

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE**

**Webinar**

**September 16, 2021**

**TRANSCRIPT**

**Committee Members**

Stephen Poland, Chair  
Dr. Carolyn Belcher  
Chester Brewer  
LT Robert Copeland  
Judy Helmey  
Jessica McCawley  
Laurilee Thompson  
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Tom Roller, Vice Chair  
Mel Bell  
Chris Conklin  
Tim Griner  
Kerry Marhefka  
Andy Strelcheck  
Spud Woodward

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Dr. Julie Neer  
Cameron Rhodes  
Nick Smillie  
Christina Wiegand

**Invited Attendees and Participants**

Rick DeVictor  
Dr. Jack McGovern  
Dr. Genny Nesslage  
LT Patrick O'Shaughnessy

Bob Gill  
Trish Murphey  
Dr. Clay Porch  
Monica Smit-Brunello

Additional invited attendees and participants are attached.

The Mackerel Cobia Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Thursday, September 16, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Steve Poland.

MR. POLAND: Good morning, everyone. I will call the Mackerel Cobia Committee meeting to order. The first item of business is Approval of the Agenda. Are there any additions or modifications to the agenda? Hearing none, the agenda stands approved. Next is Approval of the June 2021 Committee Meeting Minutes. I am sure that everyone read through them. Does anyone have any modifications, additions, or deletions to the committee meeting minutes? Hearing none, those minutes stand approved.

The first item on our agenda is Review of CMP Amendment 34, and our task today is to review the amendment and either select or reaffirm our currently-selected preferred alternatives, and hopefully send this amendment out to public hearings, and so, with that, I will turn it over to Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Good morning, everyone. Diving right into Amendment 34, I'm going to give a little background on this amendment, just to refresh your memory and to help the new council members get up-to-speed. This amendment is coming off the back of the updated SEDAR 38 stock assessment, which was completed in April of 2020, and this should feel like a bit of fresh air after yesterday, but king mackerel is not overfished or undergoing overfishing.

Additionally, commercial landings, catch per unit effort, and recruitment were all showing an increasing trend, and so there was a pretty significant increase in the recommended ABC coming out of the SSC, and you can see those OFL and ABC recommendations right here in Table 1.

This new updated assessment also includes the revised recreational landings that are based on the new FES method, and so, as a result of the change in methodology, and because the trigger policy has been -- The trigger policy includes a new stock assessment, the council is considering current sector allocations and whether or not to revise them.

Finally, there are a series of actions in this amendment that were recommended by the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel. When we first received the stock assessment, we went straight to the advisory panel and noted that there was an increase in the ABC, and if there was anything the council could do to modify management measures that would help increase harvest or would make things a little bit easier on king mackerel fishermen, and so there are sort of three things we're doing in this amendment, and you can see that reflected in these actions. We're updating the catch levels, we're looking at allocations, and we're making some modifications to management measures, as recommended by the AP.

Like Steve said, the objective for this meeting is to review the draft amendments and analysis, and there are a couple of actions that still need preferred alternatives, and then we would like you guys to consider whether or not this amendment is ready to go out to public hearing. If you guys do feel like it's ready to go out to public hearings, that will likely happen sometime in the fall. This is a full plan amendment, and so the Gulf Council must also concur with all of our preferred alternatives, and we'll be taking this amendment to them in October, and hopefully they will select preferred alternatives and also consider approval for public hearings, and if they, as well as you guys today, approve for public hearings, we'll be holding those hearings sometime in the fall, before the December council meeting.

With that, we'll dive right into the meat of things, and here is the purpose and need statement for this amendment. The purpose of this amendment is to revise the annual catch limits and annual optimum yield for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel, to revise recreational and commercial allocations for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel, and to revise or establish management measures for Atlantic migratory group king and Spanish mackerel.

The need for this amendment is to ensure annual catch limits are based on the best scientific information available and to ensure overfishing does not occur in the Atlantic migratory group king and Spanish mackerel fisheries, while increasing social and economic benefits through sustainable and profitable harvest of Atlantic migratory group king and Spanish mackerel. This purpose and need hasn't changed for the last couple of meetings, but I just wanted to briefly pause here and make sure that the committee was still comfortable with this language before moving forward.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. Committee members, any comments on the purpose and need statement? For new council members, typically what we do, when we work through one of these decision documents for an amendment, we may come back to the purpose and need statement, after working through the actions, if there's any significant changes to the actions included, but, right now, we have reviewed this purpose and need statement, like Christina said, a couple of times, and it doesn't look like the IPT has provided any recommended language change. Last call. Any committee members have any comments to the purpose and need? Seeing no hands, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Let's move on forward. I'm sorry. I see that Tim has his hand up.

MR. POLAND: Tim, go ahead.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I was just curious why do we mention Spanish mackerel in the purpose and need statement?

MS. WIEGAND: My apologies and I should have explained that. Spanish mackerel is listed in the purpose and need statement because of Action 7. Action 7 looks at allowing recreational fishermen to retain cut or damaged fish that meet the minimum size limit, and, right now, there are alternatives under that action that would apply to king mackerel and to Spanish mackerel, and so that's why Spanish mackerel is included here in the purpose and need.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Moving into Action 1, Action 1 revises the stock annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for Atlantic king mackerel, to reflect the updated ABC level, and so, again, the purpose of this action is to update catch levels based on the SEDAR 38 update and SSC recommendations, and so we've got the no action alternative. Alternative 2 would set ABC equal to ACL, and your current preferred alternative is Alternative 3, which would set the ACL equal to 95 percent of the ABC, and then Alternative 4 would set the ACL equal to 90 percent of the ABC, and, again, you can see the numbers that result in Table 2.

We have completed analysis on this now, and it's important to remember that Alternative 1 is not a viable alternative, because it doesn't reflect the updated assessment, and thus wouldn't be based on the best scientific information available. In terms of biological effects, overall, revising the catch levels, as proposed in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, aren't really expected to result in negative impacts, because there are still accountability measures in place to prevent overfishing, and, of course, specifying a larger buffer, as proposed in Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, would provide greater assurance that overfishing is prevented.

In terms of economic effects, Alternative 2, 3, and 4 are all higher than observed landings in recent years. However, from a -- So no direct economic effects are anticipated, and, in terms of social effects, there is a benefit to making sure that the ACL is based on the most recent assessment, and, in general, higher ACLs lower the chance of triggering an AM and all of the associated negative effects that go with triggering accountability measures.

Just as a brief refresher, and you guys got these AP comments at a couple meetings, but I wanted to go over them, but I wanted to go over them briefly again. The general thought of the AP is that, given the drastic increase in catch levels, they felt that it was acceptable for the South Atlantic Council to consider accommodating the buffer between the ABC and the ACL, but it was important to note that there have been increased landings of king mackerel throughout the Northern Zone and into New England, which is a big source of management uncertainty, and that, in and of itself, may warrant a slight buffer.

With that, I will scroll back up to the action and alternatives. Your current preferred alternative is Alternative 3, and I will just pause here, to see if there's any discussion or any interest in modifying that preferred.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. Bob, go ahead.

MR. GILL: Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I would like to suggest that you consider adding an alternative here for a constant catch ACL. You have a declining yield stream, fishing the stock down, and having a constant catch strategy might well be preferred by industry, and I would also mention that, when this comes to the Gulf Council, we are likely to put it in there, and, if no one else does it, I probably will, but there's a lot of advantage to doing that.

You might, depending on the numbers, need to go back to the SSC to get a constant catch OFL/ABC, but that's calculated by the simple arithmetic average over whatever time span you are considering, three or five years, but adding such an alternative, I think, would add value to this document. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Bob. Christina, or staff, constant catch, that's typically not a strategy that we talk a lot about here. Could you or council staff provide a quick summary of what that is, for the council, or for the committee?

MS. WIEGAND: I am not sure that my scientific background, my stock assessment background, is strong enough to explain why the council may want to use constant catch here, and I might leave that up to one of the many more stock-assessment-oriented people we have on the call. I will say that that's not something that has typically been done for king mackerel. To my knowledge, king mackerel has always had a decreasing yield stream coming out of assessments, and I know at least

the previous SEDAR 38 assessment, which was implemented through Amendment 26, also had a decreasing yield stream.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. I see Myra has her hand up. Go ahead, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Good morning, everybody. I just wanted to point out that I don't think we've done a constant catch strategy. As Christina said, the council has opted to set catch levels at an equilibrium level, and I believe they did that for golden tilefish, I don't know, many years ago, but it's something that the council has talked about. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Myra. Clay, to that point?

DR. PORCH: I think what Bob is getting at is, when you have a stock that is not overfished, and not undergoing overfishing, as soon as you then say, okay, now we're going to fish at the overfishing level, then what that means is you actually have to fish the stock down to the point where it's right there at the border of the MSY level, and so, in other words, the OFL would say that, because the stock is above the level that would produce the MSY, or OY, that you could actually take more catch and fish it down to that level, and so, if you just went with the constant catch scenario, if anything, that's a little more conservative than the actual declining yield stream, because you wouldn't take as many fish at the top end, right, and it's an average across-the-board. Instead of taking all the fish initially, you're kind of --

MR. POLAND: Your audio went out right there at the end, Clay.

DR. PORCH: I am not sure where I was dropped, but the point is, if you have a declining yield stream, because the stock is actually already above the MSY level, and you're just fishing it down to the MSY level, and then, if you go with the constant catch strategy, you're going to end up in about the same place, if not a little bit better. Then, to Myra's point, if you then -- Instead of just taking that surplus catch, if you fish instead at the MSY or OY level, then you're going to generally have more stability in the fishery.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Clay. John Carmichael, go ahead.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you, Steve, and I was recalling what Myra said, and you have done stocks where you set them at your OY, and, in a lot of cases, this council has picked OY at say 75 percent of the equilibrium MSY, at the F 75 percent of that, and so it gives you a yield that's stable, despite the very high stock, and I think it's important to note that, if you look at the no action, the current ACL is twelve million pounds, and you look at the ABCs from thirty-two and declining down to twenty-one million pounds, and you're talking about an awful lot more fish out there.

I think it would be wise to set something that was -- For example, if you set it at the twenty-one million pounds, the 2026-2027 fishing year, you're below all of the ABCs, and you don't need to ask the SSC for any permission to set an ACL that is below all of those ABCs, and that's totally expected, and, when you look at how high those limits are, compared to where you are, and you've got a lot of flexibility, in terms of setting some stable level of ACL that won't result in the fishery changing. As Jimmy said, when we talked about this before, you have to be aware of, if a fishery does suddenly start ramping up, it's a lot harder to be ratcheted down than it is to give it some more leeway, if you have that flexibility.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you for that explanation, everyone. Laurilee, go ahead.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Bob, for bringing that up. To me, that makes total sense of stabilizing the fishery. I mean, if you're got a windfall of fish, why try to fish it out as quickly as we can, and we did talk about this strategy in two of the species in the snapper grouper category in the previous two days, and so this, to me, looks like it just makes sense, and it would stabilize everything, and it would give everybody something to base their projections on every year, as far as figuring out what fish to target, and it looks like there's plenty of fish for everybody, and it's not taking anything away from anybody, and it puts us in a position where we're controlling the fishery, and managing the fishery, instead of bleeding it down and then possibly being in a reactive position, which is where we are in the snapper grouper fishery once again. This is an opportunity to manage something that's in good shape and do it in a sensible manner. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Laurilee. We've got a few hands up now. Spud, go ahead.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Steve. I was supportive of this when we were talking about greater amberjack, of looking into this approach, and I certainly am supportive of doing it here. However, I guess there are some questions that arise in my mind, and that is we have to select the lowest value in the projection time series, I believe, to stay compliant with the advice, and so, if we wanted to pick something that wasn't that lowest value and keep it constant, that requires some additional analysis, and I assume that could possibly delay this going forward, and is that correct?

MR. POLAND: I would look to Christina and staff for that.

MS. WIEGAND: I think, if we had to take this back to the SSC, then it would delay this amendment slightly.

MR. CARMICHAEL: But, if you stay below the ABC recommendations, you don't have to go back to the SSC. You can always go below.

MR. POLAND: Did you have a follow-up, Spud?

MR. WOODWARD: That confirms what I was -- What I thought about this, and what I understood about it, and I think we all need to be aware of that, because it may have some implications for allocation discussions and things like that, and perhaps not, but maybe so, and I am certainly supportive of adding in an alternative for consideration, unless it's going to throw a monkey-wrench in the gearwheels here.

MR. POLAND: Absolutely. Understood. Andy, go ahead.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Steve. I am supportive of considering a constant catch scenario. In direct response to your question, this is what I was getting at a couple of days ago, with some of our other discussions, and, essentially, if you set the catch level in the beginning time period lower than what's estimated, and so you're not fishing down that biomass, you're essentially keeping fish in the bank, so to speak, and so those fish can then contribute to the future population, and so your abundance numbers, your biomass numbers, are going to be higher in the out years,

and so that would be certainly a benefit for them, looking at kind of a new analysis of setting the catch limit lower in the start year than the yield levels would be in future years under a constant catch scenario, because I would expect it would be somewhat higher than just kind of the midpoint that's presented here on the table.

With that said, I guess the other thing to think about, and we're not, obviously, selecting this as a preferred at this point, but, if you set a constant catch lower than what the kind of biomass out in the water is, you do run the risk of bumping up against that more quickly, as the biomass is more available and fishing conditions are more conducive to catching the quota, and so that's kind of a downside, from the standpoint of now allowing the higher harvest level, at least early on, in the yield trajectory, but, right now, I don't have a clear understanding if we would be at risk of kind of bumping up against the catch limit if we did go with the constant catch scenario, given the current changes, and so things to keep in mind.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Andy. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Steve. Just to make sure that I understand this, and I had the same question that Spud did, but, in practical application of that then, if we were looking at using these numbers that we're looking at, and so, given the numbers under the Preferred Alternative 3, at the moment, what we would be talking about doing is a constant catch level that would need to be slightly less than the 20,710,000, that bottom number, and so, if you came in at twenty million even or something, and just for discussion, that would be less than the minimum in that particular alternative that the SSC gave us, and so that's what we're talking about, is a number something like that, and then, if so, then I agree that I'm okay with having an alternative in there.

Again, as Spud mentioned, I wouldn't want to completely stop-up the works here, but that's what I am just confirming, and that's what we would be talking about, a number somewhere in that range, if we were using that column?

MR. POLAND: Mel, that's my impression, but I will go to John Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mel is right, and I just wanted to clarify that you can set ABC equal to ACL, and so, technically, you could set it for five years at 21,800,000, and you would be fine. You wouldn't have to go back to the SSC even in that case, because you notice the 20,710,000 is already putting a 5 percent buffer between ACL and ABC, and so you could pick the 20,710,000, or you could pick any of those, and you don't have to go back to the SSC for any of this, and you know that, in all likelihood, this projection stream shows you that there's even more yield that should be available.

The big question with mackerel has always been whether or not the fishery can even take that yield, and, as I recall, they've not been even taking the twelve million that's out there, and so I don't think there's any concerns about the stock here in any way. The bigger concern, that we've talked about before, if you remember back to the Executive Order discussions, is how do you get some more interest in this fishery?

MR. BELL: Could I ask a follow-up, Steve?

MR. POLAND: Of course, Mel.

MR. BELL: Then, just moving forward with this process, if the Gulf were to kind of take that approach, do we need to -- Do we need to be hand-in-glove with the Gulf, when we finally get to the point where we're ready to close on this? In other words, it would be perhaps -- If that may happen, is it perhaps prudent to have that alternative in there, so that we are able to mesh up with the Gulf, if they go that way, or can we take two separate approaches?

MS. WIEGAND: Can I answer that, Steve?

MR. POLAND: Go ahead, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: This is a joint amendment, and so we do have to concur with the Gulf on all of our preferred alternatives in this amendment. There is a separate amendment, CMP Amendment 33, that you guys will likely see in December, that addresses Gulf king mackerel, and they don't necessarily have to take the same approach for Gulf king mackerel as we do for Atlantic king mackerel, but, for the purposes of this amendment, yes, the Gulf Council and this council have to agree on all of the preferred alternatives.

MR. BELL: Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. I will go to Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think John hit on something that is really important to kind of keep in mind here, and that is this is such a big increase, and we have no idea what percentage of the recreational quota will or will not be caught underneath these new MRIP estimates, and so I think there's a natural buffer in there anyway. I mean, how are you going to go from a fishery that can't catch twelve million pounds to a fishery that now has thirty-one million pounds, or twenty million pounds, available to them?

I think, really, you keep it at the thirty-one million, and drop it down to the twenty million, and just see what the fishery does. I mean, you're going to have the extra fish in the water anyway, because you're not going to be able to take a fishery, a commercial fishery, that goes from four or five million pounds a year and all of a sudden increase the effort to take thirty million pounds of fish out of the water, and the recreational effort -- We have no clue what it really is. We don't even know, and so I don't really see the advantage of going to a constant catch, really, because, in reality, the catch is going to be what the catch is, and it's going to way below thirty-one million pounds or twenty million pounds. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Tim. I'm going to go to Monica, real quick.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I was just going to reiterate that Christina gave you great legal advice in the scenario where both councils need to approve the amendment, and so what she said was spot-on.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Monica, and kudos, Christina. Chester, go ahead.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Steve. I think Bob has already said that, on the Gulf side, they intend to put a constant catch alternative in, and since -- I don't see why, if we know that that's going to



happen, or we've got a pretty good idea that that's going to happen, why would we not put in an alternative on our side, because it's something that we may actually agree with the Gulf Council on, and it might become the preferred for both of us. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Chester. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was going to say something similar to what Chester just said. We added this constant catch alternative in some other documents. Thus, the same rationale would apply here as to why we would want to consider constant catch, and you have Bob Gill saying that he's going to request that when it goes back to the Gulf, and I see no reason to not add it here, and I think that we should add an option for that. That way, both the Gulf and South Atlantic Council can consider it, and Bob makes some good points, and it is a joint amendment, and we will have to agree. We know it's coming up at the Gulf, and I'm just throwing it out there.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica. We've heard quite a bit from the committee, and it seems like there is interest in adding an alternative, but we don't have a motion yet, and so what is the pleasure of the committee? Mel, go ahead.

**MR. BELL: After all this discussion, I would move that we add an alternative for a constant catch stream.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Second.

MR. BELL: Now, do we need to be specific on that, or is that enough right now, just to basically add the alternative and work out the numbers?

MS. WIEGAND: I mean, direction to staff, to make sure I'm clear on what you guys are looking for, but you're looking for an alternative for a constant catch stream at the 2025-2026 level, and so this 21.8 million pounds.

MR. BELL: Okay. Good.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, and so motion by Mel and seconded by Jessica. Is there any further discussion? **Hearing and seeing none, is there any opposition to the motion on the board? Hearing none, the motion stands approved.**

A motion has been passed to add an alternative to include a constant catch stream scenario, and we still have a preferred alternative selected. Is there any desire of the committee to modify our current preferred or send this out to scoping and then reconsider? I am not hearing anything. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say that, based on all of our previous discussions, that was our preferred, and we haven't really moved forward on looking at this new alternative, and so I would maybe just leave it as it is right now, and that's the condition that it's in, and that was our preferred.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. Christina, go ahead.

MS. WIEGAND: If it's helpful, alternative language for the alternative you guys just approved a motion for shouldn't be too complicated to craft, and we could probably have that for you by Full Council, if you wanted to then discuss if you wanted to modify your preferred or keep it the same.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. All right. I am not seeing any more hands, and so I think we can move on to Action 2.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Scrolling on down to Action 2, here we go. Action 2 looks at revising sector allocations and sector annual catch limits, and so there are a couple of things that we need to go over for this action, and so I'm going to try to take it slow and make sure that we address everything. The first thing we need to note is that this action is iterative, and so it's based on the annual catch limit that was chosen in Action 1, and so, right now, all the numbers you're going to see here are based on the current Preferred Alternative 3 in Action 1.

The poundage has been set, and that's been set in Action 1. Action 2 is just looking at the percentage allocations, and so, right now, we've got the no action alternative, which is 62.9 percent to the recreational sector and 37.1 to the commercial sector. You have got Preferred Alternative 2, which has the same percentages, 62.9 percent to the recreational sector and 37.1 to the commercial sector, and so the no action and the Preferred Alternative 2 have the same percentages, and, thus, result in the same poundage allocation.

Alternative 3 allocates 77.3 percent to the recreational sector and 22.7 percent to the commercial sector. This is based on that sort of complicated idea of trying to make sure the commercial sector does not experience a poundage that is lower than what they are experiencing right now, and, in order to do that, we have to base the percentage allocation on the lowest stock ACL, which is that 2026-2027 fishing season, because there is that decreasing yield stream that we just talked about with king mackerel, under the current preferred alternative. This percentage allocation assures that, at the lowest level, the commercial sector is not experiencing a poundage allocation lower than what they are experiencing now.

Alternative 4 allocates 70.95 percent to the recreational sector and 29.05 to the commercial sector, and that's based on the proportion of landings from 2004 to 2019. Alternative 5 allocates 68.9 percent to the recreational sector and 31.1 percent to the commercial sector, and that's based on a more recent time series of 2014 to 2019. Alternative 6 balances the older time series with the more recent time series and allocates 72.92 percent to the recreational sector and 27.08 to the commercial sector.

There are a couple of things that I want to cover here. This Table 3 is really helpful if you're looking for sort of simplified language that gives you the commercial percent, the recreational percent, and explains how it was calculated, and then you've got Table 4, which gives you the actual poundage that is associated with those percent allocations. Keep in mind that this is based on Preferred Alternative 3 in Action 1.

We've also got the current problems and objectives for the CMP FMP here for you to review, and those were last updated -- The problems were last updated in Amendment 9, and then you've got the objectives, which were last updated in Amendment 6, and so those were both updated in the early to mid-1990s, and so it's been a while.

Then I'm going to briefly go over the effects analysis, before I sort of go back and talk to you a little bit about how you might want to consider modifying the actions and alternatives as they are, and so, in terms of biological effects, they're not really expected to vary between any of the alternatives, because they don't change that total ACL that is specified in Action 1. Further, the commercial sector has effective AMs in place, and, while the recreational sector doesn't have in-season AMs, it does have post-season AMs that would address any overages in stock ACLs.

You've got your economic effects, and, in general, it's going to depend on providing which provides the highest amount of accessibility or opportunity for increased landings, even though there aren't any anticipated closures for the commercial or recreational sector, and, again, social effects, both sectors would likely see an increase in available poundage, which would have social benefits. However, there might be some perceived negative consequences, depending on the percentage allocation and comparison to Alternative 1.

I am going to scroll back up now to talk a little bit about how you might want to change these alternatives, and there are two things to consider, and so I am going to start with which alternatives you might want to consider removing, and so I believe it was Dewey who brought up, at the past couple of meetings, whether or not there had been closures that fishermen had experienced, and I'm going to do my best to explain this, and so, for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel, there have not been any closures in the last say twenty years.

However, prior to the implementation of Amendment 26 in 2017, there was that shifting boundary between Gulf migratory group and Atlantic migratory group king mackerel. During part of the year, the east coast of Florida was considered Atlantic migratory group. During the other part of the year, it was considered Gulf migratory group cobia, and there have been closures for the east coast of Florida, back when they were considered Gulf migratory group king mackerel, and so, as a result, now that the boundary is set permanently at the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, and we're using landings from that area back in time, it's important to look at when those fishermen would have experienced a closure, regardless of what migratory group of mackerel they were considered to be fishing on at the time.

When you're looking at Alternative 4 and Alternative 6, those do include years where fishermen on the east coast of Florida experienced a closure in the commercial industry, and so, because there were closures, Alternative 6 and Alternative 4 may not accurately reflect the commercial fishing industry's capacity for harvest, and so that's one thing to consider.

I am going to pause here, because I see there are some hands up, and I've gone over a lot of information, to see if there are any questions, but just note that there's going to be another thing that we need to discuss regarding the preferred alternative, but I will pause here to answer any questions about the stuff I have already gone over.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina, and I'm going to go to Myra first, because I assume she will have some clarifying comments.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Steve, and thank you, Christina. I just wanted to make sure the committee discusses how we've been able -- We've been wanting to bring consistency in how we structure the alternatives for sector allocations for all the FMP amendments under development,

and so I'm sure Christina will cover that, but this will affect how your no action and your current preferred alternative are displayed.

I think I went over this a little bit, and we talked about amberjack and yellowtail and red porgy yesterday, and we're trying to be consistent in how the no action for sector allocations is presented, in terms of the language and the rationale for the alternative. I think I'm going pause there, and I just want to make sure that we have that discussion here, so that everybody understands that the intent is to have that consistency throughout. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you for that, Myra. Kerry, go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: Christina, just a quick clarification. In the language under the alternatives, under Alternative 3, it says to allocate 77.3 percent, but, if you go to the table with those numbers, under Alternative 3, it says 70.95 percent, and those percentages are different for both, and I wanted to make sure that I wasn't missing something there.

MS. WIEGAND: It's probably just a typo on my end. Give me one second to make sure that I'm going to give you the right percentages.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. That's just a big difference, and so I want to make sure that I know what we're talking about.

MS. WIEGAND: I must have typed them in the table wrong, and typed Alternative 4 twice, and so the percentages you're seeing in the alternative language should be correct.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Kerry, and thank you for clarifying that, Christina. Chester, go ahead.

MR. BREWER: I have a question about the Preferred Alternative 2. Is that calculated in what we're now calling the new currency, or is it calculated, given the timespan that's discussed, is it calculated in the old currency? Then I have a follow-up question.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so now is probably then a good time to sort of talk about your preferred alternative and the no action alternative, and so Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 have the same percentage allocation, and so they result in the same poundage allocations. Alternative 1, or I guess the current percentage allocations, were calculated based on landings from 1979 to 1983, and they haven't been revised since Amendment 1 to the CMP FMP, and the guidance we got from the Science Center, a couple of meetings back, was that those landings were now so old that it wasn't really possible to go back and sort of convert them into the new FES currency, to see what they would be.

At the last meeting, the council had some lengthy discussion, and they ultimately decided that they wanted to keep the 62.9 percent and the 37.1 percentage allocations, not based on any calculation, but based on the rationale that king mackerel has been a success story, and they would really like to keep the current dynamics of the fishery and the current percentages in place.

The Mackerel Cobia AP did pass a motion recommending that the council select Alternative 1, no action, or, specifically, those percentages, is what they were talking about at the time, because there wasn't an Alternative 2 in there, and there were six in favor, one opposed, one abstention,

and ten members not in attendance when that AP motion was approved. Alternative 2 is not actually based on a specific calculation, but, rather, it's based on council rationale in what they would like to see the fishery look like.

Now, like Myra sort of alluded to, we're trying to get some consistency in how these allocation actions are structured, and NOAA GC has had some discussions, and it seems like you guys might not need Alternative 2 in here anymore and that you would be able to select the no action alternative as your preferred, if it was desired, but I see Monica has got her hand up, and so I'm going to let her give you guys a little bit more detail on why that modification is possible.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thanks, Christina, and, if you recall, at the last meeting, I was sort of the one who made you come up with these two alternatives that essentially have the same percentages in them, but they're a slightly different rationale, and so, as Myra discussed, and as Christina just explained, we're trying to come up with a consistent template, if you will, or a consistent way that we deal with all these amendments that have allocations in them that are coming out of stock assessments.

Because of the change in the methodology, really, in which the recreational harvest is estimated, we have decided that it would be prudent, and make more sense to -- For example, with this action, it would be based on your preferred alternative from the previous action, and so what all that means is I have kind of seen the light, and Myra has convinced me, that this is a good way to go, and I agree.

Otherwise, you've got the same percentages in two different alternatives, and so I mentioned this yesterday, in the Snapper Grouper Committee, but, when this come back to you, it will probably have a little bit of additional language in there about the fact that this is now calculated based on FES, and we'll put more information in there to explain it, and so, essentially, you don't need these two identical alternatives, and so I agree with the way that Christina just explained it.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Monica, and thank you, Christina. Chester, you said you had a follow-up?

MR. BREWER: I did, and it's kind of been -- What I was going to ask next was why, if we are using the old currency, and, if you take a look at it, you're talking about stuff that's been there for almost forty years now, and that's how old that data is, and I was curious as to why we would do that, as opposed to my understanding was that our template, in all of this, was to make sure that the commercial sector didn't lose a pound of quota, whatever the percentages work out to do that, and maybe even throw a little sweetener in, and I think that we're pretty well come to an agreement that that's what we're going to strive for, and this does not do that. This goes back to old data, and, if you do the calculations, I believe, and while I'm not positive, I think that Preferred Alternative 2 results in fewer pounds to the recreational sector, and for that reason, I've got a little heartburn.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Chester. Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I just want to make a note, since I know you guys are coming off the backs of working on Dolphin Wahoo 10, and so, if you'll look under the IPT recommendations, it is important to note that this is a little bit different from what you've been doing in the past with

amendments like Dolphin Wahoo 10 and that this is coming off a stock assessment where there was an increase in total biomass and spawning stock biomass coupled with recent years of high recruitment in addition to the MRIP-FES survey numbers.

This increase that you're seeing in the ABC and ACL is not wholly reflective of just the switch to MRIP-FES, but it's also reflective of that new recruitment, and so it's sort of a mix of both things that are causing this increase in ABC and ACL, and so that's something important to keep in mind, and it makes it a little bit different from some of the other amendments that you've been talking about.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. Dewey, go ahead.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't think my hand was up. Sorry if it was.

MR. POLAND: All right. Kerry, go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: What I think I'm hearing from Myra is we need to have consistent rationale across all fishery management plans, as we're looking at these reallocations, and what I would suggest is, knowing that we have this decision tree tool coming, but also knowing that we have to do something now, is our current rationale for all of our FMPs should be to keep things as close to status quo as possible, not necessarily, obviously, in numbers, but as in percentages, because -- In the ones we have to deal with now, with the intent that we're going to come back with a decision tree and make more informed decisions later, to see how the fishery has changed.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Kerry. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Steve. I just wanted to follow-up on what Christina was explaining, and I appreciate that, but do we know how to proportion out the influence of recruitment versus FES recalibrations as the contributions to the increased ABC, because I think that has some relevance here on what we're sort of discussing, how to make an adjustment -- Chester hit on it, and, I mean, the Preferred Alternative 2 is a reallocation. I am not saying that that's the wrong thing to do, but it is a reallocation. If we use the most current landings streams and the most current information, it is a reallocation, and so is there any way to, I guess, allocate out, or proportion out, the influences of that, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: To my knowledge, no, there's not really a good way to figure out how much of the increase is reflective of the switch to FES, versus how much of the increase is a result of improved recruitment. I will look to one of our more savvy stock assessment scientists to confirm that I am not incorrect in that, but, no, I don't think there's an easy way to sort of parse that out.

MR. POLAND: Savvy stock assessment scientist, go ahead. Clay.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Steve, while we wait for Clay, I recall that they looked at that in the assessment, or at least I think they tried to do sensitivities to get at that, but my recollection is kind of Christina's, and I think they were not particularly informative, and they couldn't clearly distinguish the effects of the changes in this assessment and in this population.

MR. POLAND: Okay. Thank you, John.

DR. PORCH: I think John answered it, but could you ask the question again?

MR. WOODWARD: My question is, is there any way to determine the proportion of the increased recruitment, versus the FES recalibrations, on the projections? I mean, is it a 50/50 split, or does the FES have a higher influence on that than the recruitment? I mean, I know I'm asking a question that's probably difficult, if not impossible, to answer, but I am curious.

DR. PORCH: I can't answer that right at the moment. We did try and parse that out in the Gulf assessment, and we had some challenges, and so I can go back and consult with staff about the South Atlantic, but it is a difficult thing to kind of tease out, because, when you take out the FES statistics, you get other changes in the model, which also might affect your perception of recruitment, and so it's a difficult thing to separate out.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Clay.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Clay, and thank you, Spud. Committee, we've got a couple of things to do here. Earlier, Christina walked through some recommendations to consider removing Alternative 4 and Alternative 6, given the rationale that were commercial closures during those time series, and also what to do with our current preferred alternative and the guidance from legal that we don't need Preferred Alternative 2, and it can be replaced by the no action, and so I'm looking to the committee for some guidance on where to go here. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I wasn't going to comment on that, but I'm certainly supportive of the recommendations to remove Alternative 4 and 6, based on the rationale provided, and eliminating, I guess, the duplication of Alternatives 1 and 2. The comment that I was going to make was going to go back to Kerry's comment, as we proceed forward, and I forget how she exactly worded it, and it's important, obviously, that the council has a strong record and rationale for any allocation decision.

I don't think that means that it has to be the same rationale, but you need to be at least consistent in forming a record and take into account, obviously, how any allocation is fair and equitable and other factors that you deem important, obviously, in determining that allocation, and so, if the council's goal is to kind of maintain near status quo in the short term, until you can use the decision tool, that's certainly a basis for the record and why you want to maybe move forward with that, but I just wanted to be clear that you don't have to pick kind of the same methodology, or rationale, for each and every allocation, if there is a record to determine that changes in allocation are warranted for other reasons.

MR. POLAND: Thank you for that, Andy. Mel.

**MR. BELL: I think probably we should do this in two separate bites, perhaps, but I would move to remove Alternatives 4 and 6 from the document.**

MR. POLAND: Okay. Motion by Mel to removes Alternatives 4 and 6. Is there a second?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Second by Jessica. Any further discussion on that, Mel?

MR. BELL: No, and I think we had the discussion earlier, about the problems, the potential problems, with those, and it seemed logical to take those out, and I think we've already talked about it.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. Monica, go ahead.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, I would just like to reiterate what Andy said. The standardization, if you will, will be in the way that the alternatives and the actions are kind of presented across amendments, so that you have some consistency there, and not necessarily that the council has to choose a consistent way to deal with all the various allocations under all the FMPs, and that's up to you, of course. Christina, I guess I have a question for you. Is it clear enough, or do you need a motion, for the restructuring of the no action alternative, in the sense of the identical percentages between Alternative 1 and 2?

MS. WIEGAND: I think, once we've dispensed with this motion, what I would need is perhaps a motion to select the no action as the preferred and then a motion to remove Alternative 2 and send it to the Considered but Rejected Appendix, like we're doing here with 4 and 6. I believe that would be the proper procedure.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Monica and Christina. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would make a motion to do what Christina said, to make the no action alternative, which is Alternative 1, the preferred and remove Alternative 2 to the Considered but Rejected.

MR. POLAND: All right. Well, let's take care of this motion first, and then I will come back to you, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Is there any other discussion on this motion? **Any objection to the motion? Hearing none, the motion stands approved.** Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **I move that we select Alternative 1, no action, as the preferred alternative on Action 2 and move Alternative 2 to the Considered but Rejected.**

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica. Is there a second?

MR. BELL: Second.

MR. POLAND: It's seconded by Mel. Kerry, did you have discussion?

MS. MARHEFKA: No. Sorry. That was just to second.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thanks. Is there any discussion on the motion on the board? Again, this is to select Alternative 1, no action, and remove Alternative 2. We would effectively be maintaining our current preferred. **Hearing no discussion, is there any objection to the motion?**



**Hearing none, the motion stands approved.** Are there any more loose ends with this action, Christina, that we need to tie up? I think that covers it.

MS. WIEGAND: That's everything that I needed, and, if there's no more discussion, I'm happy to move on to the next action.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you. Proceed.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Action 3, this looks at revising the recreational annual catch target for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel, and, again, this is iterative, and so this is based on the preferred alternative selected for the stock ACL in Action 1 and reflective of the preferred alternative in Action 2, which sets allocations and, thus, the recreational annual catch limit, which the annual catch target is based off of.

You've got your no action alternative, which is not a viable alternative, because it's based on the last assessment and is not considered best scientific information available. Alternative 2 looks at revising the recreational annual catch target to reflect those updated ABC and ACL levels, using the same equation that we were doing before, which is  $ACL \times (1 - PSE)$ , or  $0.5 \times ACL$ , whichever is greater. Alternative 3 would set the annual catch target at 90 percent of the sector ACL, and Alternative 4 would set the annual catch target at 85 percent of the ACL.

Now, just to sort of update the newer council members, we do have to consider the ACT for king mackerel, and I know that, yesterday, you talked about removing ACTs for the snapper grouper species, but, for king mackerel, the recreational ACT is codified and utilized in the post-season recreational accountability measures, and so we can't remove the ACT without also revising the current accountability measure.

Here, you will see the PSE values for king mackerel, and there is the three-year average and the five-year average, and here is your resulting recreational ACTs. The five-year average PSE, again, was 13.7, as you can see here, and so there's your equation, which results in setting the recreational ACT at 86.3 percent of the recreational ACL.

In terms of biological effects, revising the recreational ACTs, as proposed in these alternatives, is not expected to result in negative biological impacts to the stock, and specifying a buffer between the recreational ACT and sector ACTs, as is proposed through 2 and 4, would provide a greater assurance that overfishing is prevented, since the ACTs could trigger AMs.

For economic effects, if the recreational landings do exceed the ACL, and the AM is triggered, causing a reduction in the bag limit in the following year, that could have some indirect economic effects, and, for social effects, reducing -- Reductions in harvest threshold potentials can do everything from changing fishing behavior as well as other social disruptions that go beyond impacts to the fishery and into the community and region. However, there is a benefit to fishermen and communities by preventing overfishing through an ACT, if there is potential to exceed the ACL.

You guys currently don't have a preferred alternative for this action, and so I will scroll back up to your alternatives, and you've got Alternative 2, which, again, that equation results in like an

86.3 percent of the ACL will be the ACT, and so sort of right in the middle of Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, and, with that, I will leave it up for discussion and selection of a preferred alternative.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. We need to select a preferred for this action, or it would be nice to have a preferred, before we send it out to public hearings, and so is there discussion from the committee? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that this kind of depends on what action we select earlier in the document, on the ACL, and I say that because adding this ACT here is really kind of another buffer in place, and so, with that said, I am okay with Alternative 2. If people think that we need another step-down buffer, I would be okay with Alternative 3 as well. I didn't want to make a motion yet, until other people discussed this, and I just wanted to throw out my thoughts there.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica. Any other discussion from the committee? I tend to agree with your rationale, Jessica. There is already a buffer there for the ACL, and the fact that this ACL, or this fishery, hasn't really reached its ACL in the past, then the likelihood that the accountability measure will be triggered is low, but, by utilizing an ACT, it does provide a step-down mechanism that might be a little bit more palatable. Jessica, go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can you go to Mel first?

MR. POLAND: Yes. Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say the same thing that you all mentioned. I mean, it looks like a buffer on a buffer, but, I mean, if there's no -- I don't have a problem with it, and so it's not an objection to it, if we want to pursue that, and I'm fine, as Jessica said, with 2 or 3, but it does -- Given the history of the fishery so far, I kind of wonder the utility, but I'm okay with it.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. **I move that we select Alternative 2 as the preferred under Action 3.**

MR. POLAND: All right. Is there a second?

MR. WOODWARD: Second.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Spud. We'll let Christina get it typed out. All right. Is there any further discussion on the motion? **Hearing and seeing none, is there any objection to the motion? Hearing and seeing none, the motion stands approved.** All right. Action 4, Christina, whenever you're ready.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Action 4, Action 4 proposes to increase the recreational bag and possession limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel in the EEZ off of Florida, and this is included in the amendment based on a recommendation from the Mackerel Cobia AP to create consistency in the recreational bag limit throughout the management jurisdiction, and so, north of Florida, the bag limit is three per person, as well as throughout the Gulf migratory group's area is also three fish per person, and it's only off the east coast of Florida where it's two fish per person,

and so your current Preferred Alternative 2 proposes to increase the daily bag limit to three fish per person in the EEZ off of Florida, to match the other areas.

We did do an analysis to look at the percent increase in landings that could be expected, and, depending on the method you use -- Method 1 assumes that any trip that met the two-king-mackerel bag limit would also meet the three-king-mackerel bag limit, whereas Method 2 isolated the trips that met that two-king-mackerel bag limit and discarded a king mackerel and assumed that, if they discarded a king mackerel, they would then now meet the three-king-mackerel bag limit, which results in a percent increase in landings of anywhere between 3 percent and 14 percent. Again, this increase in landings is not anticipated to result in a recreational closure under any of the previous actions and alternatives.

In terms of biological effects, Preferred Alternative 2 is expected to have minor effects on overall harvest, since the majority of anglers are currently only catching one fish per person. Negative effects could occur, if more fish are allowed to be retained. Again, however, this preferred alternative is expected to have negligible impacts.

In terms of economic effects, generally, angler satisfaction increases with the number of fish that's being harvested, and so Alternative 2 would be expected to result in higher economic benefits than Alternative 1. Similarly, with social effects, the benefit to the recreational sector from increased trip limits would -- You would see social effects, so long as there was no impact on any increase that would result in a closure, and Preferred Alternative 2 would create consistency in the recreational bag limit throughout federal waters, which would have indirect social benefits.

Again, this was recommended by the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, and that's why it's been included in this amendment, and so I will scroll back up and pause here and see if there's any discussion or interest in modifying this preferred.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. As you noted, this has been requested, for a while now, by stakeholders and our Mackerel AP. Is there any discussion or any interest in modifying the preferred? Bob, go ahead.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. From the Gulf perspective, as you all know, we implemented a three-fish bag limit in 2017, with the hopes that that would increase recreational landings and utilize some of the unutilized fish, and, if I'm not correct, the net effect, given all the change in behavior, et cetera, that has transpired since, we have had no effect in increase in landings at all from the recreational sector with our increased bag limit. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Bob. Any other comments? All right, Christina. It sounds like we're good with Action 4. I'm going to suggest that we take a five to ten-minute biological break, because I expect the next three actions will generate some discussion, and so I think now is probably a good time for a clean break.

MR. BELL: Let's do ten. Take ten.

MR. POLAND: Ten. All right. 9:58, everyone.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. POLAND: All right. Take it away, Christina, on Action 4.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Diving into Action 4, Action 4 looks like -- We did Action 4. We're moving on to Action 5, are we not?

MR. POLAND: Yes, that's correct. My apologies.

MS. WIEGAND: Action 5 looks at reducing the minimum size limit for recreational harvest of Atlantic migratory group cobia. As a reminder, at the last meeting, you guys requested that we split out the action on reducing minimum size limits so that Action 5 addresses recreational harvest and the new Action 6, which we'll get to in a minute, addresses commercial harvest, and so, right now, this is just for recreational, and, again, this was included in the amendment based on a recommendation from the Mackerel Cobia AP as a way to increase recreational harvest and reduce discards.

Alternative 1 is the current minimum size limit, which is twenty-four inches fork length. Your current preferred alternative is Alternative 2, which would be twenty-two inches fork length. Alternative 3 is twenty inches fork length, and then Alternative 4 proposes to remove the minimum size limit for recreational harvest altogether, and so, again, this is based off of the AP suggestion that removing the minimum size limit would help decrease issues with smaller king mackerel that are often landed when targeting other species and are regularly discarded dead.

In terms of biological effects, minimum size limits can cause increased regulatory discarding and may increase discard mortality. Currently, smaller king mackerel, that are caught under the current minimum size limit, are often released as dead discards when targeting other species, particularly Spanish mackerel, and so revising the minimum size limit, or removing the minimum size limit, may increase landings, if smaller fish are landed rather than discarded. There may be some negative impact biological impacts to the stock, since more fish can be landed under a reduced minimum size limit. However, less fish would be discarded, which could have positive impacts.

In terms of economic effects, reducing or removing the minimum size limit may increase harvest, which would provide positive direct economic effects for the recreational sector, so long as there are no long-term negative effects for the stock. Similarly, for the social effects, it may increase the number of fish that can be retained, which would increase trip satisfaction, and then there may be positive impacts resulting from reducing discards that would reduce waste for this portion of the fishery, and, thus, improve the perception of management success.

Again, you've got your Mackerel Cobia input here, and they noted that dealers in Florida are concerned that smaller king mackerel are going to have a lower value, and the commercial sector is already allowed to possess undersized king mackerel in quantities that don't exceed 5 percent by weight, and so that's why this action was split. However, specifically, with the recreational sector, Florida noted that there are giant groups of undersized king mackerel, and so there may be a lot of pressure on those fish, if the minimum size limit is decreased or removed. North Carolina AP reps noted that small king mackerel are not really directly targeted, but they're often caught during other activities, like trolling for Spanish mackerel, and both of these species are fragile and can end up as dead discards.

With that, I will scroll back up to the top, again noting that this action only addresses the recreational sector and your current preferred alternative is a minimum size limit of twenty-two inches fork length.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. I can't see the hands raised over on the left of the screen yet, but are there any comments? Jessica, go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just had a question, and maybe it's in the document and I just didn't see it, but I assume that king mackerel has a low discard mortality. Do we know what it is?

MS. WIEGAND: I do not remember the discard mortality rate. I'm positive that would have been in the stock assessment, and I can look it up and get that information for you. I do know that twenty-two inches is the length at which you have 50 percent maturity.

MR. POLAND: Thank you. Spud, go ahead.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, coincidentally, I was just looking on Google to see what I could find about that, and it's certainly not an extensive search, but I did find a reference, and it's mid-1990s, but it basically said that 19.4 percent, across various size categories, I guess, and gears, and so there is something.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Spud. I know there had to be a discard mortality rate applied in the assessment, and I would be interested to know what that was. I just know that, anecdotally, from my experience mackerel fishing, I could see that being highly variable, too. Chip, do you have an answer for that?

DR. COLLIER: I pulled up SEDAR 38, and, in the discard section for that, it describes the discard mortality rate, and it was 20 percent for commercial handline fisheries, 100 percent for gillnet and shrimp trawl fisheries, and 22 percent for headboat fisheries and 20 percent for private rec, charter, and tournament fisheries.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Chip. Jessica

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip. I guess my other point to bring up here -- I know we've already selected this preferred of twenty-two inches, and then the next action, which is new, would be looking at the commercial size limit, and I guess I would just throw out there that I assume we want them to be equal, and I am just assuming that we want them to both be twenty-two inches, but maybe there's a reason that we want them to be different, and I don't know, and so I'm just bringing that up here, since the next action is new, and we're going to talk about the commercial size limit.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica. As far as the commercial discussion, I would be interested in really seeing what the discards look like in that fishery and then having a discussion about potentially how selectivity for the commercial fishery may change, if we reduce the size limit, and I know the AP provided some input on, at least from a fish dealer and market perspective, on that, and that was pretty interesting. Dewey, go ahead.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was wondering if their discard estimates that Chip was giving was based on size selectivity, because, in the commercial fishery, there is different size selectivity, depending on the gear you're using, and I was just -- To be sure that one-size-doesn't-fit-all on the different size fish, and I was just curious about the size fish that was sampled to come up with their discard numbers. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Dewey. I'm sure it will take a minute for Chip to find that information. While we wait, are there any more comments from the committee? Are we fine with the currently selected preferred? Do we want to provide any additional rationale for why we selected that preferred? Chip, go ahead.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. In response to Dewey's question, and not what you were talking about right there, these estimates come from a variety of sources, and it's looking at a variety of sized fish, and some of it is telemetry studies, and some of it is observer studies, and so it's going to be a wide range of fish.

There wasn't like -- It's not like red snapper, where there's been multiple studies really focused at honing-in on discard mortality rate and trying to do the depth function and all that. It's been a little bit different for king mackerel, and they're usually caught at the surface, and so you're not dealing with barotrauma as much. I would have to go back and look at this, and this is from my memory, and I did work on this on one of the SEDARs, a long time ago, but it's pretty limited data for discard mortality for king mackerel and Spanish mackerel.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you for that, Chip. John Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I was just surprised that there wasn't any discussion of the stock ID confusion between small kings and big Spanish that you get and the potential benefits to that problem from potentially removing the size limit. Is that in the amendment and just not in the decision document, because I didn't see it, and maybe it is, and maybe it's just something I overlooked in the effects.

MS. WIEGAND: I don't know how much it's discussed in the effects section. It is discussed in the comments that the advisory panel gave, but we can make sure that discussions of ID confusion between the two species is included.

MR. POLAND: Thank you for bringing that up, John, and, at least from our state's perspective, that is something we tend to deal with every summer and fall, and we do see a lot of misidentification of small kings as Spanish mackerel, and we've pretty much got a standing news press release that goes out a couple of times a year and education efforts, and so it is a concern here, and it can be an issue. All right. Let's get back to the committee. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We might have to revisit this action after we talk about the commercial action, and I was looking at some of the AP's comments, which were primarily about the commercial size and suggesting a lower size limit, but there was also a comment from the AP that they would like to see more information on how lowering the recreational size limit may increase harvest, and it just seems like it's a little bit challenging to make some of these decisions about reducing the

minimum size limit for rec and commercial. Maybe, eventually, we need a little bit more information.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Jessica. Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I engaged -- Well, I should say that I started a lot of this conversation, when I was an AP member on the CMP, regarding reducing the recreational size limit. My comments then, which I think are pertinent to put in the record now, were that, from the experience of fishermen up this way -- I'm not really aware of people that target small king mackerel, but they're just caught incidentally, like is mentioned here, in the Spanish mackerel fishery or when you're king mackerel fishing.

That discard rate of 20 percent has always been a surprise to me, and maybe they're a little bit tougher than I give them credit for, but my comments then were that we wanted more information, to see what we could do to lower the size limit and how that would increase harvest, or if we could make that decision based on that, because there are a lot of encounters with those nineteen to twenty-two and twenty-three-inch fish that I don't have a lot of faith that they're not ending up as discards, but I would want to see more information as well, to see how that would affect recreational catches. At the AP, there also didn't seem to be a lot of support for reducing the commercial size limit from twenty-four inches.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Tom. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I just looked up the -- For our state, the minimum size limit is twenty-four inches fork length, and then there is two different bag limits. It's four per harvester through March 16, and then it reverts to two per harvester. Does that make it more problematic for law enforcement if you have a different fork length for the state versus our EEZ waters?

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Laurilee. I assume you will address that, Jessica?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I raised my hand to respond to that. Basically, FWC considers consistency on the actions that are made by the council, and so, if the council takes an action to change size limits, bag limits, et cetera, then FWC will consider a similar consistency action in state waters. They don't always go exactly consistent, but it can be considered after the federal changes.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Laurilee and Jessica. Christina, go ahead.

MS. WIEGAND: I just wanted to note that we have done some analysis on discards. This is Attachment B, and it's the amendment document. The challenge is there isn't a lot of information out there on king mackerel recreational discards or commercial discards, and I will talk about the commercial discards when we get to the next section, but, if you look at Figure 4.5.2, this shows you discards from the DMF headboat survey and the FWC charter and headboat discards, and so, as you can see, we've got just a little over a hundred fish that we're looking at here, and so there has been some analysis done, but the issue has just been lack of information to give a more in-depth analysis than what we have here.

MR. POLAND: Thank you for that, Christina. That's informative, and I am surprised that our headboat program only saw four fish during that five-year time period. All right. Are there comments from the committee? Again, we have a selected preferred, and I am not hearing a lot of strong opinions one way or another, and I'm hearing more just a desire to have more information and consider this further. Jessica made the suggestion to consider Action 6 and then revisit this action. How does the committee feel? Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say, based on my knowledge of the fishery off of here, and the various things we've discussed, I am okay with leaving it, but, as Jessica said, if we want to just leave it for right this second, and then we go to 6 and then revisit or something, if we need to, and I'm not sure how that will play out, but I am okay with leaving it as the preferred at this point.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. Christina, let's run through Action 6, and then we will discuss both of these actions as a group.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Here is Action 6. Your alternatives are exactly the same as they were under Action 5, except this is specific to commercial harvest. Again, the environment consequences here -- For the commercial sector, the majority of discarded fish were about twenty-nine inches fork length. However, they're sort of large size bins, and so you'll see this note down here that the length data on harvested and discarded king mackerel in the commercial sector comes from the Science Center's trip intercept program, and discard data came from the commercial observer program.

The commercial program has a large sample size of discarded king mackerel, but they put these discard lengths into thirty-centimeter size bins, and so thirty to sixty centimeters fork length, sixty to ninety centimeters fork length, and so what was done here is that these large size bins were converted to inches and resulted in discard length size bins with sort of twelve-inch interval gaps, and so, due to that large range in the bins, it's difficult to distinguish the exact king mackerel lengths that were discarded, and so that twenty-nine inches is just the median, I believe. That's the information we have for you on discards for the commercial sector.

Again, negative biological impacts to the stock can be expected, since more fish would be landed under a reduced minimum size limit, but, again, in terms of the risk of overfishing, there are still accountability measures in place to prevent any overages. For the economic effects, reducing the minimum size would provide positive direct effects for the commercial sector, so long as there are no negative effects on the stock. Similarly, reducing the minimum size limit would result in positive social effects for king mackerel fishermen. However, the positive effects of removing the minimum size limit result from reduced discards, which would result in reduced waste. However, smaller kin mackerel may be of lower value on the market.

The IPT did note that, if the council is going to consider decreasing or removing the minimum size limit entirely, they may want to consider whether or not they want to address that provision that allows commercial fishermen to possess undersized king mackerel in quantities not exceeding 5 percent, and so, like has been discussed, when the Mackerel AP talked about this, AP members noted that some dealers in Florida had expressed concern that smaller king mackerel are going to have a lower market value.



Additionally, in Florida, they see those giant groups of undersized king mackerel, and there was concern that a lower minimum size limit would result in increased pressure on those fish and that it's important to make sure that the smaller females are protected and that the current minimum size limit had been working just fine for the commercial sector, and so that's why the AP had recommended that the council select Alternative 1, no action, as their preferred for the commercial sector and then to split the minimum size limit actions by sector, like you guys did at the last meeting. That's where we are with the commercial sector, and I will move back up, and, again, these alternatives are the same as the ones that you were just discussing under the recreational action.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. Jessica, go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: This is tough, but, based on that AP discussion, I am wondering if our preferred should be Alternative 1, no action, and, that way, the Gulf Council can have the discussion, and the APs can have discussions more about this. Also, just as a reminder, don't they have a 5 percent provision that allows them to keep some undersized fish already? Let me just throw that out there, and no motion yet, but just throwing out my take of this situation.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica, and I think that is correct. There is a 5 percent tolerance for undersized kings. Spud, go ahead.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Steve. I reached out to Judy, because I know she and her folks catch a lot of fish, and she's of the opinion that a lowering of the size limit would allow retention of the fish that are otherwise being released, and I can kind of see both sides of it, but, if I put my old ex-state director hat on, if we might could change some of that, go back to our Board of Natural Resources and get them to do board action, and so forth and so on, and I guess is the juice worth the squeeze here, for what will be required of the states to -- I don't really have a strong opinion either way, and I personally would go with no action and leave things as status quo, but I wouldn't be adamantly opposed to reducing it either.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Spud, and you bring up a good consideration, as far as the states having to adopt this in state waters, and I know all the states have different governance structures and processes. At least from North Carolina's perspective, that's not a heavy lift for us, but I know, in states like Georgia and South Carolina, that can be a little drawn out. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: Just to that, I mean, we would -- We could adopt a new size limit by reference, and it's not a problem for us, in terms of adopting it. I did note that you all mentioned that the IPT recommended that -- You pointed out that we have that 5 percent by weight thing in there right now, and so, if we were to go to change something, you might have to go back and address that as well, but, just from our perspective, we could certainly adopt it, and we don't really have a commercial king mackerel fishery anyway, and so we're not really a player in that.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Mel. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was wondering about -- How about like the rec keeping one fish under twenty-four inches or something, just to help them get an extra fish, or not an extra fish, but just one under twenty-four inches? I understand the lift for some of the states, but it might be helpful

for some and another way to see some analysis in the future, to have one fish under twenty-four inches.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Dewey. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am certainly sympathetic to the states that have a cumbersome process for making changes like this, and certainly, at the federal level, our process isn't a lot simpler, when we make tweaks and changes. With that said, to me, the compelling rationale here still remains that we have quota increases happening, or changes happening, and we have a National Standard Guideline to reduce bycatch, to the maximum extent practical, and I think this is a commonsense solution to do that. Without significantly changing the size limit, we can reduce some discards and then manage this and look to the future, to see what the impact was.

As Bob Gill said, we haven't really seen this huge change from the bag limit in the Gulf of Mexico, and so I will be curious, obviously, to see if a size limit change would influence landings considerably, and so, from my standpoint, I would support consistency with the rec alternative and go with Alternative 2 as the preferred here, and then we can always revisit it down the road.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Andy. Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I just want to say that I appreciate Dewey's comment, and I find that to be kind of an intriguing idea that I would be interested in looking at as well.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Tom. Noted. Jessica, go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I could support Alternative 2. What I like about that is that it's consistent with the recreational. However, if we're going to drop the size limit down, I think I would want to do something about that allowance for possession of 5 percent by weight under that, just because that could be a smaller, in length, sized fish, and 50 percent maturity is right at twenty-two, and so, if we're going to drop this down, I think we should do something about that other provision, because then you're catching fish under the 50 percent maturity mark, or allowing the catch of an amount under 50 percent maturity.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica, and I understand your rationale, and I would be interested in considering that as well. Chris, go ahead.

MR. CONKLIN: I am pretty sure that 5 percent was put in for the gillnet fishery in south Florida, and that's why it's there.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Chris. It seems like there's general support for Alternative 2, to be consistent with our preferred alternative in Action 5, and what's the pleasure of the committee? Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I'm fine with that, but, to Jessica's point and what I brought up earlier about the 5 percent thing, would we need to create -- To do that, would we need to create sub-alternatives to have that in there? I am just trying to figure out how to make that happen here. Would that need to be a separate alternative, or sub-alternative, or how would you mechanically do that?

MR. POLAND: I mean, my perspective is that it might be cleaner as just another action, but I will let Christina speak to that.

MS. WIEGAND: That is something that, typically, the IPT would sort of discuss and flesh out, and so this is me speaking as me, and not having consulted with the IPT, and I think, given the way the regulations are written, where the minimum size limit is wrapped in with that language related to 5 percent, I think we might be able to modify the language of these alternatives to remove it, and, if that wasn't acceptable, then, yes, it would probably need to be another action, but, again, that's something, if the council is interested in, that the IPT could flesh out.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was just curious of what was heard, and it might already have been said, from the AP on the size of the king mackerel for the commercial being reduced to twenty-two and what would happen with the marketing effect of smaller fish, given market standards, because I just wonder, because I do know, from past history, that there's a price difference between the size of the fish that's paid for, small, medium, and large, and I'm just wondering, and I know two inches isn't that big of a difference, but sometimes it is, and I was just curious, given that there's already 5 percent tolerance, of what other effect would that have. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Dewey, and that's certainly something I think, when we send this out for public hearing, we can specifically ask the public to provide comment on, because I'm not sure if we have that input at the moment. Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: I think it would be really important to get some public input here. I don't want to speak for the commercial industry, but, as an AP member, in the discussion, I don't remember much support for increasing the size limit, as I believe a lot of the discussion revolved around that dealers don't necessarily want the smaller fish, and they want those bigger than twenty-four inches fish, and so I would like to let the public weigh-in on that and see what the fishermen say.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Tom. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I can only speak for our little dealership, but size doesn't matter. We're smoking most of our king mackerel, and, what we do send to restaurants, they don't seem that concerned with the size, but I am not saying that's not true. I am just giving my little personal experience with that.

MR. POLAND: Okay. Thank you, Kerry. As far as personal perspective, I prefer a small king mackerel, at least for table fare, but, like Dewey said, I know there are price differences in the market, and exceptionally large king mackerel can be valued a little lower than the smaller king mackerel, but I think, if we do move forward with reducing the fork length to twenty-two inches, and also remove that 5 percent tolerance, I wonder if that would really change the amount of undersized king mackerel coming into the market. All right. What's the pleasure of the committee? Do we want to select a preferred for Action 6? It seems like we hinted around at some motion language and some actions, and so let's hear it. Chester.

MR. BREWER: **Just to break the silence, I move that we select Alternative 2 in Action 6 as the preferred alternative.**

MR. BELL: I will second.

MR. POLAND: All right. Motion by Chester and second by Mel. Any further discussion? There was also some discussion about considering removing the 5 percent tolerance for undersized king mackerel, but I think we can just provide that as direction to staff to consider. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: That's why I had my hand up. I was going to ask if we could just provide direction to staff to work through that with the IPT and bring that back, in terms of language and all.

MR. POLAND: Is that clear, Christina, to staff? All right. Any further discussion on the motion on the board? No hands. **Any opposition to the motion on the board?** All right. **Hearing and seeing none, the motion stands approved.**

Christina, let's scroll back up to Action 5, briefly. Given that we have selected Preferred Alternative 2 in Action 6, to be consistent with Action 5, is there any more discussion on Action 5? Tom and Dewey both made a comment to consider potentially a one-fish-under-the-size-limit provision for the recreational sector. Is there any interest by the committee in acting on that? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: No interest on my part for taking one under that. It's going to be a law enforcement nightmare, and we're about to have a whole conversation about partially-bitten-off fish, and so my recommendation on this particular action is no, from my point of view.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Jessica. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I concur with Jessica as well.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. Any further discussion? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Ditto for me.

MR. POLAND: All right. If there is no further discussion on Action 5, let's move on to Action 7, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Action 7 looks at modifying the recreational requirement for Atlantic king mackerel and Spanish mackerel to be landed with heads and fins intact. Again, this was included based on a recommendation from the advisory panel, as a way to increase recreational harvest and address the increase in shark and barracuda depredation.

Alternative 1 does not allow recreational fishermen to possess cutoff or damaged fish. Alternative 2 would allow recreational fishermen to keep cutoff or damaged fish that comply with the minimum size limit, and then there are sub-alternatives for king mackerel and for Spanish mackerel, just the Atlantic migratory groups.

Here are your biological effects. Allowing possession of damaged king and Spanish mackerel is expected to minimally increase harvest, while reducing the number of discarded fish, but, since those fish are in a state where they're expected to be discarded dead, the biological effects to the

stock are expected to be neutral. From an economic perspective, allowing possession of damaged king and Spanish mackerel would increase harvest and provide direct economic effects for the recreational sector, especially since the fish are in a state where they're not expected to survive release.

From a social perspective, again, this is expected to provide positive social effects. In particular, this alternative, Alternatives 2a and 2b, address stakeholder concerns regarding damaged fish and may improve stakeholder perceptions of the management process, and, again, just some AP comments, and the AP felt that this action makes perfect sense, and there is a big issue in North Carolina and Florida with sharks and barracudas, and fishermen regularly have to throw back fish that do meet the minimum size limits just because they're damaged.

It's important to note that commercial fishermen already have this provision in place. Commercial fishermen are allowed, currently, to keep damaged fish that meet the minimum size limit, and it's been noted that there is some confusion among law enforcement, and the AP members noted that there was some confusion among law enforcement, given that commercial fishermen are allowed to do this, whereas recreational fishermen are not, and many recreational fishermen are keeping damaged fish that meet the minimum size limit, and so it's not clear to the public. The AP also noted that, when we do take this out for public comment, we will need to make it clear that this damaged provision is for king mackerel and Spanish mackerel, and it is not for cobia, and so, with that, I will scroll back up.

At our last meeting, we had discussed some concern about how changing this regulation would impact regulations at the state level, and the state representatives were going to come back with more information about how this may impact them and the different sort of regulatory processes they may need to go through to modify regulations at the state level, and so, with that, Steve, I will turn it back over to you for that discussion and a discussion on what you guys would like to select for your preferred.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Are there comments from the committee? I provided some comments on Monday, during my state agency report, about actions that our marine fisheries commission is taking on modifying our mutilated finfish rule. We're currently in the process of modifying that rule to allow provisions for spot and croaker, potentially, and so, at least from our perspective, if any additional modifications need to be made to our enforcement of mutilated finfish, now is probably a good time, if the council moves forward with any actions in here, and so we don't have the same concerns that some of the states have raised, as far as administrative and governance concerns at this time, and so I will put that out there again. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Steve. I mentioned on Monday that we have some state issues, just in terms of how we go about adjusting things, and we would probably have to do that, and it really matters on who you talk to and the perspective and how you ask the question, but, first of all, this isn't really -- With Spanish and king, as I mentioned, we really don't have commercial fisheries, to speak of, like North Carolina and Florida, and it's not been a problem in the recreational fishery, that our law enforcement has really noticed, but the way our head and tailfin intact law is written, it's possible that, if the federal regulations changed for just mackerel and Spanish, we might be able to adopt that by reference if that is deemed a size limit.

We're allowed to adopt -- For our statute, we're allowed to adopt what the federal CFR says, basically, certain things, and one of them is a size limit, and so I'm not a lawyer, but, if this were deemed as a size limit, then we could adopt it, and I would say it has to do with size, and so perhaps we wouldn't have to do anything, in terms of adjusting state law, but, if that were deemed to not be clearly a size limit, then we might have to put wording in a different law, and then we would have to go to the general assembly, but it's quite possible, because -- I am glad to hear specifically about cobia, but, just for king and Spanish mackerel, based on the way the law is written, it's possible that we could adopt that again, if it's deemed a size limit.

From a law enforcement perspective, I will just say that occasionally they deal with this, and they use discretion, and, probably like in other places, if the fish -- Whatever the species is, if the fish they're looking at -- If what's left of it meets or exceeds the existing size limit, it's not a problem, but our law specifically addresses certain species, and mostly state, or pretty much predominantly state-managed, or state waters, but I think we might be okay. Again, it gets into interpretation of how it's worded, and so I guess, to quote Monica and others, it all depends.

MR. POLAND: Thank you for that, Mel. Spud, go ahead.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Steve, and I certainly won't speak for Carolyn, but the law in Georgia is pretty clear-cut. We don't have a situation like in South Carolina, where I think you could sort of incorporate by reference some exceptions to it. The state law in Georgia is pretty clear-cut. I mean, it says all fish subject to restrictions specified in this rule may be possessed in state waters or landed only with heads and fins intact, except that when landed for commercial purposes, and so it would create an issue.

To me, this begs a bigger question. If you're going to do it for Spanish and king mackerel, why would you not consider doing it for other species that are federally managed with size limits? I mean, if your goal here is to prevent unnecessary waste and allow the recreational fishermen to harvest something that's already dead, and is going to be removed from the population, I mean, is it -- Does this not beg a bigger discussion about how we deal with any federally-regulated fish that's subject to a minimum size limit? That's just my input.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Spud, and thank you for that perspective, too. I mean, from my perspective, I mean, I think we should have this discussion really for all of our fisheries where the species is managed with a size limit, and I don't see any reason why we should just focus this on king and Spanish mackerel and not have these discussions for all of our other finfish. Jessica, go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. We have landed in whole condition requirements for our species, and so, if we're going to do this, as you guys are mentioning, for king and Spanish, it seems like it would need to be considered for all species, which I think is quite a can of worms to open up, and to try to do it for some and not others could be a little challenging to pass. All of these changes would have to be passed by our commission for state waters, and it's just -- It seems like a simple fix, but I don't know that it really is, and I feel like we're on kind of a slippery slope here.

I mean, you guys are making an argument here about wanting to not discard some of these fish and keep them, but I think that that's a slippery slope over to something like red snapper, which are being discarded because of seasons, et cetera, and so, if we're going to allow people to keep

bitten-off fish, because of the shark problem, how do you tell them they can keep those fish, but you can't keep regulatory discards, because you have quotas and such that are so low, et cetera, and they would want to keep those fish as well, and I just feel like you're on a slippery slope, and it seems strange even to say, hey, we'll consider this for king and Spanish mackerel, but we don't really mean to consider this for cobia. It's just a little odd.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Jessica. Fair points. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say that, I mean, we started down this road, logically, because we're talking about specifically amendments to this plan, and it came up, and, the folks that we're engaged in conversation with, from the AP and all, it made perfect sense to them, and that's why we're focused on this, specifically, but I do agree that, if you go down this road now, it begs the question of, well, why not selection of other species and all, and it then gets a little bit -- I think, from a South Carolina perspective, again, and I'm not worried about just how we do things, but, if it was sort of everything was lumped in there with something -- Again, I'm using the same state code section, but, again, it would all have to be interpreted as size limits for all of those species that we might be dealing with, and that might really be stretching the logic.

If it were a completely separate approach, to where you were just dealing with shark depredation and this is how we're going to deal with this, and we put this in place, then I don't know. Then we probably would have to change the law to match that, perhaps, because it's not clearly just a size limit thing.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, to me, this should be done in a separate amendment for each complex. Any fish over the size limit that's in open season that has been mutilated by -- I mean, not cut off by somebody's knife because it was short, but a legitimate bite-off, it should be allowed to be retained. I know the law is the law, but, I mean, I see plenty of fish, up and down the coast, come in, large groupers and stuff, that have bit in half, and they're over the size limit, and people with any kind of common sense aren't going to throw that back.

That could feed their family or something, and they certainly aren't looking to get in trouble or anything, but it happens almost every trip, and shark depredation is a real thing, and it's getting worse and worse. We've heard a constant outcry from the public and stakeholders, even before our visioning process, to do something about it, and this is an opportunity for us to actually do something worth a damn, instead of putting people out of business. I would strongly consider looking at this in a broader spectrum and coming to our senses here and do something that makes sense. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Chris. Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: I understand the hesitancy by some of the other states in regard to this, but I think that the discussion here comes from the comments we've received from fishermen, and just stakeholders in general, as these two species are two of the most common to have -- To be damaged by sharks and barracuda, and that's definitely my experience as well.

I am going to end my comment here with kind of an open-ended question, if I could get some clarification on it, but I believe it's my understanding that HMS allows for the retention of shark-bit tuna, and I'm not much of a tuna fisherman, myself, and I was just curious how other states are handling that. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Tom, HMS does allow for shark-bit tuna, as long as they meet the minimum size requirements, and, at least for our state, we have adopted that in rule, to be consistent, and so we allow it here. All right. Dewey, go ahead.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: It's my understanding that part of the reason for this was king mackerel and Spanish mackerel are trolled fish, catching by, to my knowledge, surface trolling, but it could be a good idea to do this, because it would document, but we might not want to know, all the shark depredation that's going on, and so -- It could be a great project for citizen science, with the app, to report all your shark-bitten fish, by documenting, with pictures, the ones you kept with that, and so it could be a great learning tool, because this shark problem is not going to go away anytime soon, and it's going to steadily get increased, and folks are going to be wondering why they can't keep the fish that got eaten, instead of feeding it to the sharks, and so it might be something to think about.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Dewey. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Steve. I hate to do this, but I agree with Dewey. I think it might be a great citizen-science-type thing, to get some pictures of a bunch of mutilated fish and take them up to HMS and show them what's going on. That's not why I raised my hand. I wanted to agree with Chris, in that I think this should be done across-the-board, as opposed to piecemeal. It's a problem that has -- It's going to be more and more of a problem, as we go on, and as we see more and more sharks, unfortunately, because it shows no sign of slowing down, and so, with regard and in response to the shark problem, I think that something like this should be applied across-the-board, and that might be of some help to people that have to go to legislatures or other groups to approve that, if it's done across-the-board, they would only have to go one time. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Chester. Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I wanted to note a couple of things. First, in terms of a sort of broader comprehensive amendment to address this, do keep in mind that, because CMP is a joint FMP with the Gulf, historically, CMP has not been included in some of those larger comprehensive amendments, and so we would need to work with NOAA GC and have sort of bigger conversations about how to include CMP in a broader comprehensive amendment, but what I raised my hand for was to note that cobia is not included in here, because, when we wrote the action and its alternatives, our intention was to match what was currently allowed for the commercial sector, and the commercial sector is only allowed to keep cutoff or damaged king and Spanish mackerel.

Now, that's not to say that Gulf migratory group cobia could not be added into this action, if that's something that the council was interested in doing, and so that's why it wasn't included, but I would certainly welcome any conversation or modifications to include it, if that's the will of the committee.



MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you for that, Christina. What is the pleasure of the committee? Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I am kind of back and forth on this. I do agree that it would be nice to deal with it across-the-board in some capacity, but this is sort of where we started the discussion. I really like Dewey's idea about a citizen-science-type thing, in terms of quantitatively documenting things, and that could be kind of neat, but, I mean, perhaps one -- Well, I mean, one approach would be to -- My fear is you've got an immediate problem that we're trying to maybe help with, and so, if we're going to take this to a more broader approach, the timing on that is who knows.

If there's something we can do in the more short-term, like this, to give some relief to folks, even if it's just this specific fishery, fine, and then we come back later, maybe on a broader scale, and then we incorporate what we've done back into a more broader approach or something, but I'm just -- I'm kind of torn between the desire to do something to provide folks some immediate relief, or relief fairly soon, versus something that might take quite a while longer to deal with across-the-board, which I agree that we do need to look at it across-the-board, because this is not just an issue for the Spanish and king fishery.

I guess, with that being said, I would be fine with moving along with it in this amendment and then realizing that we do need to deal with it later in a more broader perspective, and that's something we deal with down the line, along with all of the other things that we're trying to deal with.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. I'm going to go to Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. This is just what Dewey and Chester and a couple of other people have brought up, in terms of citizen science, and I did want to give a quick shoutout to the Release app that Julia talked about earlier in the week, and that does have an option on it to indicate that a shark got your fish, and so we are collecting that data, in some capacity, through citizen science.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just think it would be a good idea to give the public maybe a little bit better understanding that the councils are working on something, and more to come in the future, but I will leave it at that. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Dewey. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks. My preference is still to deal with this holistically. If we were to proceed with this, and actually have it implemented, it will require our Board of Natural Resources to take action that would be specific to these species, and then, at some point in the future, possibly come back and amend that. I mean, it's not terribly onerous, and, I mean, we don't have to go to the general assembly, but it's a duplication of effort, but I guess maybe that's unavoidable in some of these circumstances.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Spud. So a question to the committee. Do we want to select a preferred or send this out to public hearing with no preferred? No hands. All right, Christina. That is it for actions in CMP Amendment 34, correct?

MS. WIEGAND: Correct. That's all the actions. I do need -- First, I want to clarify that the intention of the committee is to not select a preferred on Action 7 at this time, but to go ahead and take it -- Not worry about it going out to public hearings without a preferred, and I will also note that you guys have made several changes throughout the amendment, and so I guess the other big question that we have to deal with is whether or not you feel comfortable, at this juncture, sending this amendment out to public hearings.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. We have added potential alternatives to Action 2, I believe, as well as requested some IPT inputs for Action 6, and so that might change the language of the actions and alternatives. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I mean, we're aware of the scope of the changes we've made, and so I'm fine with taking it on out. Relative to Action 7, I mean, there are only two choices, and, I mean, we don't have to have a preferred, but it's either do it or don't do it, and I guess you do have your sub-alternatives, but, I mean, I think what I was sensing is that there's no sort of a consensus, right now, of which way to go, and so I think that's just where the council is on that right now, and we've had discussion about pros and cons either way, and so I think taking it to the public and let them mull it over, but, anyway, I think it's okay not to have a preferred with 7 as well.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Steve, refresh me on where we ended up on the constant catch alternative. We added that to Action 1, and is that correct?

MR. POLAND: I believe, yes, Action 1. Sorry.

MR. WOODWARD: So are we at a point where we feel comfortable with that going out to the public when we really haven't even seen it yet?

MR. POLAND: Committee? Mel.

MR. BELL: Good point, Spud, because we had mentioned kind of -- Well, Christina had mentioned maybe being able to have something fleshed out for us to look at at Full Council, when we come back to this group, and so maybe we make the decision at that point, because we don't really know exactly what we're approving, completely.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Mel, and that sounds good to me. Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Mel is correct that I think we could probably get alternative language put together. I will ask the committee to keep in mind that -- At Full Council, we'll have Alternative 5 that has this constant catch stream, and your current preferred alternative is still Alternative 3. Should you have discussion, during Full Council, where you want to modify your preferred, keep in mind that that also requires us to go through to Action 2 and Action 3 and modify all of the numbers for those actions as well, because they are iterative, and so you set the stock ACL, and

then you set the sector allocations, and then you set the rec ACT, and so just keep in mind that that will have to be modified and changed as well.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina, and so it sounds like we can take up the item of sending this out to public hearings at Full Council. Tim, go ahead.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Christina, will you be able to tell us, -- Along with that constant catch, will you be able to tell us, in the new currency, what each sector is catching, at that time?

MS. WIEGAND: I believe that information is in the full amendment document, but I can pull it up for you and have it ready to go, absolutely.

MR. POLAND: All right.

MS. WIEGAND: Here we go, Tim, and so here are recreational landings by year from 2000 to 2001 and 2019 to 2020, those fishing years. If you scroll down, there's also the commercial landings. This is PDF page 60 and document page 59 in the full amendment document, which is Attachment 1b.

MR. GRINER: Great. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: All right. Last call to the committee on Amendment 34, before we move on. All right, Christina. Let's move on to Gulf cobia. I will suggest a five-minute biological break, while you get set up, and so 11:16.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. POLAND: All right, Christina. Take it away, whenever you're ready.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Switching gears, now we're going to talk about Amendment 32, which addresses Gulf migratory group cobia. I am going to try to be consistent about the language I use when talking about cobia, but, just to go over it at the very beginning, when I am talking about Gulf group cobia, that includes the entire Gulf of Mexico and the east coast of Florida. When I'm talking about Gulf cobia, Gulf Zone cobia, Gulf Zone cobia refers just to the Gulf Zone, which is everything that falls within the Gulf Council's jurisdiction. When I'm talking about Florida East Coast Zone cobia, or FLEC Zone cobia, that refers to the east coast of Florida, which is what falls into the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction.

This amendment addresses the recent stock assessment for Gulf group cobia, which found that, while the stock is not overfished, it is undergoing overfishing, and so the purpose of this amendment is twofold. First, it's to end overfishing of Gulf group cobia as well as to address the framework procedure, which addresses responsibilities between the South Atlantic and Gulf Council, and I will get a little bit more into what those changes are once we get into that action.

Here, you can see we've got a series of figures that show here commercial landings for the Gulf Zone, the FLEC Zone, as well as total Gulf group landings since 1986, and, here, you can see the change between MRIP-CHTS and MRIP-FES, and the updated assessment did incorporate the

new MRIP-FES estimates, and that was for this -- Figure 2 is for Gulf Zone cobia and Figure 3 is for FLEC Zone cobia.

Here are your OFL and ABC values for Gulf group cobia, as recommended by the Gulf Council's SSC, and, as you can see, different from the way king mackerel was, Gulf cobia has an increasing yield stream, and so we start with the lowest value in 2021 and increase that up to 2023, and then, again, the framework procedure -- Right now, with regard to FLEC Zone cobia, the South Atlantic Council is only allowed to modify vessel trip limits, closed seasons or areas, and gear restrictions without working for approval with the Gulf Council, and so the proposed changes in the document are going to expand the South Atlantic Council's responsibilities in relation to FLEC Zone cobia.

There are a number of actions in this amendment, and, again, several of them are iterative, and so Action 1 sets the overall Gulf group cobia OFL, ABC, and ACL. Action 2 sets the apportionment between Gulf Zone cobia and FLEC Zone cobia, and then there are actions related to FLEC Zone cobia that would set sector allocations and then another set of actions that sets the ACT, and so, again, these are all iterative, related to one another, and hopefully this table makes it a little bit clearer, as we go through the document.

The purpose of this meeting is to review the purpose and need statement, actions and alternatives, and consider it for approval for public hearings. Currently, the Gulf Council and the South Atlantic Council agree on all of their preferred alternatives, and, at their August meeting, the Gulf Council did approve this amendment for public hearings, but a little more on that once we get to that point in our discussion.

Here is our tentative timing. If you all approve it for public hearings at this meeting, we would be taking it out for public hearings sometime this fall, and it would come back to the Gulf at their October meeting and us at our December meeting for tentative formal approval. With that, I will hop into the purpose and need statement.

The purpose of this plan amendment is to consider whether to modify Gulf group cobia catch limits, revised the apportionment between Gulf Zone and the FLEC Zone for Gulf group cobia, in response to new information on the stock provided in the SEDAR 28 update stock assessment, revise the sector allocation in the FLEC Zone, modify management measures related to size and possession limits, and to clarify language in the CMP framework procedure regarding the responsibilities of the Gulf and South Atlantic Council for management of Gulf group cobia.

The need is to end overfishing of Gulf group cobia, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, update existing Gulf group cobia catch limits to be consistent with the best scientific information available and contemporary data collection methods, and to clarify the Gulf and South Atlantic Council's responsibilities in the CMP framework procedure. I will do a quick pause here, again, like I did last time, to see if there are any comments or concerns about the purpose and need statements, as currently written.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. Any comments or questions from the committee? All right. I am not seeing any hands, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Continuing forward then, Action 1, again, addresses the OFL, ABC, and ACL. Like the previous amendment, Alternative 1 is not a viable alternative, because it would

not update the catch levels based on the most recent stock assessment, and, thus, does not reflect the best scientific information available. The current Gulf and South Atlantic Council preferred is Alternative 2, which modifies the Gulf group cobia OFL, ABC, and ACL based on the recommendations of the SSC, and it has an increasing yield stream from 2021 to 2023 and then maintains the 2023 levels for subsequent fishing years or until it is updated by the council.

Then you also have Alternative 3, which has the OFL, ABC, and ACL as a constant catch value, maintaining it at the 2021 level for subsequent fishing years, until changed by future management actions, and so Preferred Alternative 2 would modify it. When comparing historical Gulf group landings adjusted into FES numbers, we are expected to exceed the ACL in six out of eight years since ACLs were implemented, and so other changes to management measures are going to be needed to constrain harvest to the ACL and prevent an overage of the OFL.

In terms of biological effects, again, Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 do address the overfishing status of Gulf group cobia, and discards are not expected to increase under these alternatives, as Gulf group cobia is most often an opportunistically and not directly-targeted species. In terms of economic effects, because Alternative 2 establishes an increasing yield stream, whereas Alternative 3 has that constant catch level, Preferred Alternative 2 would be expected to result in more economic benefits than Alternative 3.

Relative to the buffer between status quo OFL and ACL, and the magnitude of the buffer, Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 would provide more protection to Gulf group cobia. In terms of social effects, we are expected to see negative effects under Preferred Alternative 2 from the loss of harvest opportunities, as the ACL would be reduced below the average total landings from 2005 to 2015.

Greater negative effects are going to be expected from Alternative 3, when compared with Alternative 2, because the catch level would remain below that necessary to end overfishing, and then, of course, while MRIP-FES has been determined to be the best scientific information available, adoption of these units has been controversial, and so there might be some indirect negative effects that occur based on how users form their perceptions of the use of this data. With that, I will scroll back up. Here is the council's current preferred alternative, and I will pause here, to see if there's any discussion or desire to modify this action.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. Any comments or questions from the committee? All right, Christina. I'm not seeing any hands.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then let's continue on down to Action 2. Action 2 looks at modifying the apportionment between the Gulf Zone and the Florida East Coast Zone based on the ACL that's selected in Action 1, and so, again, the numbers I will present you here are reflective of your preferred alternative choice in Action 1.

Alternative 2 would retain the apportionment between zones at 64 percent of the Gulf Zone and 36 percent to the FLEC Zone, and those are the current percentages that are in place, and they would be tracked using the new MRIP-FES units. The current preferred alternative would update the equation that was initially used to set allocations under the no action alternative, and so the landings between 1998 and 2012, and that results in an allocation of 63 percent to the Gulf Zone and 37 percent to the FLEC Zone.

Alternative 4 would set a different set of years, 2003 to 2019, and it would result in an apportionment of 59 percent to the Gulf Zone and 41 percent to the FLEC Zone, and so the time period that was used in 20B, which is the same time period that was used in the no action and then was updated in the council's current preferred, was selected because it included landings from the most recent fifteen years, which, at the time, was the longest period and was able to capture sort of the long-term dynamics of the stock, and, again, all of these alternatives, Alternative 2 through Alternative 4, would transition recreational data monitoring from MRIP-CHTS to MRIP-FES.

When looking at Alternatives 4 and 5, or, well, really, Alternative 4 now that uses the 2003 through 2019, it's important to note that it may be biased, due to recent management changes from Gulf cobia. Here is a table, and this is the line that you want to look at right here, Preferred Alternative 3, and that shows you the total Gulf group ABC and how that would come out as the Gulf Zone ACL and the FLEC Zone ACL, based on the 63/37 percent apportionment.

In terms of environmental consequences, no changes in effects are expected under Alternatives 1 or 2, as the apportionment remains status quo under both. The 1 percent apportionment shift in Preferred Alternative 3 is not expected to result in any detectable changes to biological or ecological effects. Alternative 4 shifts 5 percent to the Gulf group ACL to the FLEC Zone from what it currently is as the status quo, but it's still not expected to result in any measurable changes to the biological or ecological environment.

In terms of economic effects, it's assumed that the value derived from the Gulf group cobia is sort of independent of the zone from which it's harvested, and so the action is not expected to result in any net changes to economic benefits, but it simply results in a benefit transfer between one zone to another.

Similarly, with social effects, while the shift in the zone apportionment is relatively small, apportionments do tend to have sort of broader social implications and indicators of cultural significance, and so the change towards the FLEC Zone would indicate sort of an increasing social valuation of cobia within the FLEC Zone, and so, with that, again, I will scroll back up. Your current preferred alternative, and the Gulf's preferred alternative, is Alternative 3, which updates the original years based on the FES numbers and results in a 63/37 percent apportionment between the zones.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Any comments from the committee, or questions, on our selected preferred? I am seeing no hands, Christina. Carry on.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Let's rock and roll down to Action 3. This looks at modifying the FLEC Zone cobia, and so now we're only talking about the Florida east coast, and the allocation between the commercial and recreational sectors. Again, this is iterative, and so the numbers you see here are based on the preferred alternatives in Action 1 and Action 2.

Alternative 1 has your no action alternative, and it allocates 8 percent to the commercial sector and 92 percent to the recreational sector. This is based on an equation that balances the historical catch with the more recent catch, and, when it was calculated, it was calculated based on average Atlantic cobia landings back when Atlantic cobia ran from the -- It was broken at the management jurisdiction, and so all of the east coast Florida, all the way up through the Mid-Atlantic, was

considered Atlantic cobia. That management jurisdiction has been modified now to be the Florida-Georgia line, and we're only talking about Gulf cobia here, but that's how those percentages were derived.

Alternative 2 would modify the FLEC Zone cobia ACL so that it was 5 percent to the commercial sector and 95 percent to the recreational sector, and that uses the same formula that was used in the no action alternative, but it updates the landings that were used, so that it's using MRIP-FES landings and only using landings from the FLEC Zone, and so the east coast of Florida.

The current Gulf and South Atlantic preferred is to retain the FLEC Zone cobia allocation of 8 percent to the commercial sector and 92 percent of the recreational sector, and this isn't based on a time series of landings. It's based on a desire to maintain the current commercial ACL. Then, similarly, Alternative 4 has the same goal, and you will notice that percentages aren't listed here, and that's because the percentages vary based on the preferred alternatives that are chosen in the previous action, because, again, its goal is to ensure that the current commercial ACL, which is 70,000 pounds, is maintained at the lowest point, and so beginning in 2021 and moving forward, and so, because Alternative 4 is confusing, and Alternative 3 results in essentially the same percentages, that is the rationale you guys used at your last meeting to select Alternative 3 as your preferred.

Scrolling down to the effects, again, in terms of biological effects, only Alternative 2 results in a reduction of allocation to the commercial sector, 5 percent from 8 percent and 95 percent to the recreational sector, and the five-year running average of commercial landings results in the landings of about 43,000 or 44,000 pounds, and all of the alternatives proposed under Action 3 would result in a higher commercial allocation than those average landings. However, the recreational landings, that same five-year average time period, do exceed the proposed recreational ACLs in Preferred Alternative 3 as well as Alternatives 2 and 4, but biological effects are, again, expected to be neutral, because there are accountability measures in place.

In terms of economic effects, they really only impact a fishery if the harvest changes or fishing behavior changes or the sector ACL is exceeded, thus triggering accountability measures. Then, in terms of social effects, again, under Alternative 2, there would be that decrease in commercial percentage compared to Alternative 1, which could have negative social effects if there is a negative perception of this change, due to the potential decrease in fishing opportunity, if landings were to increase or concerns about the long-term effects of a decreased percentage. Preferred Alternatives 3 and 4 are expected to be less controversial than Alternative 2 for the commercial sector. However, the recreational sector may experience short-term negative effects, due to if an in-season closure occurs.

Again, the Gulf Council talked about this action a little bit at their meeting in August. A council member asked about the possibility to include an alternative in Action 3 that would look at removing sector allocations altogether, and I know Bob is on the line, and Kerry was also in attendance at that meeting, and so they can provide more information. I will note that additional actions would be needed in this amendment if we wanted to add removal of sector allocations to this, because accountability measures would also need to be modified to address that change, and there is interest in moving this amendment quickly, since the purpose is to end overfishing of Gulf cobia. With that, I will scroll on back up.

Again, your preferred alternative is Alternative 3, 8 percent to the commercial sector and 92 percent to the recreational, nearing current allocations and holding the commercial sector at approximately the same value they were experiencing right now.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Any comments or questions from the committee? Any comments specific to the discussion at the Gulf Council meeting? Chester, go ahead.

MR. BREWER: Well, since you asked that question, I'm not in favor of going along with the new allocation, as suggested in the Gulf, but I am having a little bit more heartburn than I had before, when we were talking about king mackerel, because, as I look at Alternative 3 here, you are de facto reallocating, and that didn't matter as much with regard to king mackerel, but, here, we're looking at a situation where it's expected that the recreational side will close, and, in keeping with what we have talked about as being our goal, and our goal was that the commercial people wouldn't get hurt, and that they would keep the same poundage with, quote, and I think I've used this term a hundred times now, but with maybe a little sweetener, and Alternative 4 seems to do that. I would like to see us select Alternative 4 as the preferred. Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Chester. Christina, to that, and then I have a question afterwards.

MS. WIEGAND: I just wanted to pull up -- I don't have the actual percentages that would go into Alternative 4, and so, just for comparison purposes, this is the full amendment document. If you look at Table 2.3.2, here's your preferred alternative for Action 2, which is Preferred Alternative 3, and here are the sector ACLs that you would get under your current preferred alternative for sector allocations, which is your 8 percent commercial and 92 percent recreational.

If you scroll down to Alternative 4, again, this one has sort of the complicated rationale of trying to make sure that the commercial sector, at their lowest level, is at what they're experiencing now, which is 70,000 pounds, and so you'll see that the percentages that work out for that are about 8 percent and 92 percent, and so there's not a significant difference in the commercial and recreational percentages between Alternative 4 and the current Preferred Alternative 2, and so I just wanted to pull up those percentages.

For Alternative 3, your current preferred, you're at 8 percent commercial and 92 percent recreational. Under Alternative 4, you're at 8.085 for the commercial sector and 91.915 percent for the recreational sector.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Can you go back to the decision document, real quick? I just had a question about Alternative 1 and our selected preferred. Earlier this morning, we were talking about king mackerel and a similar allocation action, and we received the advice, from General Counsel, that we could select the no action alternative, so to speak, and that the percentages were the same, and it seems here that the percentages are the same between the Alternative 3 and the Alternative 4, no action, and so I just wanted a little clarification on why Alternative 1 is not a viable option, given that Alternative 3 has the same percentages.

MS. WIEGAND: I may ask Monica to chime in a little bit here, but this is one of those fun situations that we have with CMP, where it depends on who is the document lead, and so, for this amendment, the Gulf Council is the document lead, which is why, if you look at the full



amendment document, you will see that it's formatted a little differently than what you're used to seeing.

The South Atlantic Council, the direction we have gone towards, in terms of trying to standardize how we are wording our allocation actions, is different from what the Gulf Council has done, and so, because this is a Gulf Council lead amendment, we're sticking with the direction they've gone, in terms of structuring allocation alternatives.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, Christina is right, and, just to add to that, the current Alternative 1, no action, is monitored in MRIP-CHTS currency, if you will, and that's no longer the best scientific information available, and so that's why you have kind of a very similar action down below, with Alternative 3, but using FES, and so Christina is right that the two councils structure their amendments differently.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you for that, Monica, and thank you, Christina and Monica, for that clarification. That's twice now at this meeting that it sounds like Christina needs an honorary law degree, and so I appreciate it. Kerry, go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: I can confirm that Christina is a rock star, when it comes to this stuff. She helped me a lot when I went down to the Gulf, and I was just going to speak, and I was hoping that Bob would raise his hand, but it did come up, real quickly, since you asked, about the removing sector allocations at the Gulf meeting. I explained, on our behalf, that, as a practice, our council has always used sector separations, and I hadn't heard anything from any of you all otherwise, and so that was justification, and the fact that it would complicate this document and slow it down if we looked at that.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Kerry. Bob.

MR. GILL: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. Raised by mistake.

MR. POLAND: No problem. All right. Any other comments? Andy, go ahead.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Steve. I wanted to go back to Chester's comment, and I think, based on what we were just shown, Alternatives 3 and 4 are functionally equivalent, and so Alternative 3 seems to be a simpler kind of more straightforward path and way to go. I guess the other issue there that it would be good to have a little more discussion, for the record, is the difference between Alternatives 2 and 3.

Chester mentioned concerns about early recreational closures, and Alternative 3 is preferred largely to kind of maintain the commercial sector's quota level in current levels. In looking at the analysis, I just wanted to note that, there in the appendix, the recreational fishery, depending on what we do with other recreational management measures, is likely to close, and small shifts in allocation that we would be talking about, in between Alternative 2 and 3, on the order of tens of thousands of pounds, still are unlikely to avoid recreational closures, unless the other management measures we select are significant in reducing harvest. I just wanted to note that.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Andy. Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I do want to make a quick note. When we talk about recreational closures, the recreational AMs for FLEC Zone cobia are a little unique, in that there is not an immediate in-season closure and so the AMs are written, and I have them in this document somewhere, but I just can't remember where at this exact moment, but essentially, there is no closure the first year, but, if the recreational ACL is exceeded the following year, it's managed to the ACT, and so it would likely have a shorter season the following year after an exceedance of the ACL.

MR. POLAND: Gotcha. Thank you. All right. Any more comments? I am not seeing any hands. All right. Let's take it on to Action 4, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Cruising right along, and speaking of the recreational ACT, that's what Action 4 addresses, is setting the annual catch targets for the commercial and recreational sectors. Under Alternative 1, the no action, the Gulf Zone ACT would equal 90 percent of the ACL, and the FLEC Zone ACT would be equal to that same equation we used for king mackerel, multiplied by one minus the PSE, or 0.5, whichever is greater.

The current preferred alternative would use the Gulf Council's ACL/ACT Control Rule to calculate the ACTs for the Gulf Zone and the recreational sector in the FLEC Zone, creating consistency. Alternative 3 would establish an ACT for the commercial sector in the FLEC Zone, which we currently don't have in place, and, if Alternative 3 were to be selected as a preferred, we would need to modify accountability measures to utilize that new commercial ACT.

Again, here are all your calculations. It was Amendment 18 that established the Gulf group cobia buffer of 10 percent for the Gulf Zone and the PSE calculation for the FLEC Zone. For the time series utilized in Action 2, Alternatives 2 and 4, the average PSE is about 0.24, which would result in setting the FLEC Zone ACT at 76 percent of the FLEC Zone ACL. Then, for Alternatives 2 and 3, that would create consistency and would utilize the Gulf Council's ACL/ACT Control Rule, and, under this control rule, the ACTs for the Gulf Zone and for the recreational sector in the FLEC Zone would be set at 10 percent below their respective zone's ACL.

Again, Alternative 3 provides an option to set the ACT for the commercial sector, which would also be set at 10 percent below the commercial ACL if the council decided to select that as preferred as well, and so that means that Alternative 1 results in a larger buffer for the FLEC Zone, whereas selecting Alternative 2 or Alternative 3 would standardize the ACT calculations for the entirety of Gulf group cobia.

For your environmental consequences, modifying the ACTs from the current value may have an impact if harvest is changed from the current levels and if AMs are triggered. Preferred Alternative 2 allows for additional harvest by the recreational sector than the buffer that is associated with Alternative 1. For the economic effects, larger buffers between the ACL and ACT, or smaller ACTs, are expected to result in greater reductions in fishing opportunities and, thus, larger economic losses, and so, of course, conversely, smaller buffers would be expected to result in fewer economic losses.

Again, social effects are similar, and smaller buffers, like the one provided for Preferred Alternative 2, allow more fishing opportunities before the fishing season is closed, and so, with

that, I will scroll back up. Again, your current preferred for both the Gulf and the South Atlantic is to use the Gulf Council's ACL/ACT Control Rule, which results in a 10 percent buffer between ACL and ACT for the recreational sector.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Any questions or comments or concerns? Seeing no hands, Christina. Good job. Carry on.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Let's rock and roll. Action 5 looks at modifying Gulf Zone and FLEC Zone possession limits, vessel, and trip limits. Action 5.1 addresses the Gulf Zone only, and the Gulf and South Atlantic Council currently agree on all of their preferred alternatives. Currently, the preferred alternatives would reduce the daily possession limit to one fish per person, regardless of the number or duration of trips. This is for the recreational and commercial sector.

Your current preferred Alternative 3 would create a recreational vessel limit, and fishermen may not exceed the per-person daily possession limit, and the Gulf and South Atlantic Council have agreed on Preferred Option 3a, which is two fish per trip. Alternative 4 creates a commercial trip limit, and, again, the Gulf and South Atlantic Council have agreed on Preferred Option 4a, a trip limit of two fish.

Preferred Alternative 2 again decreases that per-person daily possession limit from two fish to one fish per day. Less than one cobia per angler is already retained, on average, on all trips in the Gulf Zone, and so reducing the per-person possession limit to one fish per day is projected to result in a minimal reduction to harvest rates.

With Preferred Alternative 3, which would prevent anglers -- It would create that two-fish per person, and, since the majority of trips catching cobia are already retaining one fish or less per vessel, the predicted reduction in harvest from the options are low. Again, that one fish or less per vessel, the less than one fish has to do with the number of anglers onboard, and so, if you're got three anglers onboard, and they kept one cobia, that's less than one fish per person. Then Alternative 4, similar to the recreational sector, the majority of commercial trips average one or fewer cobia, and so the predicted reduction from this management measure is low.

Under the biological effects, you can see the exact percentages, and so the reduction under Preferred Alternative 2 is expected to reduce harvest by 1.2 percent for the recreational sector and less than 1 percent for the commercial sector. You are also expected to see reductions in harvest with Preferred Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, but, again, minimal. For the economic effects, you can see that those reductions, instead of percentages, are reflected in number of fish and the expected loss in economic value. Again, relatively minimal.

For the social effects, as always, fishing regulations that reduce harvest can have negative social effects. However, given that Gulf group cobia is undergoing overfishing, these reductions may be necessary to prevent overfishing and ensure that long-run social benefits are realized.

Additionally, part of the goal with this amendment has been to create consistency in regulations between the Gulf Zone and the FLEC Zone, and, as you'll see when we get into Action 5.2, the Gulf and South Atlantic Council's current preferred alternatives match, and so there would be consistency in regulations throughout federal waters for Gulf cobia. It would create some difference between the regulations in state waters though. With that, I will scroll back up. Again,

these are the possession, vessel, and trip limits for the Gulf Zone specifically. In a second, we'll move on to Action 5.2, which addresses the FLEC Zone.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Any comments, questions, or concerns? All right. No hands. Carry on.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Moving on to Action 5.2, in the interest of time, I'm not going to go over each of these individual alternatives again. They match 5.2, and the Gulf and South Atlantic Council currently agree on all of their preferreds, and the preferreds between 5.1 and 5.2 are the same. Again, you're expected to see sort of a minimal reduction in harvest by these changes, about 11 percent for the recreational sector and 14 percent for the commercial sector.

Then economic effects, again, anything that reduces the number of fish that an angler can land can have some direct short-term negative economic effects, and you can see those reflected in number of fish and the monetary value here. Again, relatively minimal reductions. Social effects are also consistent, with a note that the council's current preferreds alternatives do result in the largest reduction in landings, which is about 20 percent to 9 percent for Option 3a and 4a, coupled with the reductions that are associated with Preferred Alternative 2.

The Mackerel Cobia AP did have some comment for this. They did note that the commercial sector is currently able to catch two fish per vessel, but they have never caught the full quota, and cobia is really just bycatch for commercial fishermen, and it helps them with covering incentives, and so they didn't necessarily see the purpose in reducing the commercial limits. They also noted that, at ASMFC, they have different trip limits for for-hire vessels, and that might be something the council wants to consider in the future, because for-hire vessels do regularly target cobia, and so, with that, I will scroll back up. Again, the Gulf and South Atlantic Council agree on all of their preferreds, and the preferred alternatives currently match between the Gulf Zone and the FLEC Zone.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Are there questions or comments or concerns from the committee? All right. Seeing no hands, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Let's rock and roll on to Action 6. Action 6 looks at modifying the Gulf group cobia minimum size limit. Currently, in the Gulf Zone, the minimum size limit is thirty-six inches fork length, whereas, in the FLEC Zone, it is thirty-three inches fork length. The current preferred alternative is Alternative 2 for both the Gulf and the South Atlantic, which would increase the FLEC Zone minimum size limit to thirty-six inches fork length, to match what is currently in place in the Gulf Zone. Alternative 3 proposes a minimum size limit of thirty-nine inches. Alternative 4 includes a minimum size limit of forty-two inches, with options to have that in the Gulf Zone and the FLEC Zone.

Overall, commercial fishermen in both zones, and recreational fishermen in the FLEC Zone, tend to harvest larger cobia than Gulf Zone recreational fishermen, and increasing the minimum size limit in the FLEC Zone is really expected to reduce fishing in two ways. Anglers are going to be expected to release cobia that they would otherwise retain, and it would increase the probability of a fish reproducing perhaps more than once before being selected by the fishery, and it's noted that 50 percent of cobia are thought to be sexually mature by thirty-three inches fork length.

There has been a lot of discussion about discard mortality, and both the AP and the Gulf Council have noted that there will need to be, perhaps, some education on outreach on the use of gaffing to land cobia. That practice is widespread, and it's expected to result in a substantially higher discard mortality rate than the 5 percent rate that was used in the SEDAR 28 update.

Here are the percent reductions in harvest that you're expected to see, for lack of a better term, in reducing harvest and trying to end overfishing, and increasing the minimum size limit tends to get you a bit more bang for your buck than modifying the possession and vessel limits, and so, if you look, here are the proposed alternatives for Action 6. In the FLEC Zone, you've got Alternative 2, which results in a 27.2 percent reduction in harvest. You will notice that it's zero for the Gulf, and that is simply because they already have that thirty-six-inch fork length in place.

Again, the Mackerel Cobia AP did have some comments on this, and they noticed that, on the east coast, fishermen regularly catch thirty-four-inch and thirty-five-inch cobia, and there was concern that, if the limit is increased from thirty inches fork length to thirty-six inches fork length, it's going to hurt the fishery in the area, and, again, they did note the importance of educating anglers and encouraging them not to gaff cobia. They noted that, in general, it's hard to get a thirty-five-inch cobia on the boat and measure it without injuring the fish, and so there is some concern about discard mortality with a higher minimum size limit.

Similar things were discussed for the biological effects, but, in general, the increase in the probability of cobia reproducing more than once during their spawning season was expected to result in positive biological effects.

In terms of economic effects, Preferred Alternative 2 would be expected to sort of marginally reduce recreational and commercial landings in the FLEC Zone, and, again, you can see that reflected in the number of fish, as well as economic value. Again, for social effects, there are expected to be some social effects related to the reduction in harvest with the increased minimum size limit, but it would match that in the Gulf Zone, which would, again, align regulations, which is part of what this amendment has intended to do, and it would reduce the complexity of complying with regulations, depending on where you're fishing. With that, I will scroll back up. Your current preferred alternative is thirty-six inches fork length, and the Gulf and South Atlantic Council concur on the preferred.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Are there comments, concerns, or questions from the committee? Chester, go ahead.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Steve. I just want to say that I share the concerns with regard to gaffing cobia, and you can't really tell the difference between -- I can't tell the difference between a now thirty-one-inch fish, as opposed to a thirty-three-inch fish, without bringing the fish aboard and measuring it. If you gaff that fish, and it's thirty-one inches, you've got to put it back, but you gaffed it.

The solution, what a lot of the people around here have come up with, is to use these nets, and they're larger nets, but they fold down and whatnot, but you use a net, and I don't know why this is, but, if you gaff a cobia, it goes crazy. If you put one in a net, they just lay there, and you can measure them successfully and put them back in pretty good shape if they're short, and so I'm wondering if we need to have some sort of formal education program, or should we do something

like we did with descending devices and have a requirement that you have a net onboard, in order to safely release an undersized cobia? Thank you.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Chester. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree that putting this size limit in place is challenging, especially people are gaffing, and they do crazy when you try to bring them onboard. Just a reminder that the size limit change is the only thing that's going to really get us the reduction that we need for cobia, and I like the idea of using outreach to talk about this net, but I just think there are some challenges in requiring the net that might be a little bit too challenging to overcome, since we're moving rather quickly to get the cobia changes in place, and so I will just put that out there.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica, and I certainly agree. Public outreach can be very beneficial, and it can achieve a lot of the desired intent on things like best management practices and that kind of stuff, or fish handling, and my general experience is the majority of anglers are receptive to it. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say that, based from our experience, and we had a huge cobia fishery at one time, and it's building back, but our anglers were very passionate about cobia, and very passionate, later on, about caring for the cobia, and so I have watched the nets used, and the nets work. Certainly I guess you would go crazy, Chester, if somebody gaffed you, but I think we can transition from the gaff to the net and do that in an outreach type of way.

It has worked for us, and I don't think we need to mandate another piece of gear that needs to be onboard for somebody to -- For the law enforcement to deal with, but I think it can be accomplished, because I have watched it accomplished over the years, and we have a thirty-six-inch limit, and we transition to a different size, and I think the nets will work, and I don't think we need to mandate it, in terms of being onboard.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Mel. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think that Virginia mandates it, that they have seen that it was a real good tool, and I think Virginia does, and I'm not sure. I don't even know what our regulations are here in North Carolina about gaffing or a net, but Virginia definitely does have a net, mandated net, and it probably helps.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Dewey, and I think you're correct that Virginia is no gaff, and, as far as our regulations here for recreational cobia fishing, I think we have some language in our proclamation that basically states that fish must be returned to the water in manner which guarantees the highest likelihood of survival, and so it doesn't directly prohibit gaffing.

Just my general experience with netting cobia, I've netted hundreds of them for tagging studies, for implanting transmitters and satellite tags and that kind of stuff, and I can agree that they are manageable in a net, and these are cobia ranging from well under a thirty-three or thirty-six-inch size up to forty-five or fifty-inch fish. All right. Any other comments or discussion on Action 6? All right. No hands. Carry on, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Moving on to the framework procedure, just to remind everyone of why we're working on this, and to talk through it a little bit for the newer council members, the framework procedure for the CMP species is a little interesting, in that it doesn't just identify what can be done via a framework amendment, but it identifies what each council can do with respect to their migratory group.

King mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia are all split into Atlantic migratory group and Gulf migratory group, and, for cobia specifically, the Gulf migratory group is split to the Gulf Zone and the FLEC Zone, and so what we're really addressing here is what the South Atlantic Council is able to do, through a framework procedure, related to FLEC Zone cobia that doesn't require them to go to the Gulf Council and get formal approval from the Gulf Council as well.

Like I stated earlier, under this lengthy framework procedure, the South Atlantic Council is only allowed to set vessel trip limits and closed season or area or gear restrictions for FLEC Zone cobia. The councils' current preferred alternative would modify that and give the South Atlantic Council the responsibility to set vessel trip limits, closed seasons or areas, gear restrictions, bag and possession limits, size limits, accountability measures, and ACTs for FLEC Zone cobia.

It's important to note that it would be only these things and that anything that had sort of a broader impact on Gulf group cobia as a whole, like changes in the apportionment or the overall stock ACL, all those would still have to be done via a joint amendment between the two councils, because they affect both migratory groups. These things were selected because the South Atlantic Council can do those things for FLEC Zone cobia without having any impact on Gulf Zone cobia, and so both councils still have to concur on any recommendation that's going to affect both FLEC Zone and Gulf Zone cobia.

Additionally, there are some smaller things that are being changed in this. We're removing reference to a king mackerel zone that no longer exists, and we're also removing any reference to Atlantic cobia, because we no longer manage Atlantic cobia.

Again, the consequences of this, it's a purely administrative action, and so there is no expected changes to the biological or ecological environment. Economic effects, there might be some indirect benefits that would result from speedier implementation, and it would be, really, the nature of those regulatory actions that would determine the magnitude of any potential economic benefits. Similarly, with the social effects, there might be some minimal positive effects to updating the responsibility, and those would be related to expedited adoption of new requirements by the respective councils.

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel noted that Alternative 2 makes the most sense and that it ensures that the South Atlantic Council doesn't lose control of the fishery. With that, I will scroll back up to your preferred. Again, this right here is the list of actions the South Atlantic Council would be able to take with respect to FLEC Zone cobia.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I know I said this before, but I wanted to thank Christina again for her work on helping to rewrite this particular action. It was super confusing before, even though we knew the intent and where we wanted to go. I think that the way that it's worded -- It

actually seems to get better every single time we look at this document, and I think it makes a lot of sense, and so I just wanted to thank Christina for that.

MS. WIEGAND: I appreciate that. Thanks, Jessica, and the thanks also belongs to Natasha, who is my co-lead at the Gulf, as well as Monica and Mara, who is NOAA GC for the Gulf, who helped us a lot in trying to craft the language for this alternative.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica, and I agree for the thanks all around. I understand it now. Any other comments or questions or concerns? Christina, I am not seeing any more hands.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, then there's one more thing that I want to bring up related to this amendment, and that's some administrative changes that are going to be included. There is currently an error in the regulations in relation to sale and purchase of cobia, and I'm going to do my best to explain this in a way that's clear, but it's a little bit of a complex issue, and so please - I encourage you to ask questions if I'm not being clear.

Right now, if you possess a federal permit, you are required to sell your fish to a federal dealer. Also, on the regulations, it states that federal dealers cannot purchase cobia from a vessel that does not have a CMP permit, and so a king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, or for-hire permit, and this essentially creates a situation where, say if I'm on a vessel with a snapper grouper permit, and I catch a cobia that I want to sell, I am required to sell that fish to a federal dealer. However, that federal dealer cannot purchase cobia from me if I don't have a CMP permit.

There is no commercial permit to sell cobia, and so, through this amendment, NMFS is going to correct that mistake and make that requirement applicable only to king and Spanish mackerel, and so federal dealers can only purchase king and Spanish mackerel from a vessel that has a king or Spanish mackerel permit, and, essentially, this will allow Gulf group cobia harvested from the EEZ to be purchased by federal dealers, regardless of that vessel's permit status.

They will still have to have any of the state requirements to sell, but, from a federal perspective, federal dealers will be able to purchase cobia from any vessel, regardless of the permits it has, and so that's how this is going to be updated. The Gulf Council did raise some concerns about modifying this language, and it's important to note that it does not remove any restrictions. It just corrects an inconsistency in the regulations.

The Gulf Council had asked a little bit about the history of discussion related to a cobia permit, and so I did want to note that the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils did consider requiring a federal permit to sell cobia back in Amendment 20A, and it was actually known as Amendment 19 at the time, but they ultimately decided not to move forward with requiring the cobia permit, because their concern at the time was data collection, and they felt that the state data collection methods were consistent to capture -- They were sufficient to capture cobia landings.

Again, currently, all five Gulf states and Florida restrict the sale of cobia to properly-permitted individuals and commercial vessels, and so, in effect, the sale of cobia by private recreational anglers isn't permitted, due to state regulations, anyway. I will pause there. I see Monica has her hand up, and she can probably provide additional detail on this inconsistency and why NMFS is going to correct it through this amendment.



MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Actually, Attorney Christina explained in the most clear way that I have heard it so far, and so I don't have a lot to add, except that this inconsistency came up when we implemented the Gulf and South Atlantic generic dealer amendment that modified the federal dealer reporting requirements, and we didn't catch this inconsistency, because we should have fixed it then, and corrected it, and so this does not require council action, but we thought, since this is a cobia amendment, and this inconsistency has caused some scratching of heads through the years, and I know Mel and I have talked about it a good bit, that we would fix it now. It's the perfect time to do it, and so you would probably see that fix when you see the proposed regulations, and I guess that would be in December, that would implement this FMP.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Monica. Any questions or concerns or comments from the committee? All right. No hands. I guess all that's left, Christina, is to consider approving this for public hearings?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, sir. That's all that's left, is to consider approving this for public hearings, which the Gulf did at their August meeting. The Gulf is holding in-person public hearings for this at a number of places in Florida, as well as throughout the Gulf, and so, if you guys do choose to approve it for public hearings, it might be helpful to have a discussion on the record about how you would like our staff to handle public hearings for the east coast of Florida.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Christina. Mel.

MR. BELL: Thanks. First, let me say thanks, Monica, for that fix, and also, Christina, consult with Monica on where you actually have to go to take the fish bar exam. Well done. Thank you so much. **I would move that we approve Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 32 for public hearings.**

MR. POLAND: We have a motion on the board by Mel. Is there a second? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Second, but I also have something else that I would like to bring up after we dispense with this motion.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you. The motion has been seconded. Any further discussion on the motion? **Any opposition to the motion? Hearing none, the motion stands approved.** Jessica, you have the floor.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I wanted to talk about the public hearings. This is clearly a Florida-centric item for the South Atlantic, and the Gulf Council is holding eight workshops, seven in-person and one virtual. Three of those are in Florida. Destin, Madeira Beach, and Fort Myers are those three workshops that they have scheduled at this time. Those are in-person workshops.

I wanted to remind folks that that series of workshops on the Gulf coast of Florida is actually the third round of workshops for cobia, and you might remember that FWC had heard concerns about cobia before the stock assessment was actually ready, and anglers were requesting that we take some proactive measures in state waters. We held a number of workshops along the Gulf coast of Florida, and, ultimately, FWC adopted these proactive measures, and then the Gulf Council

actually went and did the same thing, and they held some workshops prior to them adopting proactive measures before the stock assessment came out.

The stock assessment came out and indicated that even more additional changes were needed, and especially that size limit was one of the big ones, but, throughout all of this, over the years, we haven't been out in Florida, whether FWC or the South Atlantic Council, to the Atlantic coast, and so we haven't really talked to them at all about cobia, and I just want to be diligent about gathering the input on this and not just assume that everybody on the Atlantic coast understands what is happening here and is good with these changes that we're making.

I would like to make a suggestion for some in-person meetings. In the past, there have been ways where FWC staff have maybe done some workshops in conjunction with the council staff, and I think that we're willing to send FWC staffers, and we have regional staffers all along the Atlantic coast that could hold listening sessions, or meet with stakeholders one-on-one, but we are willing to help, however we can here.

In talking to both Laurilee and Chester, we were thinking four, at least four, of these, one in the Keys, one in the Jupiter area, one around Port Canaveral, and one around the Jacksonville area. In fact, the Gulf Council had contacted Martha to say, hey, can you get the South Atlantic folks to handle the workshop that's in the Keys, and I'm just like, hey, sure, and I didn't realize that we didn't have any in-person workshops scheduled, and so I prematurely agreed to hold a workshop in the Keys, not realizing that we didn't have any on the list.

I am willing to do whatever we can here at the FWC to help make some of these in-person meetings happen, whether it's listening sessions or just having the FWC staffers go out with the information from the council, et cetera, to go do this.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you for that, Jessica. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I couldn't be more supportive of that idea. From my time when I was on staff, the sort of ability to meet with people in-person and have those discussions are -- They're just priceless, and they go a long way for everything we're trying to do, and I would also point out that it's a great opportunity to talk to people about the net versus gaff issue as well, and so you have my 100 percent support, Jessica.

MR. POLAND: I agree. It's so nice to meet with people in-person, even when they are yelling at you. Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: Good point, Jessica. I mean, we still, obviously, have a responsibility for the Florida east coast as well, even if it is the Gulf king mackerel. I think any way that the council can work with you and FWC to kind of make that happen, and that makes perfect sense, and you are absolutely right that we need to make sure we're reaching out appropriately to our folks on the Florida east coast. I know we spent so much time dealing with the Atlantic group, but you're absolutely right that we definitely need to follow through and make sure we've appropriate done outreach in connection with our east coast Florida folks.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Mel. Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I just wanted -- Sorry, Jessica, and I was typing as fast as I could, but you listed four locations, and I want to make sure I have got all four of them reported, and what were the other two?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Christina. We had Jupiter and Jacksonville.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you.

MR. POLAND: All right. Is that enough direction to staff, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, I feel like that's enough direction to staff. Jessica, we'll be in touch with you and your staff to work out public hearings or listening stations or whatever we think is going to work best for the Florida east coast.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Christina.

MR. POLAND: All right. With that, I guess that concludes the review of this amendment. Is there any other business to come before the Mackerel Cobia Committee? Seeing no hands, this concludes the Mackerel Cobia Committee for the September council meeting. I just want to thank Christina for being a fantastic staff lead and working with me as Chair over the last three years, and I will certainly miss you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on September 16, 2021.)

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Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
November 1, 2021

# SAFMC September Council Meeting

## Attendee Report: (9/13/21 - 9/17/21)

Report Generated:

09/17/2021 06:59 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

262-125-515

**Actual Start Date/Time**

09/16/2021 08:00 AM EDT

**Duration**

9 hours 25 minutes

## Attendee Details

<b>Attended</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Badolato	Matthew
Yes	Belcher	Carolyn
Yes	Bell	00-Mel
Yes	Berry	James
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Blough	Heather
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Brennan	Ken
Yes	Brogan	Gilbert
Yes	Brooke	Sandra
Yes	Bruce	James
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Carmichael	01 John
Yes	Carnes	Justin
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Clarke	Lora
Yes	Coleman	Heather
Yes	Collier	01Chip
Yes	Conklin	00 THE REAL Chris
Yes	Copeland	01 Robert
Yes	Corey	Morgan
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Cross	Tiffanie
Yes	Curtis	Judd
Yes	Dale (NMFS SERO)	David
Yes	Dantuono	Bill
Yes	Darrow	Jamie
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Dixon	Michael
Yes	Doten	Madeline

Yes	Finch	Margaret
Yes	Fitzpatrick	Kelly
Yes	Flora	Corrin
Yes	Flowers	Jared
Yes	Foor	Brandon
Yes	Foss	Kristin
Yes	Franco	Crystal
Yes	Gentry	Lauren
Yes	Gill	Bob
Yes	Glasgow	Dawn
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Godwin	Joelle
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Gorham	Bill
Yes	Griffin	Charles
Yes	Griner	00 Tim
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Hart	Hannah
Yes	Hawes	Rachel
Yes	Haymans	Doug
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Helmey	Judy
Yes	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	Herrera	John
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Hudson	Rusty
Yes	Iberle	01Allie
Yes	Ingram	Jamal
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	KELLY	BILL
Yes	Karazsia	Jocelyn
Yes	Keener	Paula
Yes	Killer	Ed
Yes	Kramer	Rob
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Laney	Wilson
Yes	Latanich	KATie
Yes	Lee	Jennifer
Yes	Lewis	Savannah
Yes	Marhefka	Kerry
Yes	McCawley	00 - Jessica
Yes	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	McGovern	Jack
Yes	Meehan	Sean
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Mendez-Ferrer	Natasha
Yes	Merrifield	Jeanna

Yes	Merrifield	Mike
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Nesslage	Genny
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Shaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	PHELPS	MARK
Yes	Package-Ward	Christina
Yes	Pannell	John
Yes	Patten	Willow
Yes	Phillips	Charlie
Yes	Pierce	Brett
Yes	Poholek	Ariel
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Yes	Porch	Clay01
Yes	Powell	Jessica
Yes	Prewitt	Brian
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Puglise	Kimberly
Yes	Ralston	Kellie
Yes	Ramsay	Chloe
Yes	Rapp	Amber
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Reichert	Marcel
Yes	Reynolds	Jon
Yes	Rhodes	01Cameron
Yes	Roller	Tom
Yes	Sanchez	Nacho
Yes	Schmidtke	01Michael
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Shervanick	Kara
Yes	Smillie	Nicholas
Yes	Smit-Brunello	00Monica
Yes	Smith	Duane
Yes	Spurgin	Kali
Yes	Sramek	Mark
Yes	Stemle	Adam
Yes	Stephen	Jessica
Yes	Strelcheck	00-Andy
Yes	Sweetman	CJ
Yes	Thompson	00Laurilee
Yes	Travis	Michael
Yes	Trego	Marisa
Yes	Vara	Mary
Yes	Walia	Matt
Yes	Wamer	David
Yes	Weissman	Dani

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thomas  
thompson  
walter  
wilber

Geoff  
01Christina  
Wes  
00 Spud  
Katharine  
Barb  
Chao  
00chester  
scott  
jeff  
charles  
david  
thomas  
douglas  
01suz  
mary jean  
John  
pace