

**PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION
ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA
AUGUST 7, 2025**

MR. KROLIK: My name is Brian Krolik. I've lived on this peninsula for sixty-some years. It's rather disheartening to me that we must have this battle over and over again. The value of the oculina coral is greater when it is protected than when it is exploited. The reef is a spawning ground, nursery, and lifetime habitat for a myriad of species. It should be of higher importance to protect the reef system than allow more possible devastation by bottom trawling for shrimp.

In response to those who say the currents would not send sediment over the coral and harm it, I say stand on any beach in Florida during a cold water upwelling and realize how powerful those deep currents are, and how far their impact travels. I think allowing bottom trawling is akin to killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. I got one other note I thought of. There's an optimum yield that you guys mentioned, and I think I heard it Tuesday night. Was it five million pounds a year?

MS. IBERLE: It's right under five million, yes.

MR. KROLIK: Okay. I think that number is unrealistic compared to the catch charts published by the FWC. It doesn't look like you guys ever catch near that many shrimp. I think maybe the fishery should be closed during spawning, instead of putting more coral and other species at risk, and see how this affects catch rates. They do it with lobster, and I think that works pretty well for the lobster industry.

MS. MCCOY: Sherrilyn McCoy, with Cape Canaveral Shrimp Company, and I don't really have anything written up to present formally tonight. I just want to say we are so tired of addressing this again and again and again, and, when I have to go back to these captains and crew and boat owners, other docks, and tell them, okay, we're having to go through this again, it's time to fix it.

It was done on a technical error. It was a staff error that caused this. We need to get this fixed. I don't know what else to say, and then, also, on the economic end of it, when you're talking about the economic importance, in the last year-and-a-half, we have been bombarded with imports into our shrimp industry.

Rock shrimp, they have not been able to figure out how to farm raise, and so that is one vital area of economic importance to the shrimpers now. There was just a question about not reaching optimum yield, but I think we originally started out with 150 permits, when we went to the closed entry, if anybody can correct me on that, and we're down to I think a hundred, and so, by process of elimination, we don't have near the boats. We have lost a lot of the fleet.

The imported prices have killed the fleet. Most of the boats that are being sold now are going out of the country. They can't even remain in the country, and fish for domestic shrimp, and so, given the fact that this was done in error, and you've got an executive order now that is pushing to get a balance with our shrimp, and we've got over 90 percent of shrimp that's imported, I think you really need to address this and let them fish. Thank you.

Oh, and I know there's a misconception. One reason I didn't prepare a comment, after hearing some of the comments, and seeing them online, and I was so irritated, and I thought this is not the time, but these boats do not drag on coral. I don't know where that myth has gotten put out there, that so many people are commenting that they're dragging through coral, and they don't drag on it, and they never have. The rock shrimp boats haven't.

MS. THOMPSON: Hi. I'm Laurilee Thompson. I sit on the Deepwater Shrimp AP, and I want to say, you know, some of the things that we heard on Tuesday night, during the comment session, were basically untrue. The rock shrimp industry has cooperated with everything that, you know, they were asked to do to protect the Oculina habitat.

In 1984, when the first Oculina protected area was established, eighty-four square miles, fifteen miles northeast of Fort Pierce, no one from the rock shrimp industry said anything. The local rock shrimp fishermen, and those are the ones that started the industry, and have been fishing there for decades, ever since the 1960s, do not go into the reef.

They know that they don't want to drag in the coral, and tear up or lose their gear, and they also knew that the coral was important for their fishery. Instead, they started going to the council meetings, to lobby NOAA to implement protections for the Oculina coral. They were really excited, in 1996, because something was finally going to happen to protect the coral, but, when the numbers came out, they ended up being devastating to the industry.

What was done in 1996 is Fishery Amendment Number 1. Shrimp Fishery Amendment 1 prohibited trawling east of 80 degrees west longitude between 27 degrees, 30 minutes north and 28 degrees, 30 minutes -- Between 27,30 and 28 degrees, 30 minutes north latitudes, and so that - - You know, that prohibition did not even protect not even one millimeter of Oculina habitat.

It was too far to the east. They missed the coral completely. Instead, the rock shrimpers lost sixty miles of historical mud bottom, where they had been fishing since the 1960s, and so the rock shrimpers are still staying out of the coral, even though it has zero protection aside from the original 1984 HAPC, and then, in 2000, Coral Amendment 4 increased the size of the Oculina HAPC to 300 square miles, and they did this by placing the prohibited trawl area into a HAPC.

Two tiny satellites to the west were added, and, finally, after sixteen years since the first HAPC, a teeny, tiny bit of Oculina coral was in protection. The rock shrimpers are still not going into coral, even though it's still not inside a HAPC, and so they continued staying out of the coral, and, finally, in 2015, the northern expansion of the HAPC was conceived, and, also, along with that, in Coral Amendment 8 a line was drawn that connected the two satellites, and the Oculina south of Cape Canaveral was finally protected, and so that was also, like I said, when the northern expansion happened.

We are talking about, in this little teeny, tiny shrimp fishery access area, 0.3 percent of the entire Oculina HAPC. It's 0.5 percent of the northern expansion. This is such a small area, and it's ridiculous that we are still here talking about it. It took thirty-one years to finally get the Oculina coral off of Florida's east coast protected. Thirty-one years, and, the whole time, the rock shrimp people are doing everything they were asked to do. The rock shrimp industry was -- Let me see here.

They were like the first fishery that was required to have vessel monitoring systems. They were the first industry that was required to have -- Well, they have turtle excluder devices. They were the first fishery in the South Atlantic to have limited access endorsements, like my sister said, that limited the number of boats in the fishery actually to 155 boats. Once an endorsement is retired, it cannot be brought back.

There's really only about twenty to thirty active boats in the rock shrimp fishery now. Even though there's still a hundred permits that are active, there's only twenty to thirty boats that are actually actively fishing.

In 2006, bycatch reduction devices were required, and they dramatically decreased the amount of bycatch that the shrimpers were catching. There have been observers on the rock shrimp boats, to verify that they're not catching that much bycatch.

They were in a big hurry to get Coral Amendment 8 passed, even though they had this Scrivener's error, because the coral was in really, really good shape north of Cape Canaveral, and so NOAA really wanted to get Coral Amendment 8 in shape, and so yet this coral was in really, really good shape, even though the rock shrimpers had been fishing on the offshore side of the coral for forty-five years, and so, if the rock shrimpers are so terrible, and they're destroying all this coral, why is that coral north of Cape Canaveral in such good shape?

There's shrimp fishery access areas in coral HAPCs for royal red shrimpers, so that they can access historical areas where they would shrimp. There's shrimp fishery access areas for golden crabs in a deepwater coral HAPC, so that they could access historical areas where they have shrimped. This is the same thing. We're talking about a teeny, tiny shrimp fishery access area inside a HAPC. It's not a reduction of the HAPC. It's just an area where they will be allowed to fish.

The best available science says that there's no live coral, dead coral, or suitable habitat for coral inside the shrimp fish access area. Coral is not going to grow there, no matter how long it's closed. It's mud bottom, folks. There's no substrate there for coral to grow on. I see that I'm well past my time. Thank you for your indulgence.

I have a picture here I want to give to you that shows a picture from the 1970s, that was taken prior to the time when bycatch reduction devices were required, and then there's four pictures that were taken in 2017, and you can see a dramatic difference in the amount of bycatch that's in the piles of shrimp. Thank you. John Woods.

MR. VOGELSONG: My name is Lee Vogel song. I'm on the Rock Shrimp AP. First, I would like to say I, or no one, drags in the coral. We don't drag across coral at all. I am for Alternative 3, to get it opened back up, but I will go with Alternative 2, being how it's already been passed through.

I've been shrimping in these waters for thirty-one years, and no one, that I know of, or ever, has dragged across any coral. Let me see some of it. As far as the boundary line, I would like to say that no one, or I don't, and I don't believe no one sets their gear on the boundary. When we do drag on the offshore side of the boundary, we set out offshore of it, and then move into the

boundary, and, before we haul our gear, we move off of the boundary to haul our gear back up. I wanted to clarify that.

As far as the gear, gear cost, I don't know if anyone is aware of how much our gear costs, but the gear that I pull behind my boat costs me \$86,000 every single time I set out. That's how much my cables, doors, nets, TEDs, bags, chains, everything costs, and so no one wants to lose all their gear dragging across rocks, ledges, or coral. That's why no one does, or has, and I just want to bring that up to you all's attention.

That's how much my gear costs, and most of all our family's boats are around the same cost of what the gear costs, and so that's \$85,000 plus, every time we set out, is how much our gear costs. Let me see. I've got some other stuff in here.

As far as the bottom currents, I would like to address that. I don't know where that's coming from, as far as any currents on the bottom, but I've been shrimping, and the only currents I ever see is on the surface, and, maybe halfway down, you'll have some cross tides, and so, as far as the John Reed scientist, or whatever he says he does, and I don't know if he knows his head from his ass, but he's wrong about any bottom currents. I would like to bring that up. As far as the bycatch, we pull fisheyes, and we have TEDs, and we have no bycatch at all. It's mostly all clean, pure shrimp, and that's pretty much all I've got to say for right now.

MS. VOGELSONG: Hello, everyone, and thanks for coming out. Thanks to the council for putting up with us again and again and again, and for all you taking your time to listen to me chatter, and so my name is Marilyn, and I'm on the Shrimp AP, Deepwater Shrimp AP. I have shrimp boats. I'm a fifth generation, fourth generation for me, fisherman, with grandchildren and children in the business. I've been at it a really long time, longer than Dr. Reed has.

Okay, and so, anyway, I'm going to go with I am -- I would prefer Option 3, but, since 2 has already been approved, and worked into the agenda, and the council and everyone has went along with that, we'll settle for that.

My next topic, that I really want to complain about, is I've been here as long as I said. I'm about tired of this Dr. Reed spewing his lies about the commercial rock shrimp industry. He's had a couple of submersible dives, very few, in his expertise years of oculina diving. He has created false narratives, stating that rock shrimp vessels, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, would take gear, and put chains between nets, and pull it to dredge the bottom intentionally to destroy coral. No shrimper has ever done that. I was around in the 1970s and 1980s.

This is absolutely not true, and I can tell you why. The vessel, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, winches weren't capable of going out to fifty fathoms of water and getting into some of this coral. Their drums were too small. It couldn't carry enough cable to do what he states he saw done. The horsepower on the vessels of these boats back then couldn't go into the Gulf Stream and hold up to do that and pull those cables, and so he's wrong.

John Reed used students to go in and take their assign -- You know, and assigned them assignments, where they wrote papers, which were, as you all know, just to get the grades. He, nor his students, could clearly tell the difference between rock shrimp gear and scallop gear. In the 1970s and early 1980s, there was a lot of scallop boats out of Canaveral.

They did use a heavier gear than what shrimp boats used. They were inside of the Oculina Bank, just as the shrimp boats were back then. There were very few vessels working for rock shrimp, because most of the vessels out of Canaveral during those years were working for scallops.

Up until the mid-1980s, rock shrimp were predominantly on the east coast, and folks like Rodney Thompson, and this lovely family, had introduced and made it -- From the 1960s through the 1980s, had made it a very local delicacy, that people came to Florida to eat, and it was the rock shrimp.

As things progressed along, into the late 1980s and early 1990s, when folks like JBS and Fleet Marine and the Thompsons ended up taking the rock shrimp industry and making it more world renowned, by taking it to places like the Boston Seafood Show, and other seafood expos, where people worldwide became familiar with rock shrimp, and they wanted it.

The business and the marketing increased. There was more demand for the rock shrimp. During this time, more boats came into it, and we created -- In the early 1990s, the council came in and set up to protect the coral, because there were a few more boats working on it, and they thought, oh, goody, goody let's manage this too, like sometimes they like to do.

I'll stop there, but environmentalists have been falsely led into believing that John Reed's so-called scientific studies are factual, and have used them to attempt to undermine the rock shrimp industry for decades now. John Reed's experience with rock shrimping is a handful of dives, a submersible, and is nowhere as accurate as the fishermen who do it for a fulltime living every day, every year. All year round, they are either working on their boats, preparing to shrimp, or shrimping. In the southeast Atlantic, most of the guys that rock shrimp do.

Enough is enough of the lies and the false propaganda. Rock shrimpers do not dredge the bottom to destroy coral, or the habitat, because that's exactly what we don't want to do. We have to have that. We have to have it to make our living, to live. We're into protecting it, and not getting rid of it.

John Reed was allowed to speak six minutes at the last public comment. We got to speak three. Maybe that's why you all gave us a few extra now, and thank you. I don't know how many minutes he spoke the other night, but I guarantee it's probably more than we did, because he claims to be the pro. He's not. The pro are the people who really go out there every day, all the time, and know the bottom. They know the bottom like they know their baby's hiney, like they know the wrinkles in the palm of their hand. They know it. They have to.

You can discredit us if you want to, because you don't like what we do, or you think we're killing habitat and coral. We're not. We need it. John Reed doesn't know the difference between rock shrimp gear and scallop gear. Forty-five years ago he didn't.

Again, I'm going to state I support Option 3, but we'll take Option 2, either one of those two. We asked for 3, and that was what we originally went in and worked on the boundaries with. My son, and some other people, worked with Roger back, and they shrunk it down to Option 2, which got approved. I know I went over my boundary, and there's one other thing I want to say on Laurilee.

She did a fabulous job with her ideas, you know, with her boundaries, and telling you the amount of closed areas, but, to sum it down, basically 500 miles has been closed to protect twenty miles of coral. There's no coral in most of what is closed. We have expanded and expanded and expanded, until you've almost expanded the entire industry out of occupation, and it's the one place in the world where you can get rock shrimp. It must be saved, and it must be protected, so that people who enjoy this food is allowed to have it. That's all I have to say.

MR. MOYER: Hi, and thank you all for having this listening session. I appreciate it. My name is Jim Moyer. I'm the Indian Riverkeeper. I'm here to urge you, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, to take no action. I hope that you will take Alternative 1 and vote no on Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12, for neither Alternative 2 or 3.

Oculina varicosa creates a rare, yet essential, habitat along the continental shelf of Florida's east coast. The *Oculina* Coral Habitat of Particular Concern was established to protect this ecosystem from the destruction and the harmful impacts imposed by the same industry that is requesting more lenient restrictions and boundaries. Bottom trawling has been recognized as environmentally harmful and habitat destructive fishing practice since the mid-eighteenth century.

Some of these coral pinnacles, some of the coral colonies, were alive back then. Bottom trawling not only scours the track of the trawl, but it also creates plumes of sediment and silt that can smother organisms hundreds of meters away. While bathymetric investigation may indicate previously destroyed or few living corals in the proposed shrimp fishery access area, there are high-resolution, high-relief coral heads right on the boundary.

The terrigenous sediment, which these rock shrimp prefer, are in that area. It is not muddy. The reporting, both by the Coral Advisory Panel, the grouper snapper complex advisory panel, and several oceanographic studies that have been done on the area, and shrimpers all point to strong currents mid-water and on the bottom. Otherwise, the larvae, and the small fish that are breeding and spawning on these coral habitats, wouldn't get into the inshore ranges, if there weren't those currents.

Worldwide, coral reefs are failing to adequately respond to anthropogenic assaults. Warming oceans and lowering pH certainly influence the extent of coral disease, while fishing, dredging, runoff, and nutrient pollution make these incredible hotspots of biodiversity even more rare, and more valuable.

Marine protected areas are recognized worldwide as some of the best tools for conserving and replenishing fish stocks and resources. The hundreds to thousands of species that live in deep coral reefs will be imperiled by expanding the SFAA, because, logically, if you choose to expand the shrimp fishery access area, you are effectively shrinking the OHAPC.

Federal and state agencies have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on coral reef restoration and resiliency efforts in the State of Florida and in the Southeast. This proposal, how does it justify a 245-ton annual catch against hundreds of millions of dollars of investment to preserve marine protected areas and deep coral reefs?

The expansion of the OHAPC, through Amendment 8, was not a mistake. The council, at the time, considered input from the fish and Coral Advisory Panels and the shrimp industry and drew the boundaries accordingly. The rock shrimp fishery considers itself to have some sort of ancestral or traditional territorial right to jeopardize a fragile and rare oculina habitat and spawning grounds. That's just a preposterous assessment, or assertion.

Hearing arguments that the cost of VMS is prohibitive, or that increased spacecraft launch scheduling requires an offsetting with a greater fishing access area, or that picking up space debris causes economic hardship, that can be offset by potentially destroying oculina corals, is just not fair, and not reasonable.

Destroying oculina corals to allow damage to another fishery doesn't make sense either. Even with turtle exclusion devices, or bycatch reduction devices, the amount of bycatch is still unacceptably wasteful and tragic.

The Oculina Coral Reef Bank is a living treasure that must be protected. Reversing protections and exploiting resources for short-term financial gain for a few is unethical and foolish. Follow the advice of the experts on your Coral Advisory Panel and do the right thing. I know that Dr. Reid has submitted several papers talking about his experience on the Oculina Coral Bank, as well as his experience in submersibles. Thank you for your time this evening.

MS. M. KROLIK: Hi. My name is Mary Krolik. I live in Fort Pierce. I've been on mostly the east coast waters for probably over forty years, and I am totally against both proposed amendments that would allow any bottom trawling, which to me is the most destructive fishing method, not anywhere near the oculina reefs, or anywhere in the ocean.

Bottom trawling seems to be a problem worldwide. The science, to me, is very clear that the reef hosts over 2,000 species that need to be protected. The deepwater coral is rare, and a unique ecosystem that was discovered around the mid-1970s by Professor John Reed and numerous other scientists.

Those coral reefs once stood six feet tall, and were over like 900 years old, once full of large groupers and snappers and a large variety of deepwater organisms. Fish are in decline in Florida, and this reef habitat provides space for life cycles of many of these species, which are known to travel back and forth to the Indian River Lagoon.

To me, the science is clear. If the oculina reef system is left alone, and protected from fishing, and especially trawling, we all would reap many benefits, that would greatly outweigh the benefits solely for the small group of local rock shrimp fishermen to establish an access area along the edge of the oculina reef. The reef deserves to be protected, and it is vital to our ocean's health, and our health, every one of us, and all of our well-being. It is unethical, and a disgrace, to let this reef be destroyed. Thank you.

MS. K. KROLIK: Hello. I'm Kristen Krolik, concerned Floridian. I grew up, you know, boating the waters of Florida, and grew up learning an appreciation for the coral reefs. I am a biologist, but traditionally more a molecular wet lab, and so I have not read these studies that have been talked about today, and I have not done ecological studies in general, but I will read these studies, and then amend my comment more online, if needed.

I am empathetic towards being hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt and working decades of your life for something, very hard work, and having to reinvent yourself, and how hard that might be. I am empathetic in listening to the shrimpers talk today, and I still urge the council to go with Alternative 1, no action, and, even if you go with the other two, I don't understand why there can't be something else in with this, if it gets approved, that it's going to be watched for the year.

It sounds like, to me, there hasn't been an actual study on if the sediment is reaching the reef or not, and so, even if this does get allowed, if we can actually study, if the sediment is reaching the reef, to stop it, and have that written in the Preferred Alternative 2 or 3, and that sounds like the most logical, and I'm not sure why -- I'll look at the studies you guys were talking about.

I understand they're saying, over and over again, they're not on the reef, and the one scientific study just shows reef is not there, and that's not, I don't think, the point. The point is, is the sediment reaching the reef, and how much is the bycatch affecting the biodiversity, and it sounds like we don't have these studies, and so why are we allowing this, or maybe allow it, and study it that year, and, if it does affect it, then stop it, and I want to say that I am empathetic, and I hope you understand, and I still go with Alternative Action 1, and I will read the studies and comment more online. Thank you.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Hello. My name is Mike Merrifield. I'm the current chair of the Deepwater Shrimp AP. I've been working with the coral, this amendment, in one way, fashion, or another for the last -- Since 2012. This comment is in support of the Coral 11/Shrimp 12 Amendment, Preferred Alternative 2 to establish a shrimp access area along the eastern boundary of the OHAPC northern extension that was approved in Amendment 10 in 2013.

This area is significant to the rock shrimp fishery, as it's the start of the soft substrate harvest area for rock shrimp. Starting at the beginning of the harvest area, rather than further offshore, increases the harvest efficiency and overall catch level. This was presented to the council during the development of Coral Amendment 8. The council did not want to delay the amendment, but agreed to correct the boundary in a later amendment.

Coral 8 added over 900 square miles of Coral HAPC. 405 of it was for the Oculina extension northward. The Deepwater Shrimp AP worked with the Coral AP to develop this area, and were in agreement, except for this narrow twenty-two-square-mile section of the HAPC where the offshore rock shrimp fishery harvesting starts and progresses eastward.

VMS has been required on all vessels in the rock shrimp fishery since 2003. VMS clearly illustrates how the fishermen avoided oculina coral before the northern HAPC boundary was implemented in 2014.

Previous references by John Reed that the rock shrimp vessels were mowing down coral are false. His references to goat trails being created by towing chains along the bottom between two trawl doors is also false. This is not even feasible. This shows a lack of understanding. As a whole, there's a lack of understanding of how the rock shrimp fishery operates.

In the original Harbor Branch surveys of the Oculina Reef Bank in 1975 to 1977, there was more dead coral cover, basically 31 percent, than live coral cover, about 19 percent. The only explanation for this data is that some force, other than trawling, has historically resulted in extensive Oculina die-off.

John Reed wrote, in his 2006 report to the South Atlantic Council Oculina Evaluation Team Workshop, quote, the exact causes of the extensive areas of dead coral rubble on the modern deepwater reef, including Oculina and Lophelia, is yet unknown. Extensive areas of dead coral on the Oculina reefs, as well as Lophelia counterparts, may be due to the combination of events, including natural evolution of the mound along with degradation through bio-erosion, hydromantic stress through currents, and some regions from dredging and trawling and trawling activities from fishermen and scientists. Natural episodic coral die-off, such as occurs with the shallow-water Acropora species, may be an unknown factor on the deepwater coral.

Basically, so the fact is that this is an extremely volatile environment, impacted by a number of natural episodic events that impact the coral, along with numerous other anthropogenic causes, such as the billions of gallons of gray water that's released every day out of the Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties, and the cruise ships dumping, and Lake Okeechobee overflow discharge through the St. Lucie River into the Atlantic.

This event created a brown algae bloom that suffocated the bottom, and eliminated rock shrimp fishing south of the Oculina OHAPC, for over five years, and most likely had devastating effect on the Oculina corals inside the closed area. This dead zone now extends over eighteen miles north on the OHAPC southern border, and is growing.

Regarding sedimentation, the standard rock shrimp fishing practice is to put the gear on the bottom a minimum half-mile off of the Coral HAPC boundary, whereupon work up to the quarter mile from the boundary, and then turn away from the boundary to pick up the gear. This equates to a three-quarter to one-mile buffer, at a minimum, between where fishing occurs and where the coral exists.

Surface currents, we've talked about that, on the top they're northern, and they go -- In the mid-water, they tend to go westward, and, on the bottom, there's little to no current, for approximately 10 percent of the water column.

My last -- I'm going to go to my last point, is that they -- In reference to the Executive Order Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, often regulations do not understand the challenges of producing valuable healthy quality seafood to the American consumer. Their focus is on the sustainability enforcement, which is absolutely vital for the long-term health of this resource.

The executive order is asking the regulators to look for actions that can be taken to assist the American seafood harvesters to compete with imported, primarily farm-raised, seafood that pours into this country, at prices often below the cost to produce. This is one of those actions that could assist them. Thank you for letting me comment.

MR. EDDY: Hi. My name is Mike Eddy. I operate two fish houses, one right down the street here and one in Fernandina Beach, and we unload quite a bit of the rock shrimp. I was a long

time commercial fisherman myself. I wasn't planning on speaking, until I heard the gentleman, you know, insinuate that these fishermen are willing to destroy this wonderful natural resource for short-term financial gain, is I believe what he said.

That just made me angry. These people are fighting for their economic lives, this whole industry. The most endangered natural resource we have right now is commercial fishermen, all up and down the coast, around the country. Fish houses are disappearing right and left around the country, because they don't have enough access to product to make a living at it. We're all fighting for our lives.

As Mike said, you know, our fishermen have been devastated by the imported shrimp, that is produced so cheap, and so they've seen the cheapest prices, the worst prices, they've seen in years, on the white shrimp and the brown shrimp locally, and the rock shrimp is one bright area, because there's very little imports on the rock shrimp, and so it's an item that doesn't fight near as much competition from the imports, but most of the other comments I was going to say have already been stated, but it's important, and it's up to this council, too.

They're also supposed to take into consideration the economic impact on the local communities, and on the fishermen that are involved in this. Our fishing industry is -- You know, every year, we've got less and less fishermen, less and less boats. We're not recruiting young people into the industry anymore.

When I used to fish, in the 1970s and 1980s, you could work hard, and you could make a good living. You know, it's very difficult right now, because of all the regulations. We don't have access to most of the product. There's more red snapper than -- You can walk on them off this coast right here, and we're not allowed to catch but very little of them.

It's kind of ridiculous, but it's -- This is just another case that, you know, we've over-regulated so many things, and, you know, I would just like to see this amendment passed, and giving the access back to the fishermen, and, like I said, these fishermen are the last people that want to destroy that reef. They know the importance of it, and they have no desire, and they never have, and they never will want to destroy the reef. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the public comment session was adjourned.)

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