

**PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION
BEAUFORT, NORTH CAROLINA
DECEMBER 6, 2023**

MS. HARRISON: I am Alana Harrison, from North Carolina, where I have a seafood market. I wanted to talk to you more about my experience in the restaurant industry, but, first, I wanted to give you some statistics to contribute to your discussion tomorrow on two-for-one. I requested these minutes from the council, and I read them, from 1995, and that is when the discussion occurred for two-for-one.

This was before seasons, quotas, and trip limits. The commercial-majority council decided that limited entry would help them, and so there were 2,766 permitted vessels. The highest number recorded, in 1994, was 2,883. The council saw a reduction of 49 to 60 percent, and this would be an ideal range of 1,153 to 1,412. In 2020, after twenty-four years of the two-for-one mandate, there were 639 permits, a 78 percent reduction, nearly double the initial amount, and so I'm curious if you are still committed to the initial goal of 49 to 60 percent or if we are moving the goal to zero.

Then, going back the food service, I don't know if you all are aware that you manage several histamine fish, and the histamine is a poison that develops with time and temperature abuse, and so, if you do not properly ice your fish, its histamine toxin develops, and it cannot be detected by sight, taste, or smell. The fish looks fine. It cannot be cooked out, and it cannot be frozen out, and it cannot be smoked out. You cannot get rid of it.

This is the most common cause of death when eating fish, is histamine poison, and I would like to tell a story of why this issue became so big. In Hatteras, we had a restaurant that bought tuna from a local fish dealer, and the fish dealer dropped it off behind the restaurant, in the eighties, and the restaurant wasn't open. The fish didn't get properly iced, and it was served at the restaurant, and a doctor and his wife were having dinner, and he ate the tuna, and, within a couple of hours, he had fallen ill from the scombroid poison, which is an unfortunate name, but it's also known as histamine fish poisoning.

He went to the hospital, where he died, and his wife ordered an autopsy, which determined histamine was the cause of his death, and she proceeded to sue the restaurant for wrongful death for three-and-a-half million. The court determined that the restaurant was not liable, and it was the fish dealer who was liable, because he did not monitor the temperature, and he did not make sure the boat did everything right, and so, when we talk about the tournament king mackerel sales, it's not just that they're a recreational industry harming our market, but it's that they're doing us a disservice as a professional industry who cares about their customers, and who cares about the health and wellbeing, and then our fish -- If somebody dies from king mackerel, that's on us, and it's very unfortunate, and I think that you all need to just remember that, at the end of the day, we are feeding people, and it's our responsibility to make sure that our food is safe, and, if we have a sector who can't follow those regulations, they shouldn't be allowed to feed the public, and that's all I have for today, and I'm sorry for going over. Thank you.

MR. ZALES, II: Bob Zales, II, newly-hired Executive Director for the Southeastern Fisheries Association. It's been a while since I've been before this council, and it's good seeing some of my old friends that are sitting at this table, and seeing some of the new ones. As people who

known me know, I have worn many hats over my fisheries management career, and so now I have a new one representing the members of the Southeastern Fisheries.

I was happy to hear the discussion you all had on FES and on the private rec permits, on the for-hire limited entry, and there's been some talk, outside of this council, about illegal charters, your two-to-one permits, and clearly the issue, at the moment, is the shrimp trade issue.

First off, when it comes to for-hire limited entry, I was the chairman of the Gulf Council ad hoc for-hire AP when we developed the limited-entry for-hire fishery in the Gulf, and it ain't rocket science. It's real simple to do, and I would suggest that you get it started, and you should be able to get it completed. There's a model out there. Just check with the Gulf Council, and you can mirror it, and you can modify it a little bit, but there's no reason to reinvent it. It works.

The FES, clearly that's a big problem. I've been involved with FES since it was first showed up at the Gulf Council in December of 2019, and clearly we've all had issues, and, fortunately, the State of Florida had issues before a lot of us did with it, and it just didn't make sense, that the numbers that they showed going back in the mid-1980s could be anywhere close to correct, and so we were real happy to see where they came and did their own study and said that clearly they had problems, up to 40 percent overestimation.

It's good to see where you all have kind of done what the Gulf Council has done, and kind of put a halt on using FES for any future stock assessment work until they get the system straightened out. It's called best available science, and how you call the best available science with a data system that they claim, their own selves, is overestimating 40 percent, is beyond me, and I don't know how that can be the best available.

The private recreational permits, on behalf of the charter industry, and on behalf of commercial grouper fishermen, I sent the Gulf Council a proposal, three years ago, to develop private rec permits fishing in the EEZ, and the only vessels from the Gulf, and the east coast, that can fish in federal waters without a federal permit is a private rec vessel. You're never going to get accountability until you recognize those people and find out who they are. If they don't want to fish in the EEZ, they don't need a permit. If they want to go out there, get your permit.

The two-to-one permits on the commercial side, clearly that's a problem, because it's working to eventually eliminate commercial fishing altogether, and regulatory issues, right now, are doing a pretty good job at eliminating commercial fishing across the area, and so you need to work on trying to fix that.

On the shrimp disaster part, anything you all can do, with your various state agencies, to get everybody together on this issue, to try to save the shrimp industry, we need to do, because, if this continues down the road for another year or so, you won't have fresh Gulf shrimp, or fresh east coast shrimp. They won't be there, and nobody will be there to catch them, and so sorry for going over. Thank you very much.

MS. GUYAS: All right. Good afternoon, everyone. Martha Guyas, with the American Sportfishing Association. I will start with Amendment 46. For that one, I support taking more time to work with the technical group, and the new AP, to flesh this out more before taking this out to public hearing. You know, when you go out to public hearing, you need to be able to fully

explain the details of how this is going to work, the benefits and the costs, and you're going to get a lot of questions, you know, about all the different scenarios, and how they intermix, and really like what this tangibly is going to mean for the fishermen that it affects.

Right now, there is too many unanswered questions, and so I think, if you went out to public hearings now, it's essentially going to be a repeat of scoping, and you're just not going to get a whole bunch of new information.

Red snapper, I know you all are going to talk about that later, and our position really hasn't changed here. I think there are serious questions about this assessment, and the overfishing and overfished determinations. The MRIP pilot study only adds to those questions, and so, you know, we've got the Atlantic red snapper count going on now, the MSE, and we've got EFP proposals in the hopper, and, you know, all those things are going to come together to help inform assessment and management of this species moving forward, and so it is not the time to do snapper grouper time and area closures and other drastic measures, or, you know, really try to change the game on red snapper, when we have all this new information coming.

Spanish mackerel, there are, I think, several red flags that should give the council pause on moving forward with Reg Amendment 13 at this time, and so, at a minimum, I think the council should defer development of Reg Amendment 13 until after the port meetings are completed and you all have a chance to consider the feedback from those. Ideally, it would be nice to have a better stock assessment, and a clearer understanding about how the MRIP-FES pilot study effort overestimation affects Spanish, but I know you all are feeling the push to move forward, and so that's why I'm suggesting at least port meetings.

Just to run down the list of red flags, and I want to send you guys a letter about this, just to fully flesh it out, but I probably will run out of time, and so I already mentioned that we've got a very uncertain assessment, and it's got documented issues, including issues with recreational catch and effort estimates. The MRIP-FES pilot study raises further questions about that recreational data, and it would be really, I think, unfortunate for, you know, a couple of years down the road, for the council to be in a position, once those issues are resolved, to have to kind of come back and undo a lot of this stuff, and it's going to get really messy, especially with potentially other sweeping management changes coming right behind this.

The catch level recommendations in Reg Amendment 13, which convert the quota from CHTS to FES, remember they look like an increase, but it's really a decrease, and yet the council is not addressing the allocations in the amendment to account for that change from CHTS to FES. You have a mismatch between the currency used to set your quotas and allocations, and so what does this do? You know, it gives the commercial fishery -- I think it's like a 32 percent increase in quota, and, I mean, while the overall quota is going down, and so the -- On the recreational side, not only to account for the catch advice from the SSC, but also to allow the commercial quota to be increased by a third.

Then you all talked about, yesterday, that recreational quota cut is so large, and the recreational fishery usually only lands like 60 percent of their quota in a given year, and it's open year-round, and it's potentially going to be down to a six-month season, and it maybe needs accountability measures, and it maybe needs back limit reductions, and so it's really just not clear why you

would move forward with this de facto reallocation, or disruptive management measures, for a healthy fishery, before taking all this stuff out to the public.

I think the port meetings, you know, gives you all an opportunity to do what you all had planned to do, which is step back, take a holistic look at this fishery, and try to figure out where to go from here and how to best manage. One more thing about Reg Amendment 13 -- I'm way over, and so I will stop, but I was going to say that optimum yield is also a public hearing topic, or a port meeting topic, and it's a big idea thing, and so thanks, you all.

MR. GENTNER: Good afternoon, everybody. Brad Gentner, and I want to thank you for the time you've given me here today to speak a little bit. I am struck, in this meeting, and my experience over the very short time participating in this council, that we have at least three controversial solutions still searching for a problem.

Overarching, and driving, these two issues is the elephant in the room, the flawed recreational data program, and it's completely unsuited to in-season quota monitoring, while we still want to entertain seasons shorter than a wave in length, across species with extremely high PSEs, which brings me to the third solution looking for a problem, the recreational permit. Don't misconstrue this, and we need to use a frame for conducting a better, different survey, and I'm fully in support of that, and we'll start with the first issue, solution looking for a problem, is red snapper.

States, and anglers, have told NMFS that the prudent thing to do is just wait and see what happens with FES, what's the impact of the FES, to wait until after the red snapper fishery-independent data gets finalized, to wait until we do some of these EFPs to look at improving discard data, and then we have Spanish mackerel, with a very similar sort of story being told, that we should wait until the public comment period is completed, and let's wait until we figure out what's going on with these outrageous shore effort estimates that we're seeing coming out of the FES, and where's the fire? You know, why are we rushing around to beat us up here?

I don't think there's any disagreement that the MRIP isn't working for management. The scientists don't think so, and I want to support Spud's concerns here that the permit amendment needs much more meat on its bones. You are facing an amazing opportunity to fix the data problem here, and I mean fix it, and I see a lot of interest in including more fish in a reporting effort around this table, just over the last couple of days.

However, many questions have not been answered here, and Martha just alluded to those. MRIP shortcomings apply to all species, and here we are just talking about reef fish species. If we're going to fix this thing, let's fix it. Even heavily-sampled state species, with low PSEs, are subject to this unknown FES problem, and I think the FES is a problem, and I don't think that it will ever address being able to produce effort estimates in shorter than a wave period, and here we are talking about managing species within a wave.

I want to remind everyone that we already have a frame, a frame that took lots of political capital to pull off in the South Atlantic, and everybody knows that. Andy says that participation estimates are vitally important, and I couldn't agree more, and so why did NMFS make a conscious decision to quit estimating participation when these new frames came onboard? The agency estimated participation, using the license frame, for a number of years, and then they

quit, and that was an official announcement, a few years ago, that was quietly swept under the rug, that we're just not going to estimate participation. The current frame will work, and so let's figure out how to use it. Why would you want to walk away from a good frame, unless you have another agenda?

I commend the council for their excellent work in bucking the status quo. Keep pushing for better data, and stay the course until better science is available from approved data and the fishery-independent data collections are completed. Thank you for your time, guys.

MR. MARCHANT: My name is Spencer Marchant, and I'm with the Don Coffey Company. I have been involved in the recreational sportfishing business, on the manufacturer side, the retail side, and the sales side, since about 1996. I was born and raised in North Carolina, and I got involved in the business here, and I'm here to ask that the council, and that NOAA, reject, or refrain from any drastic measures regarding bottom fishery closures in the snapper and grouper complex or things associated with that.

I come here to talk about the impact that we see on our level, and this is a consolidation of information from my colleagues. When we looked at just the snapper grouper complex, and the business that it means for the states affected by this council, we estimate that there is approximately 150 dealers that are involved in servicing the anglers that are participating in recreational bottom fishing.

Depending on which zones you are in, that can affect the boating industry, the fuel industry, the ice industry, and things of that nature, but roughly 150 dealers that we interact with directly, and this does not count the smaller dealers, the piers, the things of that nature, that are serviced by our distribution partners. When we looked at just the dealers that we were working with directly, and servicing directly, we think about the souls that are impacted, the employees that are involved with those dealers, that are generating their business from this particular industry, and it's roughly 1,100 employees that are with those dealers, who have families, that are going to Publix, that are going to Food Lion, as a means, you know, of income generated from this business.

Across those dealers that we talked about, they estimated that their business was anywhere from 25, on the low end, to approximately 65 percent, on the high end, of business dedicated to those particular fisheries, and, on the low end, on the 25 percent of the business side, the irony there being that those are fisheries that are primarily used to access by boat, and an example would be here in town, where you're running twenty-five miles offshore, thirty-five miles offshore, before you're engaged in that fishery, where, if you're from where I'm from, currently in Jupiter, Florida, you run twenty-five miles offshore, and you're in like 2,000 feet of water, and you're not doing a whole lot.

You know, those lower percentage, you know, percentage of businesses, those people are disproportionately then engaged in other things, like buying boats and things of that nature, and my company -- We have twenty-one souls that, you know, rely on this, and, when taken into consideration with my other colleagues that are involved in the rod-and-reel manufacturing business, the sales business, you know, just for the bottom fishing aspect alone, we're estimating -- You know, I could give a more specific number if we wanted to talk about it, but it's tens of millions of dollars that are just specific to the bottom fishing piece.

An example that I will close with is a dealer that is significantly involved in this -- They have like a seven-day season, all right, and I will give you an example of a larger dealer, that told me that a seven-day season for them would be about a half-million-dollar month. Something larger than that would be like a \$1.5 million month, and so the exponential increase in the value of the economy to that dealer is drastically tied to the length of the season, and so we would ask that you allow the count to take place, and that no drastic measures are taken in between the time, and that we take a moment to recognize the economy of the family that is involved in this fishery, beyond the numbers that we sort of talk about nebulously. There are actual economies of scale at that level, and so that's what I would rise to talk with.

MR. COX: Good afternoon. My name is Jack Cox, and I see a lot of new faces here, and it's been quite a while since I've spoke to you folks in-person, but thank you for the opportunity to speak. I left my notes at home, but I scratched a few things down, to try to remember what I was talking about, but I'm very passionate about this fishery. I am fifty-nine, and I've been in it since I was sixteen, and I was in it before we even had a snapper grouper permit.

I've got five permits, and I've got three active king mackerel boats fishing, and I've got three king permits, a shark incidental, snapper grouper permits, and, you know, I -- You know, when I say I'm passionate about it, I mean I have a lot of stories to tell, and I've seen this fishery evolve over forty years, forty-plus years, and the fishery is not in the state that it was certainly when I got into the fishery, and there's a lot of work to be done, and I appreciate the opportunity of you guys keeping me on the Snapper Grouper AP, and I was a former council member, and that was very rewarding, and the things that I want to talk to you about today are the king mackerel tournaments.

It used to be there would be one or two, you know, tournaments here in Carteret County, and now we have these tournaments that last -- Some of them last for several weeks at a time, two or three or four tournaments in a weekend, and, folks, our resource just can't handle it. We're taking these big fish out of the water, using -- We're using gear that's not compatible for releasing, and treble hooks are one of the worst hooks that you can use in a fishery, and I wish that you would look at how the Big Rock Tournament -- How the Big Rock Tournament handled their fish.

You know, they received the fish, and this is a recreational-caught fish, and me and my commercial colleagues should not have to go and compete on the marketplace with recreational-caught fish. Now, I thought I -- I hope I'm wrong, but I thought I heard a council member say, well, let's let it go out to the port meetings, and let them have discussion about it, and the problem with this council is they kick the can down the road, and you guys have heard it, and we can't afford, year after year after year, to talk about something, when we know what the solution needs to be. Stop the sales of recreational-caught fish, please.

Another thing that I wanted to talk about was the charter/for-hire. When I was on the council, ten years ago, I think there were 400 to 500 -- I think it was about 400 snapper grouper for-hire permits, open access, and how can you allow this to be an open-access fishery for snapper grouper, when we have all of these issues that we have? There needs to be a moratorium put on it, just like the commercial snapper grouper guys. There is way too many charter guys that are out catching snapper grouper species, open access, when you're taking the commercial industry

is highly accountable, and you're beating them down, and you continue to beat them down, and we need to stop the two-for-one, because we have gotten to a number now that is sustainable for the fishery that we have.

The private recreational permit, we were talking about this, I don't know, eleven or twelve years ago, and it's time to do it. We need the information, and the stock assessment needs the information, and please fast-track this. This has been going on for way too long, and there's been too much discussion about it, and we need to do it.

I'm over a little bit here, but I want to say that I support inshore MPAs, and I think, looking at forty years of this fishery, that there's a lot of work to be done, and I want to see the gentleman that spoke before me stay in business, and I want to see my commercial fishermen stay in business, but, folks, if we don't conserve, and manage, this resource, like we've been asked to do, we're not going to have it. I'm telling you that it's not there, and it's getting beat up pretty hard, and everybody needs to do their part.

Very few people talk about shark interactions, but, being that we're in ecosystem-based management, the sharks are a problem, you know, and we need to have more take on the sharks. We need to include the shark take on our stock assessments, because it's not just the fishermen that are beating up on these fish, but it's the sharks as well, and there's a lot of sharks out there. In closing, I would just like to say that I'm happy to see that the gags -- That the regulations on that amendment have gone in place and that we're on track for rebuilding. Thank you very much.

MR. MCCAFFERTY: My name is Chris McCafferty, and I'm a commercial fisherman here in Morehead, and I would like to start with these comments. Decades of managing our fisheries, with ever stricter regulations, endless regulatory discards, and questionable equations, full of questionable assumptions, have failed fish, fishermen, and seafood consumers.

I respectfully ask the council to consider a fundamental shift in fishery management philosophy that focuses more on enhancing our fisheries, and food supply, than restricting the public's freedom to access our public resources. Hatcheries, and habitat enhancements, are proven management tools that can help most seafood thrive at historically high levels, even as we harvest more. This approach would limit waste, while creating more recreational opportunities and feeding more people. We can make our fisheries better than ever if the powers, and the talents, of fishery managers are focused on enhancement.

Offshore windfarms being built within the council's jurisdiction offer a wonderful opportunity to shift management priorities towards helping our fisheries be the best they can be. The council should make a formal request, under the National Environmental Policy Act, for hatcheries to be one of the mitigation measures to offset any negative impacts of restricting the public's freedom to access our public waters. We could stock a wide variety of native seafood that can actually reproduce and create hatchery-supported quotas, based on a percentage of what is stocked. The council should also ask that the base of windmills be designed as permanent artificial reef habitat that can be dismantled to a safe navigational depth when decommissioned.

Some experts say that artificial reefs only attract marine life from other areas. While that does happen, new habitat will increase the total biomass that enhanced areas can support over time.

Think of habitat on land. Would ten or twenty acres of habitat support more life? What if ten acres of habitat had an additional ten acres of similar habitat created around it? The wildlife would initially spread out, but there would eventually be more animals living comfortably in more habitat.

There would still be natural fluctuations in the abundance of different species. Nature rarely allows everything to exist simultaneously at the highest possible levels. Natural fluctuations are something the council should consider when deciding how to manage our multispecies fishery. Drastic cuts to quotas, based on lower landings, are usually unnecessary.

There seems to be an aversion to stocking seafood, for some reason. Hatcheries can help many species overcome habitat-related spawning obstacles. Incubating fertilized eggs from local seafood, and releasing hatchlings to live wild and free, until harvested by independent fishermen, could be good for everyone in the environment.

There should be some guidelines to preserve genetic diversity and maintain a natural balance. We should never introduce invasive or genetically-sterilized, and otherwise modified, species in public waters. This is a great alternative to letting global corporations use our public waters for caging large concentrations of fish that have been genetically altered to grow faster. Public-water aquaculture should be limited to stocking naturally-reproducing native seafood for everyone to enjoy.

Controlling the lionfish invasion would be very helpful for our fisheries. Caribbean fishermen trap male lionfish, using female lionfish gonads as pheromone bait, and we should be able to synthesize this pheromone, and use it in ropeless traps, to help reduce the lionfish population.

Properly managing quotas, to avoid extended closures, and excessive discards, should be a priority of fishery managers. Bycatch allowances can be a great tool for limiting waste and collecting accurate data. Establishing a recreational fishing license is necessary for responsibly managing quotas. This would define the universe of anglers, while providing much more accurate effort and landing data than the questionable assumptions we rely on now.

These practical solutions could restore our fisheries, and the freedom to access them, and there would be no need to destroy the jobs and dreams of charter fishermen who have recently entered the fishery. Recreational fishermen could keep enough fish to make it worth going. Commercial fishermen could earn a living by responsibly harvesting sustainable seafood for consumers. Does anyone have a better idea that would benefit everyone in the environment? I am always happy to answer any questions, and provide more detail.

Real quick, I'm wondering about the overage paybacks for gag grouper next year, based on the reduction in October, and I'm hoping that you will at least prorate the two different quotas and have that average be what we would be paying back, rather than only the revised quota. Thank you.

MR. GRAVITZ: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman and other members of the fishery management council. My name is Michael Gravitz, and sorry that I'm not on the screen to see you, or you see me, but I represent federal policy, and I work on federal fishing and ocean policy

for the Marine Conservation Institute, a small, science-based NGO focused on marine protected areas and deep-sea corals and related environments.

I participated in the previous consideration of Coral Amendment 10, which would have opened the Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern to shrimp trawling, and I believe you will be discussing some aspect of this tomorrow in your Habitat and Ecosystem Committee, and so, unfortunately, I'm talking before you've actually had a chance to consider this issue, but what I would like to say is that not much has changed in the scientific or political or regulatory environments since the last time you considered a change to the coral amendment, in the Coral FMP and Amendment 10.

You've had some survey work done on the HAPC area, at some considerable cost, and that wasn't terribly effective, because it's very difficult to do ROV research in this area, and the short thing that I would like to say is that we need to maintain buffer strips to protect the last 10 percent of living oculina coral that were not destroyed by shrimp trawling in the 1970s and 1980s, and there's only about 10 percent left, and these delicate corals can be physically destroyed by shrimp trawl nets crashing into them and by the sediment that is kicked up by those nets drifting over them, which either kills them or damages them, and it also limited coral larvae and kills coral larvae.

When a trawl is down 150 or 200 feet, it isn't necessarily behind the boat, and even the most careful of shrimp trawlers don't necessarily know where the shrimp trawl is on the bottom. Shrimp trawls can vary from a hundred to 200 yards off-center of the boat, depending on the currents, which are unknowable when someone is trawling, and so it's pretty easy for shrimp trawls to destroy these delicate corals, and it's pretty easy for currents to take the sediment kicked up by those nets into the coral areas.

I guess what I would ask is that we would hope that you would desist from reconsidering the oculina amendment, Coral Amendment 10, and we believe it's just -- It would be a waste of your time, a waste of your money, and also a very unwise policy decision. Further, we believe that a member of your council should be conflicted-out from voting on any amendment, because they have a substantial financial interest in the fishery that might be regulated. Thank you very much for your time and attention, and I look forward to attending the discussion tomorrow. Thank you.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you, and thank you, members of the council and SERO for allowing me to provide these comments. I don't have nothing written down, but a lot of the prior commenters helped me with some of my thought process, and particularly to the two-for-one permits in the commercial snapper grouper fishery and the need for something to be changed for a modification before that industry, and the fishermen in it, are gone. The permits that we have, and, in 1999, when they implemented this, it has come full circle, and that needs to be done away with, or an income qualifier put on that.

Another issue, thinking about it, is that the Amendment 51, that just recently came out, the regs for that, I was disappointed, to be expected, that the agency did nothing to address the cooccurring catching of snowy grouper with blueline, given the possibility of having a four-month season for blueline tilefish, and I think there's been enough discussion, in the AP and other places, and survey work that shows the cooccurring, and yet National Marine Fisheries

Service did not comment on that aspect of it. There is no cooccurring, north of Cape Hatteras, for snowy grouper and blueline tilefish, but, south of it, the agency failed to address that.

Another thing that I think is incumbent upon the agency is to end the overfishing of red snapper. In June of this year, it was two years to end the overfishing that the council failed to do, and now it looks like another nine months, and what's going to happen after that? How long will the agency allow for the designation of ending overfishing of red snapper, and how long are they going to wait? The mandates of Magnuson says you have to do that within two years, and so it's very extremely frustrating that, as a commercial fisherman, we're watching -- We're watching the non-accountability of the resource that we're asked to, for our piece of the pie, not get the accountability that's needed.

Another thing is, you know, I heard a lot of people talk about different things with rec reporting, and it was interesting, yesterday, about the charter/for-hire reporting, how that's a failure, and there is no accountability in that, and the only way for it to happen is to put some teeth in something, to where you lose your access to go fishing if you don't report, and that's the same way that it happens in the commercial fishing industry when you renew your permit, and so let's spread the love around of accounting, and let's do a better job, and hopefully the agency will look at the mandates of Magnuson and allow the commercial fishing industry to continue to exist. Give us a portion of the pie, and let us fish on our side.

The one last thing, in following up here, is it's past time for the council to further consider for taking dead discards off each sector's ACL, and, that way, it's more accountable, because the commercial industry -- Take dead discards off of us, and give us a portion of the pie, and the same with the recs, and it's past time for that equality to happen, and so the commercial fishing industry hopefully can survive until this inequity and injustice is figured out, or it stops. Thank you, and have a good day.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Regarding Coral Amendment 10, which has been passed twice by the council, once with reluctance amongst the council members, and then rejected by the Regional Administrator, and then -- It was rejected due to a lot of comments that were put in, and so they gave into those comments, and I understand the reservation, and there's a lot of misinformation that's being spread around about where they're shrimping, how they're shrimping, what's the distance between where they want to shrimp, where they shrimped for decades, and where the coral exists.

After the rejection, NOAA researched the bottom, in the area of concern, and found no coral, and only soft substrate bottom, that could not support coral, just as the rock shrimp fishermen have reported previously, and, also, the closed area was a significant distance from the hard bottom, that can support coral, but it's not anywhere near where any kind of sediment plume, caused by rock shrimping, could have harmful effects on it, and it can't be compared to a dredging effort in the Port of Miami.

After the council received this scientific information from an accepted source, which was the NOAA research vessel, all the members of the council then again agreed that Coral Amendment 10 could move forward, including the Regional Administrator, and so I think we've spent a lot of time and money on this Coral Amendment 10, and I think that we've vetted it heavily, and I

think that there shouldn't be any concerns about moving forward with Coral Amendment 10.
Thank you.

(Whereupon, the public comment session was adjourned.)

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Dec. 6, 2023
Public Comments

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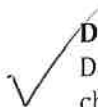
Dec. 6, 2023
Public Comments

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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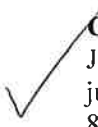
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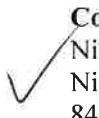
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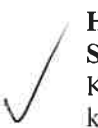
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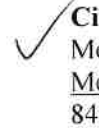
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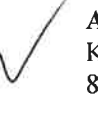


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Report Generated:

12/06/2023 06:17 PM EST

Webinar ID

379-228-259

Actual Start Date/Time

12/06/2023 07:34 AM EST

Duration

10 hours 29 minutes

Registered

205

Attended

147

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Attended

Yes

Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

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