

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL**

**Crowne Plaza  
North Charleston, SC**

**April 17 - 19, 2017**

### **Summary Minutes**

#### **Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel**

Kenneth Fex, Chair

Jim Attack

Scott Buff

Robert Freeman

Rusty Husdon

Deidra Jeffcoat

Robert Lorenz

Wayne Mershon

Kerry O'Malley-Marhefka

David Snyder

Dr. Todd Kellison

David P. Moss

Dick Brame

James Freeman

Manny Herrera

James Hull Jr.

Robert Johnson

Greg Mercurio

Red Munden

Richard Stiglitz

Robert Thompson

#### **Council Members**

Dr. Michelle Duval

Mel Bell

Mark Brown

Ben Hartig

Charlie Phillips

Zack Bowen

Tim Griner

#### **Council Staff**

Gregg Waugh

Myra Brouwer

Dr. Chip Collier

John Hadley

Dr. Kari MacLauchlin

Amber Von Harten

John Carmichael

Kimberly Cole

Dr. Mike Errigo

Kim Iverson

Cameron Rhodes

Julia Byrd

#### **Observers/Participates**

Amy Dukes

Other Observes/Participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Crowne Plaza, North Charleston, South Carolina, April 17, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman Kenny Fex.

MR. FEX: First, Amber is going to talk to us about the Citizen Science thing, and then we will start the meeting.

MS. VON HARTEN: Hello, everyone. Welcome to Charleston, and, before you all got started, I wanted to make sure that everybody had heard and gotten the news release about our new Citizen Science Advisory Panel, to make sure everybody understood what that was about, and I'm hoping that all of you will put in an application to be added to the pool.

The way this is going to be set up is similar to the SEDAR pool, if you guys are familiar with that, where we will have members of the advisory panel that will serve in a pool. Then, as we start to develop the program and start working on specific program areas, we will be able to pull people from that pool to work on these different teams that we're going to be forming.

Because you guys are already on an AP, you are automatically considered as a member of the pool, but we still need for you to fill out this online application, so we know which of the program areas that you might want to help out with if you are selected for one of these teams, and so there is five different areas, an area working with volunteers, and so citizen science participants in projects, data management, projects and topics management, finance, and then communication, outreach, and education.

If any of you guys have an interest in helping out with our newly-developing Citizen Science Program, I highly encourage you to fill out this online application, and, if you want, I can send around the news release again, but you probably should have already received it, and I know some of you all have already filled out your applications, and so I appreciate that. If you have any further questions about what we're doing, just give me a shout.

MR. FEX: Thank you. All right. Let's go ahead and introduce people. We will start on this side with Rusty and just go around, please.

MR. HUDSON: Rusty Hudson, Director of Sustainable Fisheries. Thank you very much.

MR. MERCURIO: Greg Mercurio, partyboat.

MR. THOMPSON: Robert Thompson, Murrells Inlet, charter, commercial, and recreational.

MR. HULL: Jimmy Hull, Ponce Inlet, Florida, commercial.

MR. LORENZ: Robert Lorenz, private recreational angler, North Carolina.

MR. BRAME: I'm Dick Brame, and I'm the Regional Fisheries Director for the Coastal Conservation Association.

MR. SNYDER: Dave Snyder, restaurant owner and chef.

MR. FEX: Kenny Fex, North Carolina, commercial fisherman.

MR. MOSS: David Moss, south Florida, recreational fisherman.

MR. STIGLITZ: Richard Stiglitz, commercial fisherman, Florida Keys.

MR. BUFF: Scott Buff, Holden Beach, North Carolina, commercial.

MR. HERRERA: Manny Herrera, commercial fisherman, Key West, Florida.

MR. MERSHON: Wayne Mershon, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, commercial, federal dealer.

MR. MUNDEN: Red Munden, retired marine biologist, North Carolina Marine Fisheries, and I live in Morehead City, North Carolina.

MR. R. FREEMAN: Robert Freeman, ex-charter boat captain, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, focusing on deepwater snapper grouper fishing.

DR. KELLISON: Todd Kellison, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Just a reminder that I'm a non-voting member of the panel.

MR. J. FREEMAN: Jim Freeman, Daytona Beach, Florida, commercial.

MR. JOHNSON: Robert Johnson, St. Augustine, Florida, for-hire and commercial.

MS. MARHEFKA: Kerry Marhefka, Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, commercial fishing and seafood dealer.

MR. FEX: All right. John, can we start and have you introduce yourself and go from the back there?

MR. HADLEY: I'm John Hadley. I'm the staff Economist on the South Atlantic Council.

DR. MACLAUHLIN: Kari MacLauchlin, and I'm the Fisheries Social Scientist.

MR. BELL: Mel Bell, council member, South Carolina.

MR. BUBLEY: Wally Bubley, South Carolina DNR.

MR. BROWN: Mark Brown, South Carolina, council member.

MR. BOWEN: Zack Bowen, council member, Georgia.

MR. PHILLIPS: Charlie Phillips, council member, Georgia.

MR. WAUGH: Gregg Waugh, South Atlantic Council staff.

DR. DUVAL: Michelle Duval, council member from North Carolina.

MS. BYRD: Julia Byrd, and I'm one of the SEDAR coordinators.

MS. RHODES: Cameron Rhodes, and I'm the Fishery Outreach Specialist.

DR. COLLIER: Chip Collier, Fishery Biologist.

MS. COLE: Kimberly Cole, council staff.

DR. ERRIGO: Mike Errigo, council staff.

MR. FEX: Thank you, guys, and thank you for taking time out of your day to join this meeting. Are there any changes in the minutes? Seeing no changes, could we have approval of the minutes? Thank you. Take it over, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Good afternoon, everybody, and I am Myra Brouwer, council staff. Welcome to our two new AP members, and what I thought I would do, to begin with, is give you a quick update of where we are on a couple of amendments that have been submitted and that people have been asking about. Let me bring that up, real quick. This is not an attachment in your briefing book, but just to make it easier.

Several of you remember Amendment 36. That one was under development for some time. It's the one that designated the Spawning Special Management Zones. There were five areas that were given this designation, and this amendment also proposes prohibiting fishing within these areas. It also revised the boundary for the Charleston Deep Reef MPA, and it addresses transit provisions and anchoring provisions in these spawning SMZs.

It has a sunset provision that would allow the spawning SMZs to be evaluated and discontinued unless there is evidence of spawning activity documented within these areas, and it also has a system management plan attached to the amendment that outlines research needs, enforcement efforts, and outreach efforts as well. We received a letter, the council did, dated April 4, stating that this amendment had been approved and that the council can expect regulations to become effective sometime in the spring, and so that's where we are on that one.

There is an amendment that was submitted a while back, and I can't remember -- This one went in in September of last year, and it's the one that split out the stock of hogfish and established a rebuilding plan for the East Florida/Florida Keys stock. It revised the ABC and the ACLs for each of those stocks, and it put in lots of different management measures for both stocks, and it established a boundary in the Gulf of Mexico to separate the East Florida/Florida Keys stock from the one that's managed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council on the West Florida Shelf.

There has been a little bit of a delay on this one. Apparently there has been a lot of work that needed to be done to establish that boundary that I was just telling you about off of Cape Sable, and here is basically the proposed changes, and so I just put a bunch of little bullets here, just to remind everybody, and so the total ACL for 2017 for the Florida Keys/East Florida hogfish stock would be 17,034 fish, and that is split out between the commercial and the recreational sector, and

the commercial would be an ACL of 3,500 pounds whole weight, which amounts to about 1,300 fish. The ACL for the recreational sector would be about 1,600 fish.

This is for this year, and so the ACLs do go up, incrementally, through 2027, based on the projections that were approved that established the ABC for this stock, based on the stock assessment. The commercial trip limit is going to go down to twenty-five pounds. The minimum size limit is going to be set at sixteen inches fork length. There is going to be a recreational bag limit of one fish per person per day and a six-month fishing season from May through October. That is for the East Florida/Florida Keys stock.

For North Carolina, we're looking at a total ACL of about 39,000 pounds, and that would be split out -- The commercial will get about 23,000 pounds, and the recreational would be 988 fish. These ACLs would not change over time, because they are not based on projections.

Remember that the North Carolina through Georgia stock, we don't have a stock assessment for that stock, and so these fishing levels are based on historical landings. For that portion of the stock, there would be a commercial trip limit of 500 pounds and a bag limit of two fish per person per day and a minimum size limit is going to be set at seventeen inches fork length. This amendment is in the final stages of review, and we are expecting the regulations to be effective probably in July, around that timeframe. Any questions on that one? Okay.

The next one I wanted to update you on was Snapper Grouper Amendment 41. This is the one that makes changes to management of mutton snapper. The council approved this one for formal review in December. We sent it in to NMFS at the end of February, and so this one is a little bit behind. We are looking at the proposed rule coming out probably next month, about the middle of next month, which would put the regulations, again, effective sometime late summer or maybe early fall.

For this one, there has been a change in the total ACL for 2017. That ACL would be 129,150 fish. That is split out commercial to about 100,000 pounds and recreational at 116,000 fish. These ACLs, again, are based on projections, and so they would go up through 2020 and remain at that level until the next stock assessment.

The minimum size limit would be set at eighteen inches total length, and then we also designated, for regulatory purposes, spawning months of April through June, and the remainder of the year is the regular season. This is to give the management agencies the option to put in different regulations to protect the spawning population.

Mutton is going to be retained within the aggregate, but the individual bag limit is going down to five per person per day within that aggregate. The trip limit, outside of the spawning months, is going to be 500 pounds. Then, during the spawning months, the commercial sector is going to be restricted to five fish per person per day or five per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

There was a little bit of confusion, because Florida went ahead and established these regulations in state waters already. Those regulations already went into place at the very beginning of this year, whereas, for hogfish, they haven't. The state has chosen to wait until the federal regulations go into place in order for the regulations to change in state waters, and so it's a little bit wonky, but that's where we are. Any questions on mutton?

Then, finally, the South Atlantic For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment, this is one that started out being a joint plan with the Gulf. Then the council said -- They split it out, and the South Atlantic continued with their portion. However, it's an amendment that amends also the joint plan that we have with the Gulf Council for the Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and so the Gulf Council needed to approve those portions of that amendment before the amendment could go through, and so that took place at their meeting in February, and so the amendment was submitted for approval to the Secretary on March 4.

What that means is the council has put forth what they envision this electronic reporting requirement to be, and so now the agency, NMFS, has to implement and design the infrastructure for how that electronic reporting is going to be fleshed out, and so they are in the process of doing that. They are going to get started with that.

The council made it clear that they would like for there to be a voluntary electronic reporting for the charter vessels by the beginning of 2018, and so that's where the council is coming from, and this would require that all federally-permitted charter vessels and headboats submit fishing records weekly. All fish harvested and discarded on all trips would be reported, regardless of where the fish were caught, and it would also require federally-permitted charter vessels to report location fished electronically, by manually entering latitude and longitude, in degrees and minutes, or by clicking on an electronic chart. That is the update that I had for you on these. Are there any questions? Okay.

The other thing that I put together, and this is Attachment 1 in your briefing book, is a table with the various amendments that have taken place since 2014, and it was suggested that it would be a good idea to make sure that everybody is on the same page and we all remember which amendment did what and when regulations went into effect, because, a lot of times, we're finding that things are very changing very quickly, and then somebody says, well, didn't we just do that or didn't we just change this? It's a little confusing, and so just to make sure that everybody is aware.

There is this table that shows you the various amendments, and I'm only going to touch on a couple of them. Amendment 31 is the one that required headboat vessels to report electronically, and that was implemented the first of the year in 2014. This amendment that I was just telling you about, the For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment for charter vessels and headboats, is only going to change the frequency of reporting, to make it more frequent for headboats.

We had Regulatory Amendment 14, which was effective back in December of 2014. This one did a lot of changes to black sea bass. It changed the commercial fishing year from June to January, back to the calendar year. It put the recreational fishing year June through May, and so that one starts in June, and it specified a trip limit for the hook-and-line portion of that fishery and a trip limit for inside and outside of the closed season for pots. It also changed the commercial and recreational fishing years for greater amberjack, and this is the one that put in the step-down for gag, from 1,000 pounds to 500, when 75 percent of the ACL is reached.

I was going to give you some updates here. For gag, there has actually been no commercial closure since this went into place. For 2016, that closed with 74 percent of the ACL having been met. Then we did some changes to the definition of overfished. Regulatory Amendment 21 affected several species.

Then Amendment 29, which took place in 2015, updated the control rule. Remember that we have a handful of unassessed species, and this amendment adjusted the ABCs for those, and it actually made changes to the ABC control rule. This is also the amendment that changed the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish, and it put something in place for gray triggerfish off the South Atlantic states that didn't have a minimum size limit, and that was put in at twelve inches fork length. Then, off of Florida, it ended up being put at fourteen inches fork length. We are going to be talking about gray triggerfish here in a little bit, and so I wanted to remind you of when this changed, and that was in 2015. This amendment also established a trip limit for gray triggerfish and put in that commercial split season, also something that we're going to be talking about later today.

Then we did an amendment for snowy. There was an assessment that was completed, and, in August of 2015, the ACLs were adjusted, based on that. It adjusted the rebuilding strategy. It increased the commercial trip limit from 100 to 200 pounds gutted weight, and then it put in that recreational season that is still currently in place, and the limit is one per vessel per day, and that's May through August. That's where that got started, and recall that we have done that also for blueline tilefish, which is the next amendment.

Again, in 2015, there were a lot of changes made to blueline, and this was in response to SEDAR 32. Gag and wreckfish were adjusted in 2015 also, based on stock assessments for those two species. We did some changes in Amendment 33 to the requirements to transporting fillets from the Bahamas. Then Amendment 34 made all the accountability measures compatible for all the species that weren't all the same.

In Amendment 35, we clarified the requirements for the golden tilefish endorsements, and there was a handful of species, four species, that were removed from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit. Then we did Regulatory Amendment 16, which took a long time, and this is the one that revised the prohibition for the pots for black sea bass. Then Regulatory Amendment 25 increased the ACLs for blueline tilefish and increased the commercial trip limit and increased the recreational bag limit, and so we lowered them in Amendment 32, and they went back up in Amendment 25, and that took effect in August of last year.

This is also the amendment that increased the recreational bag limit for black sea bass, and it revised the commercial and the recreational fishing year for yellowtail snapper, and that's another species that may come up in conversation later. That is where we are. Are there any questions on those updates? Okay. I think the next item on the agenda is going to be Amendment 43, and Chip is going to come up here and help you guys out with that one.

DR. COLLIER: This one is a little bit shorter than the version you had seen in the past. A lot of the actions for ABC have been removed. ABC and ACL and OFL, those have all been removed temporarily, until we get a revised ABC from the SSC. That could be coming next week, and so those actions could be placed back in there.

What we're going to start off with are potential modifications for management measures for the commercial sector. Currently, what we have in place is a seventy-five-pound gutted weight trip limit. There is a limited commercial season, and the opening is dependent on the harvest from the

previous year. We don't have numbers for 2017 yet, but they should be coming -- They will be presented to the council in June.

Some of the alternatives are -- Once we get a new ABC, if it sufficient to open the season, these are some alternatives to consider for managing red snapper in the commercial fishery. The first alternative would be a season, and the council had mentioned June to September, and the reason for that is they are trying to avoid peak spawning season for red snapper.

Another alternative is May to October. This one is a little bit more broad, and the reason for that is they're trying to avoid spawning altogether. Then the third one, listed up there, and it's listed as 2d, and it should be 2c, but it's an option to keep the season closed year-round, and that's just due to some of the commercial fishermen just didn't want to deal with red snapper if there was going to be a closure associated with it or anything like that. They said just keep us going the way we are, we're good enough, and so that was an option that was added into it. Do you guys have any comments on a potential season? Should others be included?

MR. HULL: Those Alternative A and B, it says the reason is to avoid peak spawning season for red snapper. It seems to me like, June through September, you're pretty much in the peak spawning season, and so July, off of our inlet, and I'm talking Florida, I mean they're spawning pretty much year-round now anyway, but, traditionally, the middle of summer is the peak spawn.

MR. JOHNSON: Was there no discussion about an alternative from the January -- I am just thinking the b-liners open up January 1, and why would there not have been an alternative there? You are missing the spawn altogether, and sometimes, in the b-liner fishery, in that 120 to 140-foot range, you do catch some of those chickens. It just seems like that would make a little sense there, for the commercial sector. I was just curious why that alternative wasn't suggested.

DR. COLLIER: Maybe I misspoke when I discussed the alternative, but it is prohibit commercial harvest during those months.

MR. JOHNSON: Sorry. I was wondering where you guys were going. I am good with that then.

DR. COLLIER: Now we're waking up.

MR. HUDSON: Chip, on the commercial trip limits, with the size, or actually the commercial minimum size limit, in the Gulf of Mexico, the recreational has a sixteen-inch size, but a thirteen-inch minimum size for the commercial over there, and so that's one little difference. We had the twenty size for both sectors, twenty-inch size for both sectors, but, quite honestly, I think thirteen is pretty small, and so I don't know where that puts us on anything like that, but that twenty-inch works out to be a three-and-a-half year-old, roughly four-and-a-half pounds, I believe.

DR. COLLIER: One thing I do want to ask you guys is, for a trip limit, there is the possibility in either having it in number of fish or weight of fish. Which one is better for a commercial operation? In all likelihood, it's probably going to be twenty-five to fifty pounds is what the trip limit would be. It might be a little bit more, or it might be less, but that kind of gives you a reference on how much could be harvested.

MR. FEX: I know for a fact though that you might have high-grading going on if you were at number of fish, and so I would probably exclude that one. I don't know if you might think the same way, guys. Does anybody have any opinions on size of a trip limit?

MR. HULL: I think that, if we're talking about such a small trip limit, that I don't think you should have a size limit. I think, if you get a smaller snapper and you're able to keep it and sell it and take it to market, so what if it's sixteen inches or whatever. That is a good, marketable fish. The chances of it getting eaten, being discarded, are pretty great, and so why not keep it?

DR. COLLIER: Just for a follow-up question, at what point do you think a size limit would be a good one to -- Like if the trip limit was a hundred pounds, would a size limit be a good option or would you never put a size limit on there for the commercial?

MR. HULL: I think, if there was a larger trip limit, yes, I could agree with some type of size limit, because then -- Although you're still -- I am against discarding most animals, in general, because of the mortalities that we're dealing with, and we're dealing with such small ACLs here, and so I will get back with you on that. I need to think about that one.

MR. FEX: I want to make a comment towards that though. One thing I would note though is you kind of want to have all of the samples at dock, because, if you're not bringing in the small fish, the scientists aren't seeing them. If you aren't bringing in the big fish -- I mean, we're going to be under a strict limit anyway, and so, to throw back anything, I would almost question it, just for that fact. The scientists, they always want to see the wide range of fish. If you throw that size limit in, you're going to lose that lower range, or high range, and so I just wanted to throw that out to you.

MR. JOHNSON: I think, because of the depths of the commercial fishery that, in general, it's conducted at, I really think any kind of size limit is not good. Barotrauma is going to be an issue in the commercial sector, but not so much in the recreational sector, where they are encountering these fish in seventy and eighty feet of water, versus 150 or 160 feet of water.

MR. HUDSON: I was thinking along the same way. First off, if you have a complete retention for the commercial, at least you've got that full range. The second thing that is going to matter, and I have to go back and look to see what our allocation was during the mini-seasons, because, if we don't even get to that point -- I mean, we went from fifty pounds to seventy-five pounds, and so it's really going to be built off of what ABC are we going to be dealing with for both sectors.

Then the commercial, just like Robert said, historically, we usually tried to stay away from the charter boats and headboats and those areas, unless, of course, there was some other motivating reason to be in there, and so, a lot of times, we're going to be outside of a hundred foot, and then this comes back to the descending devices, if you're forced to release stuff and the mortality associated because of the abundance of sharks that we have now.

MR. MUNDEN: In this document, and several other documents we'll be reviewing over the next couple of days, there are discussions about proposed size limits, and, generally, my feelings are that, for snapper grouper species, size limits just increase discards, dead discards.

MR. LORENZ: As a stakeholder, I agree with that entirely. For the commercial industry, as little as can be discarded is the way to go.

MR. FEX: All right. Do you guys have any ideas on a trip limit? I know we don't even know our ACL or whatever, but I will throw that out.

DR. COLLIER: To me, that's going to be analyzed after we get the ABC.

MR. HUDSON: Looking back at the history, in 2012, we had 20,000 allocated, 21,000 pounds allocated. In 2013, we had 21,000 allocated. In 2014, we had 51,000 pounds allocated, and so that range of just doubling affects a lot of our thought, because we went from the fifty fish to the seventy-five fish just for that. I don't know what ACL we would have for commercial, but that's a big deal right there, just knowing that number, and I guess next week will bring some of that information.

MR. JOHNSON: It still is a bycatch fishery though. I think that's what is important to realize. I don't know of anyone that went out there and targeted red snapper when they opened up commercially. It just allowed you to keep fish that you might normally discard, and so I think we don't have to have a real large trip limit. At least for me, on my commercial boat, my guys would rather be able to retain those fish, even if it's fifty or seventy-five pounds every trip, to add to that bottom line, what they're going to get paid, versus having one great trip and then the next trip throwing them back.

DR. COLLIER: There was one more alternative in this, and it was down below everything, which is prohibit commercial possession and harvest of red snapper in the South Atlantic using spearfishing gear. That was to keep it as a bycatch fishery. If you're spearfishing, you're targeting, and so that was the idea behind that one.

MR. JOHNSON: A lot of the spear fishermen also hook-and-line while they're out there, and so, if it doesn't have a hole in it, is it okay? That would be my enforcement issue. It's not fair to restrict him, and I don't know.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for those comments. We will go on to the Action 8, which is looking at management measures for the recreational sector. It's starting off with a season. I have a wide range of ways that seasons are going to be set up. A lot of this is going to depend on what the ACL and ABC is for recreational red snapper. That is going to determine it.

Probably the more important part about this one would be the recreational bag limit and potential size limits, and so if you guys want to comment on that, as well as maybe a potential season, if you guys think we should avoid the spawning season or anything like that. I think that would be beneficial.

MR. FEX: I will have to note that does kind of hurt the recreational sector, because usually it's done in the summertime, and that is the spawn, and so I will note that, but go ahead, Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I will just start the conversation off. Like you said, we don't know what we're going to be allowed to catch, but I think, in starting this, I see these proposals from one month to four months, and probably a good idea on any of them would be like Alternative 2b, and start it out slow, with Saturdays and Sundays, for however long.

That allows the maximum number of people to participate, and it's probably the most fair. I also think, by condensing it into two days a week, versus spreading it out, so a guy like me doesn't go out on Tuesday. Again, as Kenny said with the commercial sector, you're going to want to record a lot of data on here. It might be a lot easier to know that there is two days a week to try to intercept and capture the recreational data.

MR. JOHNSON: I am just curious if law enforcement weighed in on any of these options. No? Okay. I am just wondering what would be easier to enforce. In the State of Florida, we still have a fishery in state waters, and that's a real issue. There is some law enforcement things with any of this. If you make it too complicated, myself, I would just open it up. When the ACL is projected to be met, shut it. I think that's how they do it in the Gulf.

DR. COLLIER: Does the no size limit account for recreational fishing as a recommendation or - I will note, last year, just looking at the MRIP number of discards in the charter and private recreational sector -- I believe there was around 700,000 red snapper that were discarded.

MR. LORENZ: Looking at this with the whole universe of what you're going to do with the red snapper, just viewed like this, it's very difficult. I think I would lean to the size limit when some of the other things we're going to talk about later come into play, like requirement of the descending devices, et cetera. The fact is that the season may be with a cap on how deep we recreational anglers can go for it, and so, if it's going to be a hundred feet or less is where we're allowed to fish, and we must have descending devices onboard, then a size limit makes sense and bad discards, the dead ones, will be decreased.

MR. FEX: I will note one thing though. I might offend the recreational sector, if all of a sudden we do open the season and the commercial don't have a size limit and the recreational do, and so I just wanted to throw that out, and so not to offend anybody later on down the road, but that would be an issue.

MR. HUDSON: When I am thinking about the descending device, the one thing I see missing in this discussion document is a list of what would be acceptable. When I talked to NMFS Law Enforcement last week, they would like to know what would be a descending device and be able to capture that universe.

Just like with venting tools, we had a problem using those like on headboats and stuff, because of the chance of lawsuits, because of somebody getting poked and stuff, whereas, if you're just down to a few individuals and they choose to do that voluntarily, but to mandate the descending device -- I know MREP has some stuff that they do each year, and, every year, that's a particular discussion point, and it seems to get better and better and more improvements, and so it would be nice to see some kind of stuff like they did at the MREP brought forward for us to consider, whether on the council level or the AP or whatever.

MR. LORENZ: I am going to second what Rusty said, too. I think it would be good to at least establish a few things of what can be used, like descending devices. I have been able to use the inverted weighted-down milk crate pretty well, but, also, last week, in talking to a few guides, I think descending devices are going to become rather popular.

I've been talking to guides, and they are starting to use them on the large redfish in North Carolina, because, a lot of times, those fish get pretty tired, even in like twenty feet of water, right off the beaches, and the captains want to get them down to the bottom, and so people are using these more and more, even in fisheries that are basically, in the recreational area, catch-and-release, and so I think things like -- Not too much of a brand, but the Seaqualizer-type of thing is probably going to get very popular.

DR. COLLIER: Alternative 5 is where we start to -- As Robert had mentioned before, allowable fishing areas, and that would remain open for the entire year. We have a range of depths, ranging from 150 feet down to seventy-five feet, and so that means, in areas deeper than that, you would be limited to fishing, and that comes in Alternative 6, where you have a fishing season, a variety of them.

Alternative 6a is a match of the deep-water, but, as noted, that does overlap with red snapper spawning. 6b is avoiding spawning months. That's the few months, and then 6c does the last few months, and so you could choose 6b and 6c. That's the way that one is set up. Obviously, if you pick all of them, then you would have the full year.

MR. FEX: Chip, I have a question. I went to the last council meeting, and correct me if I'm wrong, but was the council doing every effort to not close areas? Am I correct?

DR. COLLIER: They did not want to close areas. This one didn't go over well with the council, but they also didn't say to remove it, and so that's why it's still in there.

MR. JOHNSON: I do need some clarification. Wasn't it at the last meeting, the last council meeting, that they said that red snapper are no longer undergoing overfishing? Is that correct? I heard someone made that statement to me, that they had -- I don't know you recalculate SEDAR 41, but something had changed, and can anybody tell me about that?

DR. COLLIER: What they actually said at the last meeting was there have been sufficient actions to address overfishing. They were kind of silent on whether or not it ended. A significant portion of the fishing mortality rate in the last year was due to harvest, and, since harvest had ended in 2015 and 2016, they felt that that was sufficient to end overfishing, or it was a sufficient action to.

MR. JOHNSON: That came from the SSC or who did that come from?

DR. COLLIER: That came from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

MR. JOHNSON: What did we -- Never mind.

MR. LORENZ: Robert, a bunch of us were at that meeting, and that was Roy Crabtree that stated that, just while at the table.

MR. JOHNSON: I was involved in SEDAR 41, and that's why I'm just a little bit confused about what changed, what happened between now and then.

DR. COLLIER: They sent us some letters that actually describe that, and that is included in your briefing book. We also have a request on clarification. Are there any comments on these areas or seasons or anything like that?

MR. LORENZ: I will just make a quick one. I mean, it seems like the hundred-foot alternatives and less is very reasonable. When you get to Alternative 6, it's questionable, in mid-August, when we're told they're spawning, and then, January to May, you'll be fishing in areas where there will be grouper, and so I wonder if they're alternatives at all. It makes the only sensible one -- Even, since we're not going to be able to keep very many, possibly Alternative 6c is the only thing that makes some sense up there.

MR. JOHNSON: So this is for the deeper water, deeper than what depth?

DR. COLLIER: There is a variety of depths listed up here, ranging from 150 to seventy-five feet, going down to seventy-five feet. A lot of this will likely depend on the ABC as well and how long of a season that everybody wants to have, and so there will have to be a lot of analysis done, and it is heavily reliant on the hopefully upcoming ABC.

MR. BRAME: This has been looked at in the Gulf. Dr. Bob Shipp came up with it. It's called a depth/distance regulation, and what law enforcement would tell you is the depth is what is important, but, for law enforcement, you need a distance off the beach. That's easier for them to enforce than a distance.

One thing that is not captured here is the real reason behind it is to protect those large spawners in the deeper water in the Gulf, and I'm not sure if the same thing occurs in the Atlantic. I think it does, but you are foregoing the yield of those larger, bigger spawners on the smaller fish, and also you decrease the barotrauma, and they are starting to get some information. I mean, they basically have a nine-mile depth/distance rule right now in the Gulf. 75 percent of the harvest is in state waters, and so there is some analysis you could do in the Gulf, and you might could transfer that to the Atlantic.

MR. MOSS: A couple of things. One of the issues you're going to run into with that on the Atlantic side is the variance in depths versus distance, just throughout the State of Florida. Down where I live, the Fort Lauderdale/West Palm area, at 150 feet, you're still in state waters in some of those spots, and so that could be an issue.

The other thing, and I would like to get some chime-in from maybe Manny and Greg, some of the Keys guys, is even some of these deeper depths, to a lot of people, which used to be like mutton areas down in the Keys, now you're getting a lot of red snapper bycatch, from what I hear, and so I'm just curious if this going to kind of end up being -- Not end up being, and it is, but a red snapper bycatch issue. Even now, in some of these, quote, unquote, shallower depths, what are you guys seeing? I know, when I talked to one other captain down there, that is what he is seeing now, and so I'm curious to have you guys chime in about that.

MR. HERRERA: Most of the guys that I hear interacting with red snapper are a little deeper than that, at 100 or 150. Down there, at least the guys that I know, it takes 200 or 250, and so not as much, but, then again, I don't ever get out there, and so that's just from what I hear.

MR. MOSS: I know that, traditionally, that used to be the depth, 200 or 220. That used to kind of be the red snapper area. I used to fish that when I would go down there, but I've been hearing more and more that they're encroaching into the 150 range, the 160, where a lot of the mutton fishing was going on. Maybe, Greg, you can talk to that.

MR. MERCURIO: We're seeing them now in 120 feet. Last week, my discards, in 140 feet, were 200 a day, and so there's a lot of them, and they're moving around, too.

MR. MOSS: That's what I have been hearing more and more. Yuri, I know who fishes down there, he's been telling me exactly that, that a lot of the mutton spots are kind of drying up with red snapper just taking over down there.

MR. JOHNSON: A couple of points. On spawning aggregation -- This exercise is really just about reducing recreational discards and not specifically, I don't think, targeting certain sized fish, because every spawning aggregation that I have encountered, in thirty-six years of fishing in northeast Florida, has been between eighty and 120 feet in depth. I have never really encountered a spawning aggregation out in that deeper water. I am not saying that they haven't been there, but I have just never encountered them, and so I think this is just trying to get at recreational discards over -- In the deeper water, we know that barotrauma is worse, and so more of those fish die.

MR. MOSS: Understood, and I agree with exactly what you're saying, Robert. I am just saying that, as we start to look at this and putting these prohibitions on different depths, just be wary that -- Like I said, I'm using the Keys as an example, and we're seeing them more and more in shallower water, and so it's a much broader range of depths that we would have to look at, which I know that nobody wants to shut anything down, and so we've got to kind of be careful there.

MR. HUDSON: One of the things that bothers me, with regards to the St. Augustine to Jacksonville area, all the way up to probably the South Carolina/North Carolina line, is there is a lot of folks that have to go a lot further off in the recreational headboat and charter boat stuff, in order to get to some decent bottom.

There is a lot of mud back inshore, and the main thing I keep hearing from all of the states, North Carolina and South Carolina and Georgia and Florida, is the proliferation of red snapper that is starting to show up, and, as a last thought, in 1989, June to July, when I found a spawning aggregation of red snapper, they were all twenty-five-pound fish, and I was in sixty-five foot of water, five-and-a-half miles off the beach of Ormond Beach, and so I know that that whole variance of most of the places that I encountered was always between what I figured was ten or twelve fathoms right on up to twenty fathoms, and that was the norm for the big spawners.

Now, I don't know what to say about the smaller aggregations of chickens that are breeding, because they usually have to find a place to hide from bigger things, like sandbars, but, once you get to be a sow or a pony, those animals can get up in the upper water column, all the way to surface, and take mackerel gear down and the whole nine yards, and so it becomes a different world for that red snapper, after it's got seven to twelve years under its belt.

DR. COLLIER: Greg, I had a question for you, in regards to the red snapper moving around quite a bit. In most areas, they are typically re-caught, in mark-recapture studies, very near to the place where they were tagged, and I was wondering if you had any idea why they would be moving

down in the Keys a little bit more. Is it temperature-related or current-related or anything like that?

MR. MERCURIO: They move around quite a bit. We will see them in some places for a couple of weeks and then they'll be gone, and we'll see a few muttons where they were, and then they will show up somewhere else, but they move around quite a bit.

MR. HUDSON: Historically, back in the late 1970s and mid-1980s, when I fished down in the Keys, both south of the Marquesas and on over to the Tortugas to the west, I would find a lot of chicken snappers mixed with yelloweye, right on the forty-fathom ledge, to the south side of Rebecca Shoals and all that stuff, and so that's two-hundred-and-twenty-whatever foot, but, if they're saying that was a historical place and moving back inshore, but, when I found sows, some of those depths were sometimes shallow. It was just a timing thing, and it would be in a whole different area. It's like that one thing in 1989. That was a shaft and a propeller, and there was nothing there. There was no food in their bellies or nothing for that entire month, and so it's just a different world once they get to be big animals like that.

DR. COLLIER: Anything else on the recreational?

MR. LORENZ: I would just like to offer one thing, a thought I had, when reading all of this. If you get into any kind of alternatives where you want to prohibit recreational fishing for the snapper grouper fishery, and I looked at 7 and 8 there, I would focus more on an alternative such as Alternative 8, which states, based on red snapper abundance, where something like 7, which is red snapper discards, could be under it.

I think if you go to something where you start making a criteria that you publish being the red snapper discards for the recreational industry that you will get a lot more push-back, and it won't have the validity that it would on abundance. Right now, I think, if you're counting discards, you're going to basically get them from the headboats. You're not going to get too much for the charter boats, and you're knowing -- We keep talking about the problem, but you're getting virtually no information from the private recreational angler. The abundance, there are many more means that you can determine that there's a lot of fish there, and if you want to protect them, almost like a conservation area.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Going on to Action 9, something you guys have been asking for for quite some time. It's potentially looking at a recreational fishing permit for the South Atlantic region. There is three alternatives for that. The first one is red snapper. You would only need that to possess, fish for, or harvest red snapper.

The second alternative is to look at snapper grouper species that are typically associated with red snapper. Some of the common ones that you would think of are black sea bass, gray triggerfish, and vermilion snapper, maybe put those in a group, or have it for all species within the fishery management unit.

MR. HUDSON: Last week, I was on an Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission call, which they deal with the three-mile and back into the beach stuff for our east coast, and our whole deal was taking the HMS angler permit, which is a recreational permit that is issued from Maine to Texas, and that only covers the stuff outside of state waters.

I asked them how many of them were there issued so far, and it's been in place for a couple of years, and it's 20,000, but the thing that frightens Atlantic States is the fact that you've got millions of fishermen that are in state waters that probably never get out into the federal waters, and then they're trying to get the states to do some kind of complementary rulemaking to match the federal stuff. That's a pretty -- I mean, 20,000 is doable, but, when you start getting into millions of people that's going to check a box wanting a red snapper and have something associated with that, that gets kind of daunting, I would say.

MR. FEX: I will note though that I did hear something at the last council meeting about, as we all try to get some kind of recreational stamp and get a grasp of it, who would actually report? That would come up to the question of, well, the vessel, and so we almost might want to look at a permit for the vessel, and that being the reason.

Also, I don't think MRIP wants to change, at least from what I understand, and so, even if we do come up with the recreational number or the amount of people, I don't think they're going to use it, and so I just wanted to let you know that one.

MR. BRAME: I disagree. The goal here is to identify the universe of fishermen, and it is true that there is only a few million trips, compared to about 8 or 9 percent of the trips in the ocean are in the EEZ, but it's still a couple million trips, which is tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of anglers, which sounds like a lot, but, when you compare it to the millions of anglers that are fishing in state waters, you can see how they're not adequately sampled, and it's a two-part sampling thing that I won't go into, but I would think the most important thing we could do is to require some kind of permit for snapper grouper species, to identify that universe, so they can be effectively sampled, and I think MRIP would really like that.

MR. FEX: I agree with you, and we have actually tried to push that for a long time, this recreational stamp identifying the user group, but, just from what I have heard at the council meetings -- I am sure you might get the people to survey, but I don't think they're going to use them to change their ways.

MR. JOHNSON: Dick is spot on. We are trying to identify who the universe is. We have a duck stamp, and everybody that goes hunting doesn't buy a duck stamp, but just the people who intend -- They may not ever kill a duck, but they intend to kill a duck, and so they go get their federal -- I don't want a state. I want a federal reef fish stamp for reef fish species that someone affixes to their saltwater fishing license if they intend to catch a reef fish. It's that simple. It's not complicated at all, and Magnuson is going to be reauthorized here, hopefully in the next year or so, and there is a bill out there right now that has a perfect segue for this, and so this is something that is very doable. There is no reason that it can't happen.

Think about the people that buy a lifetime fishing -- I had a meeting with a congressman last week, and he buys a lifetime -- In Florida, you can get a lifetime hunting and fishing, and they've got a word for it, but he doesn't fish in the ocean. How many people are included in this big angling registry that MRIP looks at that are just like this gentleman, and so we have to figure out who intends to catch a reef fish. Mahi and tuna and wahoo, we don't need to get all fish in the FMP, but just reef fish, the ones that have discard problems.

MR. HULL: I agree, and we've been working on trying to figure out a way to get the recreational federal water angler to have some type of identification, with some type of a stamp or a permit, and I think your question, Kenny, as to -- If we do that, we'll at least get the number on the universe of potential anglers that are in the federal waters, and that should be for all of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit, for any of it.

Then, as far as who reports, I think that can be worked out, and one of the -- An example of that could be like maybe a certain percentage that is randomly picked. 10 percent are going to be picked, and it will change, and you're going to have to be a report. It's going to be a requirement of obtaining that permit that, if you're picked to report, you will.

It might be more manageable that way, rather than everybody that has one of these permits or stamps is going to have to report. I don't think that's going to happen, but the first thing to do is to get the number. That is crucial for all of us, and it doesn't matter which sector you're in, because that's the big elephant that's killing us, is this huge, extrapolated number of dead discards from the recreational sector.

MR. FEX: Don't get me wrong. I do agree with you. I am supportive of the recreational stamp, but I just sat there and listened to the conversation, and so that's all it is, and so don't take me wrong by disagreeing with you guys.

MR. JOHNSON: Just one more question. Do we have anybody that hunts ducks in the room? Dick. Okay. Isn't there some kind of sort of generic reporting requirement on that? Don't you report like how many times you went? Can you elaborate on that?

MR. BRAME: Well, yes, there is two different things. What you are referring to is the HIP Survey, the Hunter Information Program, and that is -- People wrongly think that determines what the harvest is. That has nothing to do with the actual harvest. It's an avidity survey. It tells you how many not only went, but how many people went zero to five times, five to twenty times, or more than twenty times, and so you could do that, but they also do what Mr. Hull said, which is they randomly sample a small proportion that have to report. They send in wings, so they can get an age and sex of the ducks.

MR. MUNDEN: I agree with what's been said by a number of people around the table here, and, whether or not the Full Council would go along with the recommendation, but, if this advisory panel feels strongly about this, and I feel fairly strongly that this apply to all species, then I think it would be very appropriate for this advisory panel to support that particular action.

MR. BRAME: I also think it's important to sort of recognize this as a two-tier process, where, in a perfect world, you would have a stamp or permit that you would have to purchase, because then you wouldn't have people just signing up for nothing, but I would be willing to settle for a requirement for a free sign-up for a permit, as the initial stage, like they've done in the Gulf, in a number of states. A perfect world would be you would have to purchase a permit.

DR. COLLIER: So a couple of things that you guys have brought up, and what has been done by the council, either in the past or is going to be done by the council in the future, is, in Amendment 15, there was a requirement to have a portion of recreational fishermen report. However, that option has never been approved by OMB, because we can't provide them with an estimate of how

many recreational fishermen are actually going out there, because we don't know how many recreational fishermen are going out there. Therefore, we would never be able to supply them with the number of recreational fishermen that would be impacted.

It's a circular argument that we have not been able to get out of yet. I believe that amendment was approved eight years ago, and it still has not been approved by OMB, and so that regulation can't go in place.

The second part of this is the council applied for a grant to look at electronic reporting for private recreational fishermen. That was approved, and we got the funding for it, and so what we're going to be looking at is alternative methods to do private recreational reporting, and it's going to be designed by the Snook and Gamefish Foundation, and all the data is going to be supplied to ACCSP, and so hopefully we're going to test it out with like 200 private recreational anglers to begin with and then potentially expand it, if that is an option that people would like to use.

In order for the permit to be useable, there is likely going to be a cost associated with that, and we would develop that with the Snook and Gamefish Foundation, and so we would be looking into several of these things that you guys are discussing already, but the program is going to be starting up in mid-June, and none of that data is, obviously, available yet.

MR. FEX: Jim, can you introduce yourself? I know you just came in here.

MR. ATACK: I'm Jim Atack, from Oak Island, North Carolina.

MR. LORENZ: I would like to just bring up one point, that this Sub-Alternative 2c is the thing that everybody here has been asking for and harping on, and, if that comes through, that's a first step, to log and register all of us. Alternative 3 gives a reporting requirement. You don't have to just throw away 4, but I would hate to go to 4 right away, because, if there is a species that is important to manage, or becomes a choke species for the recreational fishing group, you could always require, for a certain species like red snapper, a tag for harvest and possession that would be in addition to the fact that you would have a requirement for the license. I would hate to just go to Alternative 4 and not go to Sub-Alternative 2c, where we could have 2c and someday have the option of a 4.

MR. HUDSON: When I think about the recreational, I have to think in terms of private, charter boat, and headboat. We've got the headboat pretty much locked in, between some observer stuff and some reporting stuff that's been in place for a while. Charter boat, the best example that I can point to is the South Carolina charter boat, where they have broken some of that information out. We haven't done it for the rest of the South Atlantic Council, but that's another step, but those professionals are a smaller world of boats and easier to monitor.

The private recreational, something that John Carmichael had brought up a few years ago, when it comes to MRIP and all that type of stuff, is who gets outside of three miles. What percentage of the total private recreational has, one, a boat, or a friend that has a boat and they go, and that's really subset type of thing.

I don't see where you get all of those people, year in and year out, and the best I can see is a subset of that private recreational that gives you the information, and there is a lot of professional, private

recreational people that are part of clubs and groups and stuff and do these different things that I have heard about, like iSnapper and things, in other areas, but it's the type of thing that we've got to think outside the box here, because you could be talking a million people that are private recreational that, at some point, once or twice or fifteen times a year, get outside of three miles on the east coast of the South Atlantic, and so I'm just throwing that out.

MR. JOHNSON: Can I make a motion? **I would move Alternative 2, Sub-Alternative 2c.**

MR. STIGLITZ: Second.

MR. JOHNSON: I want the council to move forward with this. We've been talking about this since I've been on this AP, and I think this may be my last year, and so a long time. This has been talked about and talked about, and we've done absolutely nothing but talk about it. I just wanted to get that on the record.

MR. FEX: Richard Stiglitz seconded it. Any questions on the motion at hand? **All those in favor, please raise your hand. It's unanimous. The motion passes.**

I do want to make a comment. I was involved with the Marine Resource Education Program, and I was talking to a recreational fisherman, and he was pretty hot-headed about the council and they don't know what's going on out there and now they're wanting me to try to report when I'm coming in, and I sat there and I talked to him, and I said, you know, what's kind of funny is you want them to know what's out there, but yet you don't want to report. He was like, dang, you've got a point there. I just wanted to make that at hand, because I know, as we all sit here, and I say, well, this guy threw this much back, and they don't know that until it's there in the data, and so I just wanted you to know that.

MR. JOHNSON: To that point, Kenny. This is really, to me, not so much about reporting. It's about just identifying who intends to go fishing. We haven't even done that, and so that's the least we can do.

MR. FEX: Robert, I wasn't trying to make a complication to your point. I was making a point that sometimes the recreational sector doesn't believe in the process, but, unless they give the data to the process, then they really don't -- Then the scientists don't see it. It had nothing to do with the motion at hand, and so don't get me wrong. I was making a point that some people don't want to report, but then they actually ain't showing what they're really seeing.

MR. STIGLITZ: I'm a commercial fisherman, and, when they first did it to me, I felt the same way, the same exact way you're saying that the recreational sector don't want to do, but I have to do it. I don't have a choice. If I want to fish, I've got to do it, and they need to do the same exact thing that I do and the charter boats are going to do and the headboats are going to do. **While I'm at it, you need to scroll back down, because I want to make a motion on Alternative 3, Alternative 3b. I would like to make that a motion, that we accept that.** If they don't do their logbooks, they do not get a permit, just like I have to do.

MR. FEX: Anybody second the motion?

MR. LORENZ: I will second it.

MR. FEX: All right. Second by Robert.

MR. JOHNSON: I think the issue, Richard, is you're not going to get the same kind of information that you do from a commercial logbook, because your fish are being sold, and it's pretty easy. I think what Dick was talking about, when he said zero to five trips and five to ten trips, that kind of information would be helpful, because the zeroes are just as important as the large numbers, and that's my fear of this voluntary recreational reporting.

You are going to get the cream of the crop of recreational anglers that actually go a lot. I am not interested in that guy as much as I am about the guy that never goes but once or twice, but he is sort of thrown in that big pool, and I know MRIP -- I don't understand enough of it. I know they have things that take things like that into account, but that's what we need to really find out. How many people are counted as fishermen that really aren't doing much fishing, because we can't just assume, because they bought a saltwater fishing license, that they're out there at the same level as other people.

MR. WAUGH: Richard, to your motion, one of the issues we have with the commercial is there is no -- You can wait until the end of the year and not turn in a logbook report, number one, and wait until the end of the year and turn in a bunch of garbage and get your permit. That needs to stop, and I think it would be helpful here if you just clarify, within your motion, are you talking about giving fishermen the opportunity at the end of the season, when the season is over, to supply data, or are you talking about ongoing? If they haven't provided data ongoing throughout that season, then they're not eligible to have that permit renewed.

MR. STIGLITZ: I want them to put the data in there. I mean, I don't care if we do it by the month. I know I get behind on some of my stuff. I just had to turn some in, because we hadn't fished for the last couple of months. I don't know the answer, but, if you don't put some information in there, you should not be entitled to get your permit again.

If you don't make something in there so that they have to report it -- I mean, I was talking with Manny today, and we've got commercial fishermen, to this day, that are not reporting their fish. We talked about it today, and they're selling their stuff on the back -- Now they're all concerned, and it was all about hog snapper, and, well, I catch almost that many myself in the course of a year, and it's a mess. I don't care about that guy. He hasn't played by the rules.

If a recreational fisherman wants to be a recreational fisherman, and he wants us to stand up for him, I want him to play by the rules just like all the rest of us have to play by the rules. I want his data to be put in there, just like all the rest of us have to do, so we know what we're talking about and what we're doing in here. When 50 percent, or better than 50 percent, of the fish being caught that nobody in this room knows anything about, we're not -- We don't have good science. That's all I am asking for, is a -- We just said, look, you've got to have a permit, a license or whatever way they want to do it, and make sure they put some kind of data in there.

Granted, there is going to be some false stuff, but I think the recreational sector is as responsible as we are, and they're going to start putting good data in there, because there is going to be people that say that I ain't giving you the information, and that's the guy that we're not going to take care of. We're going to take care of the guy that plays by the rules.

MR. BRAME: I am going to oppose the motion, not because I don't want the information, but I think that there are better ways to get the information. With the commercial fishery, or the charter and headboat fishery, you're talking about a few thousand people. In the recreational fishery, you're talking about hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people. If you think you're going to get good information from all of those folks, I think there are studies that show that's not the case. You are far better off randomly sampling a small percentage of them and having them required to report in a panel survey to get good, accurate information.

Now, if you're talking about a logbook, something like the HIP Program, where you're required to have it before you go out, and I can go into that more later if folks want, but that is the only way -- If I am going to hunt waterfowl, I have to have done the HIP Survey, which just says that I went several times last year, and I harvested this many ducks and doves and rails and gallinules and coots and snipe and woodcock. I would oppose it, simply because of the logbook. I think the idea of trying to get all recreational fishermen to turn in a logbook is a fool's errand.

MR. FEX: Can I ask you a question? Is that survey done before they renew their permits the next year? Is that what you are commenting on?

MR. BRAME: In order to get your duck stamp and to be able to waterfowl hunt, you have to have completed a HIP Survey.

MR. FEX: That is pretty interesting. Thank you.

MR. BRAME: It's once a year, in order to get it. They don't require you to -- Now, they do have a small sample of people that are required to take a wing from every duck and a tail from a goose and put it in an envelope and send it in, a part survey.

MR. LORENZ: As the person who seconded Richard's motion, I think where I would come in on 3b would be that -- I would prefer the language to be changed that a permit cannot be renewed unless the reporting requirements have been fulfilled, as required, for the previous year. That leaves it open to what those reporting requirements can be, and you can start easy and phase in. The first thing might just be how many trips did you take and did you fish for red snapper. That might be it for the first year, and then logbooks can evolve. Thank you.

MR. HULL: That's what I was going to say. You don't know what they're going to come up with yet, as far as any of this, but I think the point that you're making is make them report, however you come up with, whatever is going to work. They need to actually have type of reporting involved with it.

MR. STIGLITZ: Yes, I agree with that 100 percent. You can change that to just what they said there. I just want some reporting.

MR. HUDSON: I am with them on that too, because it's one thing to have them get a permit. It's a whole other can of worms dealing with, one, how are they going to report? Is it just going to be a smartphone and a couple of little things to answer and a subset of that bigger picture? That is the only thing I can see that would work, going into it. Coming out of it, ten years from now, there

might be some other developments, but starting this whole thing and getting everybody reporting, you're going to have compliance problems, big-time.

MR. MOSS: To echo what Bob has said and a few others, Richard, on the surface, I don't entirely disagree with you that there does need to be some sort of reporting requirement, but, right now, remember that there is no logbook that anybody has to fill out, and so, number one, you've got to define that if you're going to go with that, but I would be perfectly happy with just requiring a simple survey.

Every year, when you apply for said stamp, saying how many times did you fish for snapper grouper last year, and most people aren't going to be completely accurate with it, and I'm okay with that, as long as I've got rough numbers to go by and we've got something to deal with here, but I would be happy with, like I said, just a simple survey of did you fish for snapper grouper last year and how many times.

MS. MARHEFKA: My experience has also been that, the closer you stick to a system that people already identify with -- In other words, if hunters are already familiar with one kind of system, they're like, oh, I'm already doing something like this for hunting, and so they're not asking me to do too much, and so I think that that's a really important addition, and I think let's just not start off by trying to -- Let's not lose the good in sight of the perfect.

MR. FEX: I can say it does set a good example by using that.

MR. JOHNSON: This is a question for Dick. How much does a duck stamp, a federal duck stamp, cost?

MR. BRAME: I think it went up to twenty-five bucks.

MR. JOHNSON: So that's the cost of running that program. I think my understanding is that, any kind of federal program like that, they only charge the cost of the program, and so --

MR. BRAME: I don't think it's the same in Interior. Duck stamps fund -- It's far more than the cost of the program.

MR. JOHNSON: All right.

MR. MOSS: To continue on with that, most people, recreational people anyway, are buying their fishing licenses online, and it would be nothing to -- Like, for my recreational fishing license, I also have a lobster stamp, and I also have a snook stamp, and I have to click on the little buttons to get every single one of them, and it would be nothing to, when I want to get my reef fish stamp, answer two more questions of did you fish last year and how many times. It would be nice and simple. If it's a couple of dollars, as it is with snook and lobster, it's perfectly okay with me.

MR. BUFF: Robert, I think you brought this up last year, that we had this same exact conversation about the duck stamp, and my point is the legwork is already done. We could probably duplicate that template and add a few questions in it and it would be finished. I think you made this point last year. If you can't go in there and take five minutes to do the survey, you can't get your stamps.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more questions on the motion at hand?

DR. COLLIER: With this permit, it is going to take a while to develop. It's not going to be a quick thing. There are several questions that you guys see in the document, and so don't expect it to be available for next year. I am just trying to manage expectations.

MR. FEX: We have been waiting a long time, Chip. We can wait a little longer, buddy. You're all good.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for your patience.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more comments on the motion at hand?

MR. ATTACK: I guess, if you read the Alternative 3a, I think some of that verbiage is a little better for what we're looking for, because I think it's talking about there, instead of b, that it's a previous time block, and so you're not locking in for a year, and it's more flexible if you use that type of verbiage on making sure that the filing is completed for the previous time block. If the time block is a year, you're good. If the time block is not a year, then that permit becomes invalid, and that might address some of the things that Gregg was talking about of how at the end of year, on the commercial side, people might throw a bunch of junk in, just to be compliant so they can get their permit renewal. I think it's good to think about that verbiage, too.

MR. BRAME: To me, "logbook" implies some sort of more active reporting, like weekly or monthly and by species and the number you caught. As long as that's in there, I would oppose this, the term "logbook". Some kind of reporting requirement, like a HIP Program, I've got no problem with.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more comments? Let's go ahead and vote. **All those in favor of the motion at hand, sixteen in favor; all those opposed, none; any abstentions, none.**

MR. HUDSON: I have a question for Chip. Does the Science Director have the ability to pick private recreational people for some kind of reporting and stuff at this time, with certain amendments?

DR. COLLIER: It has been approved in an amendment. However, it has not been approved by OMB to allow the Science Director to do that. I don't know if you guys want to go through this, but there are a list of questions. We don't have to go through all of them, but I think this first one is pretty good. You guys have already discussed it some. Do you guys envision this permit being at the fisher level or the vessel level?

MR. LORENZ: I would like to propose considering 2. Why can't we start with a vessel permit and, attached to the vessel permit, the owner gets the individual license, so to speak, for the fishing. Then everybody else just buys whatever the license is, and so you could have a vessel permit. Then, with the vessel permit, the owner or operator or whatever is covered, and then everybody else can be recorded by getting a license or permit for the individual angler.

MR. JOHNSON: I think it has to be individual. Again, we're after effort. We want to know who intends to go fishing. I don't care which boat they go on. Obviously for-hire vessels, headboats

and for-hire vessels, is a whole different thing, but I am talking about recreational anglers. I just want to know who intends to go fishing. It's that simple, and so I think you would put -- Each individual, when he buys his saltwater fishing license, just like somebody that goes hunting, again, they buy a federal reef fish stamp.

MR. STIGLITZ: I agree with Robert. I own five different boats, one commercial boat and four recreational boats, and I wouldn't want to have to buy a permit for all four of my other boats. I think it ought to go to the person and not to the vessel.

MR. MOSS: Yes, I completely agree. I think it would just convolute things if you had the different levels of permits. If you're going to fish for snapper grouper, everybody on the boat has to have a permit and that's it, and they have to have their own, just like a fishing license. If there's one rod on the boat, everybody on the boat is supposed to have a fishing license, and it should work the same way.

MR. BRAME: The sampling unit is the individual fisherman. That's how you measure effort, is by fishermen, and you would really obfuscate the data if you've got a boat with eight or ten people on it and the captain is supposed to keep up with what everybody has caught or some sort of effort estimate for them. You are degrading your data. It needs to be an individual fishing permit.

MR. MUNDEN: I agree with what's been said. If we require the permit for the vessel, or the vessel captain, that would be like having a blanket permit, and I don't think you're going to get the information that you need if you go that route.

MR. JOHNSON: As far as type of data, I mean who and where, I think those are important things, because discard mortality is a real issue we're facing in all of these fisheries, and so it would be nice to know -- I hear, all the time, at different meetings, guys say, well, all I ever do is go out in my twenty-two-foot boat and catch black sea bass in the wintertime and you won't let me do that. That guy, he is fishing in eighty feet of water, and we need to know that that's all he ever does, in eighty feet of water. I think that sort of general information, and it doesn't have to be that specific, but if you're going to have them report random, just a select few, you could at least get some of that kind of information.

MR. MOSS: A quick question, and this might be for you, Chip, but are we talking generally -- Does this kind of address what we already spoke about, that, in order to get a permit, you're going to have to take brief survey, or is this the, quote, unquote, random data that will be selected for people and random and question them, because I think they're kind of two different things.

DR. COLLIER: For this, you start off with each individual -- It sounds like you guys are recommending that each individual would have their permit, and they could potentially, as you guys have mentioned in the past, go through an education program. Is that what you are referring to, where they would do an education program? Then, when they're doing their application, they would supply certain pieces of information, such as who they are, the type of fishing they typically do, different things like that, get some demographic information. Then, for the next part of it, if it's a random selection on who reports additional data, that would be a second component to this, and that would come up under Action 10.

MR. MOSS: Yes, that was my question. Because like Robert was just speaking to Number 2 here. Are we talking about that on kind of the first tier of this is what you have to do in order to even have a permit, or is this going to be the sampling at random, if you will?

DR. COLLIER: Commercial guys, when they actually apply for a permit, they have to fill out certain things. The same thing with charter boat captains and headboat captains. When they apply for a permit, there are certain pieces of information that they supply, and so that's what this is going to be focusing in on, I believe. I didn't write all these questions. They were kind of given to me, and I hadn't really thought about them in great detail.

MR. R. FREEMAN: I would be a little bit troubled by the complexity of what I hear being suggested. Take me as a private boat owner, and I would get five of the guys in the neighborhood, and they're going to come back and be required to fill out a survey and want to know where we fished, and I didn't tell them where we fished, because I don't want them to know, and so I think we're digging a hole that probably has no rewards.

I used to work with a guy that he would come up with Monday morning memos that made no sense, and I told him one day, don't make a rule that don't make sense, and don't make one that you don't intend to enforce, because that confuses them as to whether we need to abide by all that other garbage that came out in the previous weeks, and so I think we need to be careful where we think that it can go down, to the point of the individual angler that went on a private boat is going to know even what species of fish he caught.

I ran charters for many years, and I am not into the technology and all this kind of stuff. When I decided to bring my tablet, this is what I brought, but you just realize that what are we trying to gain? Is it the pressure that's on the fishery and how many people are actually going and what's being caught? That can all be gathered from the fellow driving the boat, that owns the boat, owns the permit, or whatever writing down what is caught, and it's not difficult. I mean, we go out and get several hundred fish a day, and you've just got a half-a-dozen categories that you're catching and turning loose and that sort of thing, and it's not complicated.

MR. MOSS: Yes, I completely agree. I think, for the purposes of just obtaining the permit, we need to keep it as simple as possible, and, if we're just going to ask how many times did you fish last year, and even that, if we're doing it on a yearly basis, is probably going to be a rough number. I think we need to keep it at that.

Again, I use my south Florida bubble, because that's where I live, but, on a given day, in even a couple of hours, I can fish anywhere from fifty feet out to 400 feet, and the people that are with me aren't going to necessarily know how deep we're fishing and what we're going for and things like that, and I may not want them to know, but, if we keep it just to how many times, at least we're getting a capture of what the user group is, and I think, at this point, that's the most important step that we need to make. I would hate to see it kind of get lost and convoluted and starting to put all of these other things on top of it to try to gather this other information, when that is the kind of stuff that should be obtained from their random surveying or whatnot.

MR. FEX: I will ask you guys, since we're talking about this, to maybe think about it and maybe draw up a survey. Maybe bring it up to us tomorrow and say here's an idea of a couple of good questions that would work, general questions, to make it easier. To your point though, a guy going

fishing, he better know what he's catching, the recreational. You're on a charter boat, and so you are the identifier. You're taking people that don't even know how to drive a boat, but the recreational guy that has got the boat that is driving offshore, he better know what he's catching, what size limits are in effect and everything. I kind of understand, but the charter boats are reporting themselves. We're just trying to get the general rec.

MR. MOSS: To that end, Kenny, I understand what you're saying, but like, for me, somebody who is fairly knowledgeable about the fishery, if I take, for instance, my two brothers and a couple other buddies, yes, they all have to get their permits and whatnot, but they're not going to -- They are relying on me to be able to tell them. For them to go back and go their app or whatever, or however we're going to do this, and start reporting that they caught five mutton and two red snapper and a couple of vermilion, whatever the case may be, but we're going to convolute this when we need to just take that first step, and I think that that first step is just figuring out who is using the resource.

MR. JOHNSON: To David's point though, it is important that we will know that that trip took place and where it took place and who in this area -- I remember, one of the SEDARs, seeing an MRIP spike during one of the waves of red snapper. After doing some digging, those fish came from Monroe County, red snapper, 180 of them, I think it was, and so that kind of stuff -- We know that didn't happen, but, anyway, that was a misidentification, but we need to know who is reef fishing and where they are. That's all we need. It's not complicated.

MR. STIGLITZ: I agree. We need to make it as simple as possible. I think you need to know who he is. Where he is fishing doesn't mean an actual GPS number. You can make it a county or you can make it a section or you can even go by state. It's simple. From Florida, from south Florida, north Florida, Georgia, that's fine. North Carolina or South Carolina, but we need to start someplace, and that's all I think we need to know, just your name, where you were fishing out of, and what type of fish you caught.

I don't care even if it's the exact -- Say mutton snapper and red snapper, but let's start off and say, look, I caught three snappers and a grouper. Start it someplace, because that's exactly how all this other stuff has started. We started someplace, and it has progressed into good information, and, if we get the recreational sector started with something very basic, like your name and where you fished out of and sort of what you caught, and, like I said, I don't care if -- I caught three snappers. If the guy don't know what kind they are, I just caught three snapper. If he knows what kind, he can write down mutton snapper and two red snapper or a yellowtail and black grouper. Up until three or four years ago, gag grouper were being sold as black grouper, and we finally straightened that out, but this all progresses in time, and I think them three little things would be a great start.

MR. ATTACK: I think the other thing you might want to consider is gear type, because I know we ran into a big problem looking at landings. Like, for hogfish, there was no gear type. If maybe just spear and hand-line, but I know, on the commercial logs, you've got your hand-lines, you've got your bandit gear, you've got your powerheads and spear. It would be good to know, from the universe, I think, how many people are participating from the spearfishing standpoint versus just hook-and-line. Maybe that's the only two gears you need on this type of permit. I don't know. I am open for suggestions.

MR. JOHNSON: The State of Florida, when they do their charter boat survey, it's pretty vague, and so there's some templates out there to look at, if you're looking for something to look at. It just basically says you fished greater than three nautical miles and -- That's a charter boat survey, but that's all we're looking for, just real basic information.

MR. FEX: I just made that comment, just because I know you guys have ideas, and it would make it generalized, and so that was my only point to do that. All right, Chip, we can move on.

DR. COLLIER: All right. I don't think we need to go through 4 or 5. Number 6, we just discussed. 7 is something we can work out later, and, Number 8, you guys have already discussed that a little bit, and so we flew through that one. I did want to give you guys an idea of how many red snapper have been intercepted from 2013 to 2015. We have red snapper in one column, the snapper grouper complex, all South Atlantic Fishery Management Council species, and then all trips. This is for private recreational anglers, since that's what we were targeting.

You can see, in some states, red snapper intercepts are very low, and this, I believe, includes both catch and discards of red snapper, and so you're going to -- As you increase the number of species, you are going to have more intercepts, but, overall, you can see there is a lot more intercepts of red snapper in Florida, ranging from fifty-one to 117, but, if you go up to North Carolina, you have one to four intercepts in a given year.

When we're looking at this, and, if there is going to be a seasonal component, or anything like that, it makes it really difficult to break this up. We can't break up one into seasons. That's obviously one trip that had fish. You probably need twenty-five to actually have a good sample, and this is what we're currently getting out of MRIP.

MR. BRAME: All species, that's the total number of trips intercepted by the MRIP survey, and so, for North Carolina, in 2015, they made 3,328 intercepts?

DR. COLLIER: Intercept, yes, and that's at the vessel level.

AP MEMBER: Okay, and then that shows the success rate for those different categories of species, okay. Thank you.

MR. BRAME: I think it would be illustrative to the group if you would show a similar thing for red drum, so you could see a well-sampled species, something like red drum or speckled trout or bluefish that is very well sampled through the MRIP process, much better sampled, and see what those intercepts are, so you have something to judge it against.

MR. HUDSON: On these trips right here, Chip, the closure of the red snapper makes it so that any discussion of red snapper, for most of those years, is just going to be discards, except for the little mini-season in 2013 and 2014, and so, really, it's estimates, built off of people's recall. It's not like a physical intercept, except for a few fish that were landed that might have been physically intercepted.

DR. COLLIER: 2013 and 2014 had seasons, and so they could have been intercepted there, but, yes, in all likelihood, a lot of these are B2, reported discards.

MR. JOHNSON: So, 2015, those numbers most likely came from a dockside survey at a boat ramp or something, where they ask a fisherman if he released any red snapper.

DR. COLLIER: Correct.

MR. HUDSON: On the red snapper, that's really not fully useful, too much, in an assessment.

DR. COLLIER: If you remember back to SEDAR 41, what they did for the landings, they actually used the -- Florida had developed different methods to estimate landings of red snapper during the mini-seasons, and so, yes, even during SEDAR 41, they identified that there were issues with MRIP in estimating landings for red snapper, due to those shortened seasons.

MR. HUDSON: Yes, but also remember that we had some bad weather that affected the recreational ability to fish in some of the other states too during the mini-seasons.

DR. COLLIER: Action 10 is modify reporting requirements for the private recreational fishery. As I had mentioned back in 2008, there was an action that created the opportunity for the Science Director to require reporting requirements for the private recreational fishery, and so any change would have to be modified. There's a list of reporting requirements for private recreational anglers. We had sub-alternatives ranging from voluntary, down to 2e, and all, at 2d, and 20 percent, at 2a, and so there is a variety of options listed there.

MR. LORENZ: I would just say, based on all the conversation that went around here, I guess the only thing to consider, at this time, is that it be simple and not intimidating to start, so that it starts simple, and so it looks like your alternatives with lower percentages of reporting would probably be more sensible, work better, along with the possibility that there could be voluntary reporting.

MR. MOSS: I agree with you, Bob. I think the lower percentages, obviously 20 being the lowest on this. The problem is, and Robert Johnson brought it up earlier, if you just do voluntary reporting, the issue that we're going to have there is it's just going to be the cream of the crop, so to speak, reporting, and that's not really accurate data, because, just as Robert said, the guy who doesn't catch anything is just as important, if not as important, as the guy who loads them up every time that he goes.

MR. ATACK: Is there a way to write this where it's flexible, so that, once we start this program, that somebody has the authority to change it from 1 percent to 20 percent, versus having to go back to another amendment, which would take two years to change the percentage of required reportings?

DR. COLLIER: There is a way to write it where that flexibility could be -- That could be incorporated in there, where it be to start off with X percent, and then, as required by the Science Director, that percent would be reporting, and so it could even start off that way. If the council recommends a certain percentage start, it could start at that, and then the Science Director could increase that in later years.

MR. BRAME: I agree with Jim. This is something better left to statistical minds, than us coming up with 20 percent or 25 percent, because it could be that you sample 1 percent randomly is far better than a biased 20 percent sample.

MR. JOHNSON: I agree with that, and, not to beat a dead horse, but we still really don't even know what the number is. Let's find the number. Then we can figure out what percentage of that number we want to sample.

MR. ATACK: Right, but, if you go ahead and put that in it now, then you're flexible later. You don't have to keep bringing it back and create a whole bunch of work down the road to get some amendment to go through, like we've done in the past over certain things, where we nitpick it and nitpick it and change it here and change it there and change it there. If we could set it up to where we've got the future in mind, knowing we may want to go there and make it flexible, then that would save a lot of work and heartache for everybody.

MR. JOHNSON: So who do you want to give the power to pick that number? I mean, you're saying somewhere down the road they're just going to come up with a number, and so who is going to do that?

DR. COLLIER: Ultimately, it would be up to the Science Director, but they typically defer back to the council, in order to give those recommendations. Alternative 3 would be a time reporting, and you guys have already discussed this a little bit, but, if you want to talk about it a little bit more. Then Alternative 4 and 5 are different ways to report, and so, Alternative 4, you are looking at -- It would be essentially a fisherman calling in and letting them know that they actually have a red snapper, and they would tell whoever they call about what time they would get back to the dock.

Alternative 5 would be a hail-in and hail-out, potentially based on a permit. You would get a permit for the day. That way, you would have a license to go fishing for the day. In order for the trip to end, you would have to hail back in with your potential catch. That's how something like that would work.

MR. ATACK: **I guess I would like to make a motion back on Alternative 2 that we consider or make a motion that the council consider a Sub-Alternative 2f or whatever it would be called that will have a range of percentages, from 1 percent to 20 percent, which could be picked by the Science Director.** Is that the right verbiage we would need?

DR. COLLIER: **I guess what I would say is tell us to put an alternative in there for 1 percent and 10 percent, and that would give us the range, the full range, of things, and those can be analyzed, because different species are going to need different things.** Something like snowy grouper, that only has 3,000 fish. If you are expanding by 100, one fish turns into 100, and so it just depends on what level of accuracy you want to get for certain species.

MR. ATACK: **All right. That sounds good.**

MR. FEX: Can you type the motion up there like that, so we can make a second on it?

MR. STIGLITZ: **Jim, why would you just go from 1 to 10?** Why wouldn't you go from 1 to 100 and leave it up to whoever is in charge of doing it? If they figure that more than 10 percent is needed, leave it to the brains that are doing it, instead of just 1 to 10 percent.

MR. ATACK: **I would go along with that.**

DR. COLLIER: 100 percent is already up there, Richard. It's all --

MR. FEX: Yes, but what we're doing is we're making it a flexible percentage, so that it could be changed.

MR. STIGLITZ: That leaves it for the flexibility for the scientific people.

MR. FEX: The Science Director would choose the 1 percent for this species and 10 percent for that one, or 50 percent for that one. That's what you're saying, I think.

DR. COLLIER: What I am saying is just let us analyze the range of alternatives, from 1 to 100 percent, and voluntary as well. That's in there, and that gives us the flexibility to come back to the group with a more developed alternative, and so that will be included, and maybe not have that range for the Science Director. They're not going to want the range. They're going to want a defined number.

MR. FEX: I might suggest maybe you just support the idea of electronic reporting, because you're going to allow them to get the number. You're just pretty much supporting this idea. You're going to want 1 to 100 percent, and the science people are going to give you what they want, whatever percent they want, and, if you just support this idea, I almost think that's what we need to do. I don't know. I might be wrong.

I will make the comment that I was at the Joint Gulf and South Atlantic Council meeting back a couple of years ago, and one of the comments was the fishermen were complaining about having to report on the way in, and the guy said, well, you can sit there and press your electronics while you're out there driving your vessel, and you can call your buddy and Facebook, and why can't you report electronically while you're driving home, and so I just wanted to make that comment, because I heard people say that, that I can't do that while I'm driving a boat and this and that. There's a lot of things you do while you're driving a boat on that trip in, and so I just thought I would let you know.

MR. LORENZ: Maybe I am jumping ahead, and I don't know about Jim's motion, but, with respect to that, Kenny, I would want to speak, in the future, against Sub-Alternative 3c, and I have my reasons for it, based on safety and practicality and intimidation, and so I would like to say something at the appropriate time.

I would be very interested to strike something like Sub-Alternative 3c out, where electronic reports for the private recreational fishermen would be required prior to disembarking from the fishing vessel, and I will bring that there are a lot of folks that go out there. In North Carolina, you're only going to start, for the snapper grouper species, maybe eighteen miles out. It's going to be basically thirty to forty-something in the southern half of the state.

It could be a small boat, a twenty-foot boat from a ramp, and here is what is happening. It's the end of the day, and you're coming back in, the sun is in your face, you're dehydrated, and you had your brains bounced around all day. I would be very much against having to report before

disembarking, because I would probably have to be non-compliant in that matter as a matter of safety.

As I said, with the sun and all of that, the utmost priority is to get through that inlet safe, as the wind starts to kick up in the day, and, for many people, getting back to the dock at an appropriate time -- I think that is way too much of an intimidating burden to do it prior to disembarking the fishing vessel, because of what that fishing vessel might be in size, and so I just think some reasonable time period, within hours, the next day, the weekly or monthly. I am okay with that, but I do not like Sub-Alternative 3c at all, or anything that would require reporting prior to disembarking of just basically a catch.

MR. FEX: To that point, the other rationale was, if the vessel comes in and they don't report what they caught, and they don't get boarded by the Coast Guard and the Marine Patrol, then they don't have to report. They're not caught. Do you know what I am saying? It's just the fact of a check-and-balance. That's all it was, and they had logic to it.

If you type your numbers in that GPS -- I mean, I can sit on the phone and -- My boat is bigger than yours, and so I am not -- That was their logic, and it was the Gulf Council, and it hit pretty hard. It hushed a lot. We can dispense with this motion, please. Any more comments on the motion at hand? Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion at hand.

DR. COLLIER: Let me repeat the motion. **The motion is to recommend the council add sub-alternatives of 1 percent and 10 percent of private recreational anglers could be selected each year to electronically report their catch.**

MR. FEX: **The motion is unanimous.**

MR. MOSS: Moving ahead to, I guess this is Alternative 3, doesn't this cover what we just voted on then, or would it make that not necessary?

DR. COLLIER: Alternative 3 is the timeframe that Bob was just discussing, but we had just voted on the motion to add percent of anglers, and so we are back to a time discussion, if you guys want to discuss it.

MR. LORENZ: With that said, I would just like to put out for -- **I would like to make a motion to strike Sub-Alternative 3c as an alternative. I would like to eliminate 3c as an option.**

MR. FEX: To Considered but Rejected.

DR. COLLIER: Just a bit of discussion on that one. Alternative 3c, that wording actually comes straight from blueline tilefish from the Mid-Atlantic, and so that's a requirement that they have for not just blueline, but all tilefish.

MR. ATACK: I guess, if this stays in there, then it goes to public comment, right? This hasn't been out for public comment yet, or has the Alternative 3c been out for public comment?

DR. COLLIER: Alternative 3c has been out for public scoping. Actually, scratch that. Amendment 43 went out to scoping, but it was a very vague document. There weren't a lot of

details in it, and so people probably didn't get a chance to see all the alternatives. It was very stripped down.

MR. ATACK: I guess, at this point, I wouldn't be in favor of removing it. I would like to see it in there, so it can go out to public comment, and then we can get the feedback from everybody before we remove this from the document.

MR. BRAME: I still have my original problem with requiring all private recreational fishermen with a snapper grouper permit to submit fishing records for each trip. I think that's probably not possible. I mean, if you had a panel, or a survey, of some to do it, that's fine, but requiring all of them to do it I think is not in the realm of possibility or probability.

DR. COLLIER: You're right. I probably need to change the wording of that, and so it would be the people selected by the Science Director.

MR. FEX: Did we get a second on the motion at hand? No? **Seeing none, Robert, sorry about that, buddy.**

DR. COLLIER: Is there any more discussion on any of the other permits? Alternative 4, once again, was you inform them that you incidentally caught a red snapper, and you would report on your way back in. Alternative 5 is based on the Mississippi Scales and Tails app that they have, which is a hail-in and hail-out procedure requiring you to report once you get back to the dock with your catch. In order to go back out, you would have to -- In order to go back out, you have to report for the previous trip, is how that one works.

MR. MOSS: Chip, just for my own clarification, Alternative 4 and Alternative 5, this just relates to that 1 to 10 percent that would be selected, correct, that we've mentioned above?

DR. COLLIER: It could be set up that way, yes.

MR. MOSS: I would prefer it. If we're going to do any of these, which I'm not saying whether I'm for or against either 4 or 5, but, if we're going to do either of them, then I think it needs to be just for that 1 to 10 percent that we're going to survey. Otherwise, that kind of makes that 1 to 10 percent survey thing obsolete, I would think.

MS. MARHEFKA: I wasn't going to comment, but now you have confused me a little. The 1 to 10 percent was just another sub-alternative of all the different percentages that could be chosen, and everything after Alternative 2 is really a sub-sub-alternative, and so I would just caution -- If I understand correctly. I would just caution that, and it was kind of hard for me to follow, and I'm kind of used to reading these, that this sort of be reworked, such that it's incredibly clear that the only people who will be subjected to these reporting requirements are whatever percentage that is not the entire universe, because I think Dick is right. I think there's no way that we're going to obviously get the entire universe. I just think, as long as that's clear, it's less likely to freak people out.

MR. MOSS: Kerry, that's exactly what I was trying to clarify. I just wanted to make sure that this was still in relation to that -- Whatever percent it is that we decide to choose, whether it's 1 to 10

or 20 to 50 or whatever, but that these other sub-alternatives, sub-sub-alternatives, if you will, are related directly to those lucky few.

MR. ATTACK: If that's not the intent, then there should be sub-alternatives on these, where it's just a percent that is required to report or it's everybody that has the permit. If you want everybody that catches a red snapper, regardless of whether they're the 5 percent that's going to be part of the survey, to report, then it should be worded that way clearly, and maybe that is two options under that. If anybody lands a red snapper, they've got to report it, like bluefin. Every bluefin that's landed, it's got to be reported, or, if you're one of the lucky that got drawn by the lottery, that you've got to report it.

MR. STIGLITZ: I do not like Alternative 4 or Alternative 5. As a commercial fisherman, we hate putting VMSs on our boat, and we are trying to make this as simple and as easy for a recreational person to do something, and I can't imagine, in my wildest dreams, a recreational fisherman wanting to hail-out and tell somebody where he's going and get on there and hail back in and tell them what he's caught and what he's done all day when I don't want one of them things on my boat, a VMS, and pretty much -- It ain't a VMS, but you're telling him that he's got to do the same thing that a VMS is going to do, and we want these people to do this stuff and be at least halfway honest about it? I just absolutely can't imagine Alternative 4 or 5.

MR. MOSS: Richard, I completely agree with you. I didn't want to open up the Pandora's Box as far as the feelings on that previously, but I just wanted to make sure that we were referencing the same thing, but I completely agree with you. I think what we were speaking about earlier, if you take your 1 to 10 percent, that, compiled with the survey that you're going to be doing to obtain one of these permits anyway, and you get a rough region of people that are going to be fishing for snapper grouper, and at least we have that user group identified -- I don't like either of these either.

AP MEMBER: We know who the hailer is, but I would hate to be the hailee on the opening day of red snapper season. We can just give out Bonnie's phone number and let them call her.

MR. STIGLITZ: **I would like to make a motion to take out Alternative 4 and 5.**

MR. FEX: Do we have a second to that motion?

MR. MOSS: I will second it.

MR. FEX: Seconded by David.

MR. LORENZ: Just if we can have some discussion just with respect to that. You heard my feelings on Sub-Alternative 3c, and I agree with Richard on 4, but I just think -- When I thought about this at home, I don't think Alternative 5 is necessarily that bad, depending on how it's done. To hail-out could be from the cellphone before you go, even early in the morning, that I am going fishing. Getting a phone number, in order to record it later, that's not so bad, if I can report later at night or tomorrow. What I wouldn't like is if I have to do it prior to disembarking on the vessel.

With Alternative 5, as a private recreational fisherman, I only dislike it if it's something that I have to do prior to getting off my vessel or very immediately thereafter. I have no problems in the

morning of calling in to get a number that I am going fishing, because, often, it's quite serendipitous. We decide at three or four in the morning whether we're going or not.

MS. MARHEFKA: I am inclined just to say, since this has not been out specifically, if I understood Chip right, this specifically has not been out to the public, I am inclined to leave the widest variety of options in and let's hear the public get upset about it or say what their issues are, and, also, maybe another alternative will come out of that that we haven't thought of.

I don't feel like we're really in the place to specifically nail this down right now, considering we don't even know the number of people we would be asking to do this. I would vote against the motion of taking it out, not because I think it's the right way to do it, but because I think it should go out to the public. Sometimes you get the best solutions out of angry people.

MR. FEX: Point noted. Any more discussion on the motion at hand? Let's vote on it. **All those in favor of the motion at hand, three in favor; how many oppose it, ten opposed; any abstain, two. Seeing that, the motion fails.** We've got one more thing on this?

DR. COLLIER: I do have one more thing.

MR. FEX: All right. We will take a break after this one. Sorry, guys, that I've kept you going this long.

DR. COLLIER: The last one is to require best fishing practices when fishing for snapper grouper species. Alternative 2 has a variety of things that could be added together. One is to require venting tools on recreational vessels, and that's 2a. 2b is require venting tools on commercial vessels. 2c is descending devices on recreational vessels. 2d is descending devices on commercial vessels, and 2e is require descending devices when releasing snapper in depths greater than a hundred feet.

MR. HUDSON: I went over the MREP Southeast website and looked at the workshop material from last year, because they don't have it uploaded for this year's meeting. There's a fourteen-slide barotrauma presentation there, with multiple types of descending devices named, the products out there.

I know some people have been doing homemade stuff, but that would at least begin the range of what would be acceptable to law enforcement, for further discussion as we get down the road. If you could provide that presentation, via email or overhead or at some point, it would help educate everybody that wasn't at the meeting last year and the year before, because, each year, it's getting better and better, and that's why I believe that descending device is going to be the cat's meow later on.

MR. FEX: I will take note that we did approve descending devices a while back in our meeting, and so just take that note, but any more comments?

MR. LORENZ: I would just say that Sub-Alternative 2e, and, in the spirit of what Mr. Robert Freeman said, if you look at that alternative, it's virtually impossible to really enforce, to have any teeth. It's really kind of a best fishing practice, or a suggested fishing practice, because who is going to be out there watching at what depth you are and whether you're using a descending device

at a hundred feet, and this is still under the private recreational angler, and so it's interesting that it's there, but it's really more, I think, a suggestion than anything with teeth. The other things, any enforcement officer can board and see whether you have them or not. Whether I have used it, who knows?

MR. HUDSON: One of the things that I learned from my shrimping was variation in low tide and high tide or mean tide or whatever, and I think Richard would understand some of that. The other scenario that I look at with fishing and barotrauma issues is it's one thing when a guy has got a rod-and-reel, let's say a 65, and it's another thing if he's got a 6/0. It's another thing if he's got an Electramate and bandits and every other thing, because all of those things affect the animal, depending on the depth, and it gets worse, naturally, as you get deeper, but sometimes careful handling protocol would be in how you fight the fish. There is a whole world there to discuss, but I just wanted to throw that out there.

MR. JOHNSON: You know, I've had a lot of experience using both the venting tools, with doing work with red snapper, and the descending devices, and the descending device is a lot easier for people to use. Venting a fish, if you know how to do it properly, I think the survivability is probably pretty good, but, if you don't know how to do it properly, you're probably going to kill just as many fish as you save. I really feel like we should be getting away from the venting tool. I don't know if there is any science to back that up, and maybe someone could speak to that, but I like descending devices, especially if you're going to be operating in deeper waters.

MR. FEX: To your point there, I know I have thrown a snapper over that I didn't vent, and he stayed on the surface, and I drove my boat around and dip-netted him back up. Then I poked him and he swam down, and so I know what you're saying though. It is a double-edged sword. Sometimes it's useful, but sometimes it ain't.

MR. JOHNSON: I think the real argument there is observed mortality versus actual mortality. What happens to that fish once he gets to the bottom? Did you just vent him properly, or did you actually puncture his intestines or all of these other things? Descending devices are a much better way to go. You are letting him relieve himself naturally, and it's just so much better. I think venting tools are something, really, that I would urge the council to get away from requiring.

AP MEMBER: I second that. I mean, you're putting surgical tool in untrained hands is essentially what you're doing. I would like to -- I agree with Robert 100 percent that we need to move toward descending devices and away from venting tools as fast as we can.

MR. FEX: Zack just made a point that we got rid of requiring the venting tools, but I think you said that point already, but good point there.

DR. COLLIER: One thing that's up here and slightly different than what is done on the Pacific Coast -- The Pacific Coast, obviously, have rockfish, and they had issues with barotrauma out there and choke species. What they did was they actually went forward with just voluntary, and that's not really an option up here, but it could be an educational program. Is there any benefit to doing voluntary as opposed to require?

MR. JOHNSON: I think absolutely. Fishermen love gadgets. I mean, I know a bunch of recreational guys that have got descending devices on their boats. Whether they will ever catch

something to use them with, I don't know, but they've got one. It's the new thing, and so they love it. I think that's a start, but you can require them as well. Either way, I am good with it.

MR. HUDSON: Back in the 1980s, I was part of the voluntary people that was working with NMFS for the turtle excluding devices to begin with, and we put in six or seven years, on a voluntary basis, and NMFS was manufacturing a lot of the original devices. Then the innovation that came from the industry -- Then we had a whole lot of other stuff that helped make it better, in that scheme of what my granddad called a better mousetrap.

That is going to be the same thing you will get out of the recreational and commercial. As soon as you can get it out there, especially if you can have some kind of way to give it to them to begin with, and then the word-of-mouth is going to make a big difference. I agree with what Robert said. I am dead-set against the venting tool in crowded situations, at the very most, and I have heard about the stomach things, that people stick the stomach, and all kinds of problems with that, and so I would stay with like the descending devices as clean as you can.

MR. MOSS: It's essentially voluntary now. I think, if we make the requirement, which I am for -- Again, I am for descending devices over venting tools, but it's essentially a voluntary thing now, because they are available. You can buy them, but, if we're going to require it, that's fine, and I'm for that.

To go along with kind of what you said, Robert, I think that, if we're going to require them, that we should also require them past X number of feet, and we can make that line of demarcation 100 or whatever the case may be, and I understand that enforcement may be an issue, but I know -- I will admit it. For myself, I am more likely to do it if I know that I might get in trouble if I don't. Otherwise, I'm just going to have it on the boat and say, well, I've got it and I've fulfilled that requirement or whatever.

MR. HUDSON: When I talked to NMFS Law Enforcement last week, they said they can verify the existence of a descending device on a vessel, but they can't verify that the people are using it unless you're in an observer situation, but he said the fact that you have it on there, and if it's acceptable device -- He made some analogy about a spark plug and whatever, and so he said that there's a range of stuff, and you've got to make that pretty clear.

MR. R. FREEMAN: What are these approved descending devices going to look like? We tried to send a thirty-four-pound grouper down with a descending device, as well as two three-pound sinkers, and it ain't happening.

MR. HUDSON: That is the whole point about the barotrauma presentation from the MREP education situation, because that shows you the variations of creations that have come up. There is upside-down baskets and stuff like that that are designed so you can put bigger fish in there, multiple fish in there, especially showing a headboat. They had the cameras, and they film it. They activate it, and the fish are actually, in the basket thing, more protected from the sharks going down than they are on any of the Seaqualizer style and the other style, wire-style, things that I saw, but, again, like I said, the more you can get people to use it, then the more creative they're going to get, and that will be a positive, in the long run.

MR. STIGLITZ: For the descending devices, I am with everybody, most everybody. I am against the venting tools, and the depth of water -- If you're catching anything in the snapper grouper complex, I think we need some kind of descending device on there, and nothing is perfect. You may catch a grouper that your descending device don't send back down to the bottom, but we need to start somewhere and get this on every boat.

If you're going to have a snapper on your boat, or a grouper on your boat, you need to have a descending device on your boat. It's just going to be -- I think it ought to be part of the license or permit, whatever it is that we come up with, that this is part of the tools. You can't fish with anything but circle hooks. If we can tell you what kind of hook to put on, we ought to be able to tell you what kind of device you need to have on your boat.

MR. FEX: That's a good point about a thirty-four-pound grouper. I guess it would be good, in the training for these descending devices, is that, for a certain sized fish, you're going to need a certain amount of weight. A two-pound weight might work for a five-pound fish, but you get bigger fish. People have no idea how much weight they're going to need, probably, unless they've been there before, and so that would be good to develop that, when they do the venting tool presentations, as to how much weight you're talking about.

MR. HUDSON: Mel had done some talking about the atmosphere changes, and I believe it was about sixty-five foot that you had already gotten the double-atmosphere benefit, Mel?

MR. BELL: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. FEX: What I am hearing around the thing is that we want the descending devices, and, like I said, we had made that motion a couple of years ago, and the council is looking more and more towards it. They are doing more surveys on it, to try to see the validity of it or whatever, and so any other motions that you want to vote on or go forward?

DR. COLLIER: Alternative 3 is the use of single-hook rigs, to require the use of single-hook rigs if fishing for or possessing red snapper. The other option is for fishing for or possessing snapper grouper species.

MR. LORENZ: Since all the species are mixed on structure, what is the sense of 3a? It just simply requires the use of single-hook rigs if fishing for or possessing snapper grouper species, and that's probably the only reasonable alternative. How can somebody go out there and fish just for red snapper and then switch to a single-hook rig?

MR. JOHNSON: What is the purpose of this? I don't understand. Is it to -- Do they think that people are catching multiple red snapper at the same time? We use double-hook rigs, every charter boat I know. When they're b-liner fishing and trigger fishing, they use double-hook rigs. I could see if we were talking about a deepwater species, where we were going to be killing multiple snowy to catch one per boat, but just in the snapper grouper complex? It just makes -- To me, I couldn't support this.

DR. COLLIER: The reason that's actually there is -- In all likelihood, the possession limit for red snapper is going to be one, and so dropping down two hooks, when you're targeting just one fish, doesn't -- That's the idea of why it's there.

MR. JOHNSON: We use two hooks now, and the possession limit is none.

AP MEMBER: Are we going to be restricted to one fishing pole at a time too, so only one fishing pole is in the water and one hook on that fishing pole and he come up and then the next one goes down?

MR. R. FREEMAN: Isn't this why we have the descending device, so, if you get the other one, you can take the bigger one and let the other one go?

MR. FEX: That's high-grading.

AP MEMBER: Then you've got to have two descending devices.

MR. HUDSON: Is this talking about both commercial and recreational or just the recreational at that point, because I know the meat producers, vermilion snapper especially, chicken rigs or whatever, but sometimes there is a lot more than two hooks.

MR. FEX: That's a good point there, but I think it was directed more to the recreational, but we'll make that note.

DR. COLLIER: So that one went over well. Alternative 4 is to change the current circle hook requirement. Currently, we have a non-stainless steel circle hook, and there is a range of alternatives, from non-offset, based on depth and different things like that, or area fished. The reason that we have the circle hook requirement as we do, for 28 degrees North, is trying to reduce the impact for the yellowtail fishery. Apparently yellowtail are very difficult to catch on circle hooks, and so it's trying to avoid impacts to that fishery.

MR. HUDSON: Isn't there -- If we were doing the entire South Atlantic Council, is there an effort on yellowtail snapper in the Keys to go back to a straight hook or something like that, or are they already using a straight hook? I know I hear people with triggerfish say they wish they could use a straight hook instead of a circle hook.

DR. COLLIER: The Gulf Council is looking into changing the regulations for circle hooks. I believe they are actually using that same line of 28 degrees, I think, but I will have to check on that.

AP MEMBER: I don't think I heard you correctly that you're using the circle hooks because the yellowtail are hard to catch on there?

DR. COLLIER: That line of 28 degrees, north of that, you have to use circle hooks. South of that you don't have to use circle hooks, and the reason for not using circle hooks south of 28 degrees is because yellowtail snapper are very difficult to catch with circle hooks.

AP MEMBER: That sounds like a reverse psychology, and, if the yellowtails are hard to catch on circle hooks, that you wouldn't be using them south. This is a bone of contention with me. I have gut-hooked snapper and grouper and everything else with circle hooks, and you can pretty well write that fish off, that you're not going to de-hook him without doing major internal damage. I

am thinking your psychology on less than 28 degrees is backward. I thought you were saying that the circle hook was less likely to catch the yellowtail, and so why wouldn't you be required to use them there?

MR. STIGLITZ: We pushed for the straight hooks for the yellowtail fishery because of our de-hookers, and Manny can probably tell you better than I can, because I am not doing it anymore, but the de-hookers we use, the circle hook doesn't work on the de-hooker. That is number one. Number two, when we're catching that yellowtail, we have them chummed up there to the top of the water, and, when he touches that bait, we're flipping him in the boat. He ain't being gut-hooked. We are lip-hooking every one of them, and they're flying in the boat, and it just didn't work. I took videos to the council of how we yellowtail fish, and that's the reason why they made this rule that we can j-hook south of 28.

AP MEMBER: I still disagree with the logic of it, that one location it's good for the fishery and another location it's not. I'm sure there's something being caught south of 28 besides yellowtails. That would be no different than us catching triggers or b-liners or whatever north of 28 degrees.

MR. HERERRA: Ditto on what Richard said. On the Gulf, we had that circle hook, and we had it removed specifically for the yellowtail fishery. I don't see why we have to include any other species other than yellowtail. As Richard said, I can show you plenty of video. We fish these fish on the surface. They don't suffer any barotrauma.

As a matter of a fact, my brother and I had Martha Bademan with us from the FWC, and I purposely took out a circle hook. It's not that we can't hook them, but it's to de-hook the fish that takes a longer time, and, as a matter of a fact, it was a day where there was no tide, and the very first fish I hooked as gut-hooked, and the fish was bleeding and so on and so forth, and so that's why the exception, but I don't believe it needs to be there, other than for the yellowtail fishery. Remember that the yellowtail fishery is done in the Florida Keys. It's a small area. It's not -- The majority of the yellowtail, 95 or 98 percent of them, are coming in from the Keys.

MR. JOHNSON: When they implemented the circle hook requirement, it was mainly, from my understanding, it was mainly to keep red snapper from suffering hook trauma. It was really aimed at that fish, and we have gotten benefit through that and through some of the research done using circle hooks. Discard mortality actually was lowered in one of the recent SEDARs because of the use of circle hooks.

I do know that, just the studies I have read, for red grouper and sea bass, circle hooks don't work, for some reason. They actually ingest them. It's just the way they feed. They gulp, but, for red snapper, I think most of the research done on red snapper shows that there is a huge benefit in using circle hooks.

I live in the epicenter of the red snapper population. I live where they were considering Amendment 17A, when they were talking about closing all fishing, and so I strongly support the use of circle hooks and the Seaqualizer and anything else that helps lower discard mortality on red snapper, because that is the choke species for everything else that we fish for, and it's really the driving factor of everything we're talking about today. I think we have to be really careful when we start talking about regulations that we are getting a benefit from.

MR. HUDSON: Richard or Manny, a question about the de-hooking device. You're commercial fishing, and so, unless it's under the minimum size, that's the only reason to release your yellowtail?

MR. HERRERA: That's correct. The only time we do release yellowtail is when they're undersized.

MR. HUDSON: What kind of de-hooker have you been using? Was it the pigtail circle style or was it a j-flip or something like that?

MR. HERRERA: Most of the time, it's a flat bar coming across, but, a lot of times, it doesn't even go to the de-hooking device. It just gets flipped on the deck, and on a pinched barb, mind you. We're using very small hooks, and, again, these fish are not ingesting this hook. It's a visual fishery. You are literally seeing the fish being caught, and you are trying to flip them on the boat. When you do go to the de-hooking device, it's just beneficial to have the j-hook, again, with a pinched barb, and the fish is coming off fairly easy.

MR. HUDSON: What you're describing is like what we've seen with the red snapper, the big red snapper, aggregating right at the surface, and they're right there. What you're also talking about, we used to have like a field-goal thing for our king mackerel, and we would just do the flip and we're already back in the water, and so I get it. Thank you.

MR. HERRERA: Correct.

DR. COLLIER: That's all I have for right now. Thank you guys, very much, for looking through and discussing it with me. I think it's going to be a much-improved document.

MR. FEX: All right. Let's take a fifteen-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. FEX: All right, ladies and gentlemen.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. The next item on our agenda is Discussion of the Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26. This is an amendment that would include actions to modify recreational regulations for the snapper grouper fishery. Just a little bit of background, the council instructed us to prepare a scoping document at the December meeting.

We put together a document that we took out for scoping in late January and early February. Then the council reviewed the scoping comments at their March meeting and gave us a little bit more guidance, but this amendment and the one for the commercial sector contain -- You will see a lot of actions that will take us a little while to get through, in terms of analysis, and, as you know, at least for the recreational sector, there is some limitations of the information that we can use to analyze some of these actions.

With that as a little bit of a background, I will also point out that this is Attachment 3 in your briefing book. I did revise it a little bit from the version that was posted and the version that you have, and so the things that I have changed will be highlighted in yellow, and it's mainly just little

things here and there, typos and whatnot, and little comments, mainly just to remind myself to bring it up to your attention.

There is a purpose and need, and we don't need to go over that. Theoretically, the purpose and need of any amendment get put together before the council decides on the suite of actions that are going to be in there, but it's fairly broad, and so these will get tweaked a little bit as the amendment becomes more fleshed out and developed in the future.

The first action is to establish a recreational aggregate bag limit and recreational season for deepwater species. The council was interested in taking a look at the existing aggregates and, based on the input that we received during the visioning project from stakeholders throughout the region, they had suggested some rearrangement of these aggregates.

One of the things that came out was there should be an aggregate just for deepwater species, and so, right now, we have three separate aggregate bag limits. We have a ten-snapper aggregate, and that includes lane snapper, yellowtail, gray, mutton, queen, blackfin, cubera snapper and silk snapper. Of course, it excludes vermilion, which has its own bag limit, and red snapper.

We have the grouper bag limit, which is complicated, because it includes shallow-water groupers and some deepwater groupers, and there are different exceptions for different species, and so you can have a maximum of one gag or one black, but not both, and the harvest is allowed May through December. It's a maximum of one snowy per vessel per day, with harvest allowed May through August. Blueline tilefish, it's, again, three per person, or a maximum of three. Again, that's May through August. Then it's one golden tilefish per person per day year-round.

This is a little complicated, but that's what is currently in place, and so, the way the alternatives are structured, and I have to tell you here that the council hasn't had a chance to see these alternatives the way they are right now. This document that you are seeing here is what we revised, based on the guidance that the council gave us and input from the team that is working on this amendment, and so the folks in the regional office and council staff.

These are the alternatives that we have come up with. The council wanted us to look at a possible aggregate from two to four per person per day, and they also wanted to look at options for a season. The way the alternatives are structured is each one is for a different aggregate. Alternative 2 establishes a two-fish per person per day aggregate, and it included the species that are currently in the deepwater complex, which are those in parentheses of yellowedge grouper, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, and blackfin snapper. It's also including golden tilefish, snowy, and blueline.

Then your sub-alternatives give you the option of establishing a season from May through August, and that was chosen to mirror what is currently in place for snowy and blueline. Then the b sub-alternatives only allow an option of one per person per day within the deepwater species aggregate. Alternative 3 is the exact same thing, except it establishes a three fish per person per day aggregate, and the same thing for Alternative 4.

We structured it this way to -- Let's say that the council wanted to consider Alternative 3 for a three fish per person per day aggregate and a season, but they only wanted one per person per day

of any one species within that aggregate. Then they would pick Sub-Alternative 3a and 3b as their preferreds, and so they have the option of doing that.

Some things to consider, and here is where I have just put things out there for your information, is the council has requested that a golden tilefish stock assessment be undertaken in 2017. There was one that was recently completed. There were some possible issues with it, some things the council wanted, perhaps, to be done differently in a different assessment, in another update. The current one indicates the stock is undergoing overfishing. When that happens, the council needs to take action to end overfishing, and so that's where we are with golden tilefish. We don't know yet whether the Science Center is going to be conducting an assessment or not.

Snowy grouper is under rebuilding. Some of the alternatives, as they are structured under this action, would increase the retention limits substantially. Right now, it's one per vessel per day, and now we're looking at up to four per person per day. That's another thing to keep in mind.

Then we already talked, with the discussion on Amendment 43, about the option for single-hook rigs. The council was interested in making this a requirement for deepwater species, and I heard some of you talk about it would make sense for the deepwater species, and so is that something that you all would recommend that we add to this amendment?

It wasn't included from the beginning because there was some confusion as to whether that type of action could be done in a regulatory amendment. We have received indication from NOAA GC that, yes, perhaps it can, although it hasn't been confirmed, but, nonetheless, if you all think that that is something the council should consider in this amendment, we can certainly add that as well. We could add it as a sub-alternative under each of these aggregate options, or we could have a separate action so that maybe the council would want to consider that, and not just for deepwater species, but also for the shallow water. With that, maybe we can have some discussion on this one. We will go action-by-action, and, where I have information to show you, I will point that out.

MR. FEX: Chip, did you want to say something?

DR. COLLIER: I have started looking at the data for the deepwater species and how things would fall out. The majority of the information that we have for the way it's written right now, listed as a deepwater complex, the majority of the information we have is for sand tilefish. Sand tilefish aren't necessarily a deepwater species. They are typically caught in shallower water.

After that, the next most abundant species that we have observed in the fishery has been blueline tilefish, and that's generally thirty to fifty trips per year, over the last three years. Then, if you go, after blueline tilefish, you are likely looking at less than ten observed trips per year, and so it's minimal information that we would be looking at in this, and we would have very little information on what kinds of impacts the different bag limits would have.

Blueline tilefish, on those trips, those fifty trips, rarely has a blueline tilefish been reported as discarded, and so it seems like, once they reach their bag limit, they go. Since there is a three-fish bag limit, it would be hard to project what would happen if it went up to a four-fish. Similarly, if you look at snowy grouper, there are a significant -- About half the trips have discards of snowy

grouper, but, once again, we're talking likely less than fifteen trips per year reporting discards of snowy grouper.

MR. LORENZ: Chip, you touched on one of the concerns I had, and I probably don't have sufficient information myself to make a decision, is that this -- The Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 substantially increase what will be possession limits, as we go per person, but, when you get to the 2b alternatives, if we're looking at discards, couldn't these b alternatives, in all of these cases, substantially increase the discards, as a person may only be allowed one fish per day for a species. They would just keep fishing, and I would worry about that, and has that been considered?

AP MEMBER: I will say all these fish -- We're usually catching one or the other in the area. You're not catching snowy where your gray are or your golden are. Those are the main ones you're going after. I like the three-fish per person. That's the alternative I like, because, if you take the time to drop that deep, it is nice to catch more than one fish.

DR. COLLIER: To that point, of the real deepwater trips that we have, about fifty per year, only nine over the last three years have had multiple deepwater species reported on that trip, and so it's very few trips that are reporting more than one species.

MR. R. FREEMAN: Do you have some reason why that might be happening? For thirty-three years, my focus was snowy grouper and tilefish. They live together. They're in the same area. You drop down a two-hook rig, and you're liable to wind up with one of each, and the thing that came out of a meeting in Beaufort a couple of years back was the sample that the Marine Fisheries was doing wasn't deep enough. They seldom beyond a hundred meters, and we don't start fishing until we're 110 or 120 meters, and so their technique for doing it, the sampling and all of that, the type of hooks, and the bait was too big to catch tilefish and all this kind of stuff, and those were pointed out by several of us that were there, that the technique just wasn't there.

I did six trips for the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries to sample tilefish, the blueline, to see if the North Carolina fish were different than the Virginia fish or whatever, and it proved out that they're pretty much the same fish. The first trip we ran with these guys, and we were taking a couple of scientists that I don't know how much fishing experience they had, but, on our first day, and they had a time crunch that they got a special exemption that allowed us to fish for these things when the season really was closed.

The first day we went, we had, like I said, a time crunch, and so we needed to run six trips within a short period of time in October and November, and we had some horrible weather. The first day, we had ten-foot seas, thirty-knots of wind and all of this, and I think we had twenty-six grouper and twenty-five tilefish, and we didn't stay late, because they wanted to get these fish back to the dock and sample them out that night and all this kind of stuff, and so that was our best trip, in spite of those horrible conditions.

Other times, it was tide, and they specified how deep we were to fish and all this kind of stuff, and so the fish live together in that area that I fish, and it's from south of Morehead City to forty miles to the northeast. That is where we focused our time, and so I know those fish are together, and we would go out. It used to be that you could catch 500 or 600 pounds of them, no problem. Today, you could probably do the same thing if you didn't have the limits and restrictions. We even quit

using a three-hook rig and started using a two-hook rig, to cut down on how quickly you wind up that there's nothing left that you can catch and keep.

DR. COLLIER: It could have been a sampling size issue. It's not National Marine Fisheries Service going out and catching the fish. It's reported by the fishermen, and so it's through the MRIP sampling program. That's where that information was coming from. It could have been just a low sample size issue that is causing that potential bias in the data.

MR. R. FREEMAN: That's one thing that troubled me over the years, when we talked about -- Previously, the hot button was best available data and all that kind of stuff. In all those years, I wasn't in the sampling, other than the North Carolina trip reports that they would randomly select X number of vessels and call and ask how deep did you fish and what did you fish for and all of this kind of stuff, and so I think, for some reason, we are missing the boat on who is catching the fish and how many boats are out there.

When I first started fishing out there thirty-five or forty years ago, you could go out one day, and you may be the only one out there, forty miles offshore. Today, you can go out there and see fifty boats within sight of you at one time, and these are the folks that we need to be permitting them and know when they're running trips and what they're catching and the pressure that's there. A lot of the trolling boats, if they're having a bad day trolling, they will drop down and catch a couple of snowy or catch some trigger or whatever, and so they're not traditionally viewed as an impact on the industry, but they're there, and we see it every day.

MR. JOHNSON: South of St. Augustine, we do have an area there that we catch blueline and snowy together. It's not a great number of blueline tilefish, but we do catch some. I really struggle with any of this, because we're talking about snowy, that have such a low ACL. That ACL was really set up as not even a targeted species. It was supposed to be like just to allow somebody, if they accidentally caught a snowy, to keep it.

We don't really have enough fish to even have a fishery for them, and we're talking about increasing the bag limit. If I was going to pick any of these, I would say the one fish, any deepwater species, any one fish of any deepwater species, per person and then you're done. I can catch snowy. I can catch a lot of them, but I don't do it, because, one per boat, why would I even try? If I have six guys, and they all drop down, what am I doing? I mean, that's -- I am not sure where this is headed.

I do know that, in North Carolina, and in south Florida, they have a lot of people that fish that deep water, and they catch a lot of tilefish, and I get that, but, for the whole region, especially the snowy grouper -- What was the ACL, like five-hundred-and-sixty-something fish? It's not many. I mean, I'm not sure how we can have a discussion about how many fish per person per day or whatever it is, a thousand fish, I don't know, but it's not many. It's a very, very low number, and so, unless there is going to be a new assessment that is going to give the fishermen a lot more fish, this is just a strange discussion.

MS. BROUWER: To help the council along in their decisions that they're going to have to make in June, one thing you could advise them on is whether the season for all the deepwater species is a good idea. That's one question that they would want answered. Then there is also the option of you guys recommending that, if the deepwater aggregate is established and there is whatever

number they pick, that you continue to maintain one per vessel for snowy, because you feel that is important, and so that is also an option.

MR. JOHNSON: To that point, if you bust the ACL, then you have no fishery the next year, or the next two or three years, however long, and so what good did you do? I do like the idea of a season, because then people are only going to be in that depth of water during this certain time. I think that's a great idea, and I think we do need to go down that road. As far as all of these aggregate bag limits, I don't know what to do there.

MR. HULL: I agree with where Robert was headed with that, and bring me up to speed on the recreational, on the ACL on the deepwater. Have we met that ACL in the recent years, and have they shut down the fishery for deepwater for recreational? To the point of a season for them, I think that makes a lot of sense, because then they're not going to be -- The MRIP is not going to be estimating, if it's closed, that they're catching all these fish, when they just bring it down to the little fishery that it is and then forget about it for the rest of the time.

MR. FEX: I don't know if I'm correct, but I think we made a motion on a one-hook rig in deepwater. I just wanted to make that clarification. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: The ACL on snowy is like 4,800 fish.

MR. JOHNSON: Michelle, don't we already have a season this year, a May 1 opening, on snowy? That is in place, and that lasts just the month of May?

DR. DUVAL: May through August.

MR. JOHNSON: May through August, okay.

MS. BROUWER: I am just pulling up the ACLs, so you can see where we are for the deepwater species, and so give me just a second here. Okay. I know you can't see this, but I don't know how to make that bigger. For snowy, and this is preliminary data for 2016, and so it looks like -- The ACL is right here, 4,400 fish, and, so far, the reported landings are 9,600. This is for 2016 preliminary information. For the deepwater complex, it looks like the ACL is about 38,000 pounds. We are at 17,000.

For blueline, blueline is not looking so good. The ACL is 87,000, and the total reported is 172,000. However, for blueline, I have to say -- Like I said, these are preliminary 2016, and so perhaps the actual season had not been in place. I can't quite remember which amendment -- No, I take that back. That was put in place through Amendment 32.

MR. JOHNSON: So those species are closed right now to recreational angling, and is there some kind of -- I should know, but I can't remember. Is there a payback? Does that mean the season will be closed this year as well, because the ACL has been exceeded? How does that work?

MS. BROUWER: The paybacks for the recreational sector are tied to going over the total ACL, and so Amendment 34 kind of changed the accountability measures across the board, so that there would only be paybacks if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded.

MR. BRAME: I know it's not in the table, but it would be useful if we had some measure of the PSE here, because it's huge. Remember that the PSE is half the standard error, and so your standard error is actually twice your PSE. For these small ACL species, this is a cumbersome and imprecise way of managing.

MR. HULL: Just one more comment on it. In reality, you should have -- With these tiny ACLs, you can have a fishery that's like this big. It only lasts like that, and so why you would be discussing increasing the bag limits is beyond me at this time. I mean, I realize that, of course, there is probably a lot more fish there than we know, and you are encountering them and blah, blah, blah, but, once the fishery is closed, it's closed. You can't drop, and so it just doesn't make good sense to me to even be discussing it. Leave it alone.

MR. JOHNSON: To your point though, if you went to -- Right now, I think it's three blueline tilefish a person. If you did restrict deepwater species to one per person of any deepwater species, you might prevent some of the overages, but I think the point about the PSEs and the fact that these are small sample sizes and there is very few people that have a lot of faith in them, in the estimates, even in the industry, and so I don't know, but that might be a way to address overages, is if you did that. That way, once they caught their one deepwater species a person, they're out of there, instead of catching a snowy and then throwing back four snowy to catch three golden or blueline tilefish.

MS. BROUWER: Somebody mentioned the PSEs, and Mike Errigo just came and gave me that, for snowy, for 2016, the PSE was 55 percent. For blueline, it was 34 percent. This is for the recreational landings for 2016. Are there any recommendations or concerns? I mean, I guess, if you're not ready to say which of these alternatives you think is good or bad, and maybe they're not even going to stay in their current form, because, like I said, the council hasn't even seen these, but feel free to shout out concerns or things the council needs to think about when they're going to discuss this in June.

MR. ATACK: When you look at the landings last year, I mean, 200 percent of the ACL was blueline, 400 percent was golden, and snowy was 200 percent, and they were done in short periods of time. In a two-month wave, they hit more than double their ACL, and so, when you're looking at a proposed May through August 31, I think you're going to have to have sub-alternatives with maybe a thirty-day season, with the existing bag limits, to stay under the ACL on some of these things, and so I think you need some more sub-alternatives, like shorter seasons, to go out. Then you can look at projections on, if we do this, this will be the landings, and this is how long it's going to last. That will come later, I guess, in the tables, but I think, for going out for comment, you're going to need probably some thirty-day seasons to go for public comment.

AP MEMBER: I think most of us agree that the fish are there. I think the ACL being where it is is restrictive, and I agree with Robert and Jimmy here, that, if you increase, you're just going to blow that ACL really fast, but I think the fish are there to be caught. I think most everybody here knows those fish are there and are easy to catch.

MS. BROUWER: Also, keep in mind that, the shorter the season, the less of a chance of an intercept. Then maybe one intercept then becomes a lot of fish, and so that's the other side of the coin. I mean, I get it that it makes sense to have a shorter season, but that also is going to limit the information that you get, and then your expansion factors are big.

MR. JOHNSON: This group has talked in the past about -- Not back to talking about a reef fish stamp, but a deepwater complex stamp. There is nobody in my area really targeting -- There is a few people that might drop down on a slow day trolling. I imagine, out of Savannah, there's not many people going after blueline tilefish and snowy grouper in the recreational sector. There's a lot of places there is just not hardly any effort. This effort is mostly from about Stuart south and then up off of North Carolina, and so I don't know, again, how MRIP gets their numbers, but that's why I guess the PSEs are so high.

DR. DUVAL: This is something that I think has been really difficult for the council to grapple with, as Myra said. One of the things that came through from the visioning port meetings was that folks wanted to see simpler regulations, but they also wanted to cut down on discards, and so it's been a real struggle here, and the comments that we got from scoping were kind of all over the board.

Some people liked the existing aggregate bag limits that we have, as complicated as they are, and some people wanted to see some modifications made, and so I think, if the AP feels as though they like the idea of constraining the season, the four-month season that we have, just for snowy and blueline right now -- It was based on projections that were done. Based on the MRIP data, we have blown through those for 2016, but I think if you all feel like the existing -- If you feel like a season is a good idea, we need to know that.

If you feel like modifications to the four-month season are a good idea, it would be great to know that. If you feel like the existing limitations on some of those deepwater species should be maintained, instead of one per person, and have that added as a sub-alternative, which it sort of sounds like some folks are supportive of, that would also be good to know, and so, if you think that maintaining the one per vessel for snowy and one per person for golden tilefish is something that you all would want to maintain, then a recommendation to consider that, I think, would be helpful, even if you do feel like having a separate defined season for the deepwater complex is a good thing, and so thank you for your discussion. I know it's difficult.

MR. FEX: I think we did make a motion on having a deepwater season a while back on the AP, and so we did support that idea, and I just wanted to make that known.

MR. HULL: Just because Madam Chairman would like some discussion on it, currently, the aggregate grouper bag limit, you do have a season of the May through August, which is the four months, on those two deepwater species there, and so I think status quo, at this time, again, unless you wanted to try to tighten that up. You are blowing through the ACL now. Tighten it up to two months or three months, or throw another alternative in there to do that, but, no matter what you do here, it's a no -- I mean, it's just ridiculous to have a fishery that's this small.

MR. JOHNSON: I am sensitive to the fact that some people do target these fish, and they are important to people, but it seems to me that like a two-month season would probably be more in line, and stay with the one snowy grouper per boat bag limit, and maybe lower the blueline tilefish to one per person per vessel, do some modifications to the existing bag limits.

I mean, we're blowing through these ACLs. It's just going to be a matter of time that there's going to be no fishery, and so the participants need to think, do we want to just continue to do what we're

doing and then end up not being able to fish at all, or do we want to take some steps? It would be nice to hear from somebody that actually targets these fish, that does it. I don't, and so it's sort of hard for me to weigh in.

MR. THOMPSON: I do target these fish, and that's -- Even going to one hook, you've got three guys or four guys dropping down at a time, and they're going to catch three snowy and a blueline. That's just the way it is, and I know the ACLs are getting blown anyway. I mean, guys are looking for an opportunity to catch those fish, because they know they're there, and they're good, but how do we change the ACL? I mean, I know that process is not on the table, but that's what we're really -- Anybody that commercial fishes for them, they're easy to catch. If you're recreational fishing for them, it's easy to catch them.

There's no point to start your day just going after them, because, really, it's fifteen minutes or twenty minutes setting up, but how do we get to where you're going to catch those fish? If we went to one per person of each of them, then you might have to go find you some golden tile, because, in two drifts, everybody has got their blueline and their snowy.

So be it, but at least give them something. I mean, that's really what a lot of people are looking for, and, to answer that, in South Carolina, we deepwater fish a little bit, too, in Georgetown, Murrells Inlet, and Little River. I can tell you right now that there's people that do not have any idea that there is a season on them. I am not going to point that out to law enforcement. I will let them find them, but that's just it.

MR. JOHNSON: I could fish for them, and I used to fish for them when I was allowed to keep them, but, like I said, I don't do it, simply because of the restrictive bag limits. I'm just not going to do it. I am not going to waste my time.

MR. LORENZ: It's a shame Andy Piland isn't here, because he does take recreational fishermen fishing for these, and he doesn't have really that far to go. He doesn't have to go fifty or sixty miles for them, but he would probably be someone to talk to.

MR. R. FREEMAN: As I mentioned earlier, this is what we targeted, and I questioned where the science was caused us to get to where we shut this fishery down, to the extent that it is now. I can go out there, on any day, and catch forty or fifty or sixty of these fish in a four or five-hour time interval, and that's dealing with the currents, fishing 400 or 500 feet deep.

I gave Michelle, I think, 150 numbers of our prime spots, for hopefully some of the scientists to go to these places and prove to themselves that the fish are out there, and it just breaks my heart that nothing is happening that brings in a stock assessment that suggests the fish are there. If we have a poundage limit or a fish limit that is caught up in half or one-third of the season, that kind of tells me that there must be more fish out there than somebody thinks is there, because there is not that many boats that truly target them every day.

MR. FEX: I would like to make a comment back to you there, Robert. That's the best thing about being on this advisory panel, is you can be involved with a stock assessment, and you need to take advantage of that. The next time the snowy stock assessment comes around, take your time out and go to it. Be involved. That's the only way you're going to make a difference, I mean honestly,

and we have that opportunity, as advisory panel members, and I have noted that a lot of us aren't taking advantage of it, and so you can make a difference on that.

Believe me, I know they don't see it all, but that's how you get involved with them. You take them fishing. I mean, it's cooperative research. You have done it, but the stock assessment is where it comes. We are never going to change them numbers sitting in here. We just manage the numbers we're given.

MR. R. FREEMAN: As a member that was at the meeting in Beaufort, the lack of information that comes back and says, what you said, we don't believe it and we're not going to try it or whatever, but we offered a technique for them to fish. Our observation, and Milton Mathis -- I don't know if some of you guys may have known Gilbert, who passed away last year, I think, but some of the better snapper fishermen around, and Milton was there.

He pointed out that they're using a circle hook that was entirely too large for the tilefish to get it in his mouth, and they were using a squid, a whole squid, with an eight-inch body, plus the legs, and hooking that on that oversized hook and thinking they were going to catch a fish that has a mouth that is one-third the size of the bait.

Another point was they didn't fish in the depth that I recognize where the fish are, and they couldn't fish if there was a knot or more of current, and they're using a one-mile-long longline. With a one-mile-long longline, when you're out there fishing where the size of the fish spot might be as big as a baseball diamond, and you're a one-mile-long line, maybe in three diamonds, and so your catch per number of hooks you put down there is going to be rather disappointing, and it just bothers me that we are where we are with this fishery.

DR. KELLISON: Just to follow up on Captain Bobby's comment, he has referenced, a couple of times, a meeting in Beaufort. In 2015, we got some funding from the Cooperative Research Program, the NMFS Cooperative Research Program, to hold a workshop to get input on, if we had a regional-scale survey that targeted deepwater species, which we don't, what would we do and how would we do it.

Many thanks to Captain Bobby and others who came and offered their expertise. We have a NOAA tech memo, which it's just a report, but we have all of that information from the -- It was a very valuable workshop, and the information wasn't discarded. Right now, there is just not support for a regional-scale survey. The one main survey in our region that targets federally-managed species that we have is our trap video survey, which does a pretty good job of covering north to south and out to, as Captain Bobby said, probably about a hundred meters.

The MARMAP group, out of South Carolina DNR, has a long bottom longline, which Captain Bobby was just referring to, which targets golden tiles, and a short bottom longline survey, which targets more blueline and snowy, but I wouldn't call either of those sort of regional-scale, because the footprint over which they are performed is sub-regional, I would say. Right now, there is just not -- We have support for that trap video survey. We recognize that there's a need for -- When you're talking about effective monitoring, because how to figure out how many fish are out there, right now we're just not doing a good job of doing that, from a fishery-independent standpoint, and so the assessments all depend, predominantly, on catch data from the commercial and recreational sectors. Thanks.

MR. ATACK: Based on the MRIP landings from last year, I mean it looks like blueline tile really would -- You could catch the ACL in two months. Golden tile, you would catch it in two months or less and, for snowy grouper, in one month, probably. If you want alternatives to look at trying to not blow through the ACL as far as we have been, then we would probably need sub-alternatives of one or two months thrown out there with these options. **I guess I would make a motion to add those to the document, so that it can be relooked at and reviewed.**

It looks like they probably might want May 1 through July 1, that would be two months that the fishermen might want. I mean, I don't fish that fishery, but maybe some other fishermen might weigh in on that.

MR. FEX: Can I get a second on that motion from anybody?

AP MEMBER: I will second it.

MR. FEX: All right. Is there discussion? I see some rationale with it, because, as he has pointed out, you have exceeded your ACL a couple of times. If you keep doing that, you're going to be putting the fish in an overfished state, and I know, believe me, that the fish are probably out there. That fishery was shut down for -- Snowy was shut down for a long time, but, again, like I said, we do not regulate. We regulate the numbers we are given, but exceeding the ACL constantly, even with the commercial sector demanding every inch or pound they need, I just see something happening in the future that could cause a problem, and I will just let you guys know that.

MR. MUNDEN: Jim, one thing that is missing from this, I think, is that, if we recommend this two-month season, what kind of harvest limits would be placed on these deepwater species during that time period?

MR. ATACK: You would have to -- If you went under Alternative 2, they're looking at a two-fish. If you go with Alternative 3, there is a three-fish. The existing is a one-fish, I think, right? I am just saying that they need to consider some sub-alternatives, under all of these alternatives, as a shorter season, in order to not blow through the ACL. Then we can go out for discussion.

MR. STIGLITZ: I don't know about up this way, but, in south Florida, the deepwater fishing for the recreational sector down there has exploded. With these new electric reels, and I'm sure Greg has seen it, and I know Manny has seen the recreational guys, I know, around Marathon, and David, from Fort Lauderdale.

They go out there in the morning, and they start catching snowy. From there, they go out and start catching swordfish. I am not talking just a handful of boats. There is a lot of boats deepwater fishing in south Florida now. It's not that far for them to run, fifteen or eighteen miles, and they're catching snowy grouper. Another fifteen or eighteen miles, they're catching swordfish, and they're spending the day, and so we need to make sure these seasons get shorter, because, the more people that get in it, the faster it's being caught.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion of the motion at hand? All right. **Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion, raise your hand; all those opposed, two; abstain. Seeing none, the motion passes.**

MS. BROUWER: One question I have is do you think it's okay for the council to establish the deepwater species aggregate? Right now, our grouper aggregate includes shallow-water groupers and deepwater groupers, and so this will be relevant for the rest of the actions, where we're going to be talking about maybe a shallow-water grouper aggregate. Does that make sense to the AP?

MR. JOHNSON: I don't have a problem with the aggregate, Myra. I don't understand sand tile being included in that aggregate. I would like to see that one removed from it.

MR. THOMPSON: Do you want it removed or added to the shallow-water?

MR. JOHNSON: I really don't care what they do with it.

MR. THOMPSON: Usually, they have to put them somewhere, you know.

MR. HULL: Myra, to your question, the way that the aggregate is set up now, and you've got the deepwater groupers and the shallow-water groupers mixed, and so you've kind of either got to do -- You're just not going to be able to do both, potentially. If you're just targeting the deepwater, like snowy and golden tile and blueline, you could max out your aggregate before you could -- We fish for gags inshore of those deepwater species, and so I think it would make sense to possibly consider making a different deepwater aggregate and take the shallow-water groupers out and have that separate, because then could just -- You're going to concentrate in the deep water. Like you're saying in south Florida, they are concentrating on -- They are doing it off of Ponce Inlet, Florida, too.

The other thing is there must be an awful lot of cheating going on in this fishery if these people keep continuing to fish all this stuff, which, again, tells you how many fish there are there, as opposed to what they're telling you are there, but anyway, I would say that they should maybe put that as a consideration, if there isn't one there. Is there an alternative for that that I am missing?

MS. BROUWER: The action itself would establish a deepwater aggregate. That would include what is currently in the deepwater complex, which are all the deepwater species, which include queen snapper and blackfin snapper, which are currently in the ten-snapper aggregate, and so you see that there is a whole lot of shuffling that's going on here.

The next action that we're probably going to get to tomorrow, we will talk about the shallow-water grouper aggregate, but that is something that I think would be beneficial for the council to -- So we can move forward in analyzing these actions as they're structured. Does this restructuring of the aggregate bag limits make sense, the way that they are thinking about it?

MR. JOHNSON: Just one thing, real quick. Dr. Kellison sort of pointed it out to me, and I am not sure what a sand tile is. A sand tile, to me, is this long wrasse fish, but he -- That's a sand tile, right? That is a sand tile?

MR. FEX: Yes.

DR. KELLISON: Robert, my point was just there is another species which is a coral-reef-associated wrasse that has that same common name.

MR. FEX: Did you get what you need?

MS. BROUWER: Just one more thing. I am just going to throw it out there. When the Magnuson was reauthorized and the requirement for ACLs came about in 2007 and we went through the Comprehensive ACL and all that, recall that several species were removed from the complex. Then a few others were made into ecosystem component species, and so that's something that -- Perhaps, if sand tilefish is one of those species that you all might think would be best placed as an ecosystem component, that could be a recommendation that the council could then move forward with, but I'm just saying.

I have one more thing. I need to go, but obviously we've just gotten started with this, and so, tomorrow morning, we will continue to do the same thing. If you could just chew on some of these ideas tonight, of how does the shallow-water grouper aggregate sound to you, how to rearrange the twenty-fish aggregate, and this is what we're going to be talking about tomorrow morning.

MR. FEX: One more thing. If you guys didn't receive a travel invoice, please let Kim know over there. She's trying to make sure that you all have one, and we will reconvene at nine o'clock in the morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on April 17, 2017.)

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APRIL 18, 2017

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened in the Crowne Plaza, North Charleston, South Carolina, April 18, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman Kenny Fex.

MR. FEX: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to thank you for coming out this morning. We will go ahead and get started. Myra, will start us off.

MS. BROUWER: Good morning, everyone. Just to recap where we left off yesterday, we were talking about the deepwater species aggregate, potentially, and we talked about your concerns regarding the sub-alternatives that would establish one fish of any one species within the aggregate and how that may not be appropriate for certain species.

We talked about the lack of available information for some of these species to conduct quantitative analyses. You indicated that a season for deepwater species might be a good idea. You suggested that including information on the percent standard errors for some of these species might be informative as well, and so we will include that in the document that the council sees in June.

We talked about there is a lot of concern that some of these ACLs are low and they are easily being exceeded and the need for better region-wide surveys, fishery-independent surveys, and Dr. Kellison talked about that, to get more information about deepwater species. Then there was some comments about how recreational effort for deepwater species in south Florida seems to have gone up in recent years. That's some good information.

You made a motion that was approved that recommended the council consider a sub-alternative from May through June, May 1 through June 30, as a season for deepwater species, and so this would be shorter than the current May through August season that is in place for snowy grouper and blueline tilefish. Then, finally, you talked about recommending excluding sand tilefish from the deepwater species aggregate, and so, before we move on to the next action, I just wanted to give you another chance to provide any other recommendations or comments regarding the deepwater species.

MR. HULL: I think that you really don't have -- We did about all we could do with this. You really don't have a hand to play with, and I don't know if it's appropriate, but it could be that we would make a recommendation that the council ask the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to start conducting some surveys and some more data collection on the deepwater stock, more than what they've been doing, and some way find some money to do that. I think it would be a good recommendation, because, until we start doing that, there's not much else we can do.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you for that, Jimmy, and I think we'll get a chance to talk a little bit more about research recommendations when we go into a little bit more depth as far as the specific recommendations for research in our region, and that will be either later today or tomorrow, but that's definitely a good point.

Moving on then to the next action, this one would establish an aggregate limit for the shallow-water species. Again, the no action alternatives are the same, and so you've got your grouper aggregate, and so the alternatives here, there is only one, actually, to the no action, and that would be to establish a shallow-water grouper aggregate bag limit, including the species that are currently in the shallow-water grouper complex, which include red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, gag, scamp, which I left off, inadvertently, from the document that was posted on the website, and that's why it's highlighted. Also black grouper and red grouper. The council's guidance there was to consider sub-alternatives that would look at one, two, and three fish per person per day, with no more than one fish of any one species.

Here again, things to consider, the black grouper is undergoing a stock assessment. There were some issues at the data workshop that took place recently regarding species identification between gag and black grouper off of south Florida, and so this may have an impact on subsequent analyses for this action and others, potentially.

Also, the red grouper assessment is going to be presented to the council in June. This one has been finalized. The SSC is going to be discussing that assessment next week. The results indicate that the stock is undergoing overfishing and is overfished, and so, again, something else to keep in mind as you think about how to rearrange this aggregate.

MR. FEX: I do want to make a comment on the red grouper stock assessment. I know it's a concern, and I know that people in North Carolina say that we need to add another month for red

grouper, into May, and the concern would be a lot of discards of them as people pursue gag and scamp in May in our area, and so I just wanted to make note of that.

MR. JOHNSON: Looking at these aggregate bag limits, the question that I had is do we have any information on how many of these bag limits are actually being reached? I know, when we looked at black sea bass, we increased the limit on them, but I can't remember what percentage of trips weren't reaching the limit anyway. I am just curious what kind of effect it would have if you change these limits, if you tighten them up, if we have any of that information. My guys are pretty good fishermen, and I'm a pretty good fisherman. Very seldom do we go out and catch a limit of gags and a limit of scamps all in the same day. I am just trying to grasp what kind of effect, if we make some changes, would it really have on the fishermen.

DR. ERRIGO: Last year, I think it was, I did an analysis on the grouper bag limit, and that includes gag and black and all of that, and tilefish and things like that, and there were almost no trips meeting the aggregate bag limit, very, very few meeting the aggregate bag limit, and those that did were not catching their gag and then -- You're only allowed one gag or black, and they weren't like catching their gag and then discarding gag and looking for the rest of the groupers.

They were actually -- They had lots of discards of gag, but -- Most trips had lots of discards of gag and no landings of gag, which means that they were all undersized, and so it seems that people are mostly encountering undersized gag, but very few trips were catching the bag limits, the aggregate bag limits.

MR. FEX: Thank you, Mike.

MS. BROUWER: If there are no recommendations or questions or comments that you would like to bring forward to the council, we can move on.

MR. ATTACK: I guess, from what we see, is, with the gag limit of one, we do hit the gag bag limit. Typically, we won't hit the aggregate limit of three grouper per person, and so it's hard to get -- With the grouper right now, it's hard to hit those aggregate bag limits. The concern would be is, if you changed it to where it was just two fish versus just three fish, but no maximum of one per species, then you could probably increase your harvest on gag, but I don't think it would be an increase in harvest on the other, because there is no limit on red grouper or scamp, as far as other than the three aggregate limit.

Essentially, you have a limit of three red or three scamp or one gag, a combination, and so, if the gag stock was in better condition, then I might recommend just saying we could go to two across the board, but I think there would be an increase in the harvest of gag, and I'm not sure that gag is really in that good shape right now. I think it's in better shape than the other species of grouper, but --

MR. FEX: I just made that comment about the red grouper and the stock assessment, and so I think that might change too, from keeping more than one red grouper.

MR. JOHNSON: To Jim's point, we do catch our limit of gag occasionally. It's just that we don't catch that aggregate limit. I guess I didn't speak clearly, but that's what I was trying to say. How many trips, actually, in addition to gag, are getting a couple of red groupers or a couple of scamps,

and what effect -- If you went to just one gag, a two-fish limit, and only one could be a gag, would that change the fishery? Are a lot of people going to be like, man, I can't keep three grouper a person anymore? That was where I was going with that.

MR. THOMPSON: We've already stepped down from five to three, and we have an assessment on two species coming directly. I mean, I think the question is, it's if we want to establish a shallow-water season or limit, and I kind of agree with that, to separate the shallow and deep. I know, on a charter, it might be a little harder to get a limit, but we do it almost every time, we get our three fish.

There might be two scamp and a rock hind, or it might be two scamp and a graysby, or it might be a gray and two scamp, but it's not that hard, once we get them going to get three apiece. Then we go out and do something else. We've got to look for bass or b-liners or something, but I don't think you should penalize the guys right now, without any stock assessment, to just say that we're going to drop it down because nobody is meeting it.

Let the guy have an opportunity. For me, go back to the ducks. South Carolina has a six-duck limit. They proved that that's rarely ever met by the duck hunter, but you've got the potential for six ducks. That's just you have that -- You're not taking any more fish, but it's there, and I just don't see where we should, without any numbers, penalize people for three fish.

MR. HERRERA: Down there in Key West, and throughout the Keys, we're seeing a lot of -- The guys are reporting a lot of black grouper, and I don't suggest that we change anything. I see plenty of red grouper too, when you move in shallower, but the amount of boats that are lined up to go and spearfish and fish for these species, whether it be the recreational -- They way, way, way outnumber the commercial, and I feel that leave it and do not change anything that's going on, because those fish -- Unless the water gets really warm and it gets stormy, like it usually does right at the beginning of the opening, those fish are going to get hurt, just by the number of people that are going to go in the water come May 1, the numbers. The numbers are incredible. At least down there, it's just amazing how many people go, and so I love to see how well they've come back. We physically get to see the fish at times and stuff, and so I just wanted to give you that point of view.

MR. JOHNSON: This is just a question, just hypothetically. If the red grouper assessment comes back and says that overfishing is occurring, and they say no red grouper, zero take on the red grouper, is that going to affect the other fisheries, if these fish are grouped together in a shallow-water complex? Is that going to be used as a choke species, so to speak? If that's the case, I wouldn't want to see them grouped, because that would be like using warsaw as a choke species or something like that.

MR. FEX: That's the way it was with gag a few years ago. When the gag ACL was met, then the shallow-water grouper was shut down, right? We got that changed a couple of years ago.

MS. BROUWER: Would there be any desire to potentially include sand tilefish in this grouping, since you didn't think it was appropriate in the previous one?

MR. FEX: Myra, for some reason, we don't know why the sand time is even in the FMP.

MR. R. FREEMAN: I think you could lump them in there right alongside carp.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. This is the last action pertaining to aggregate limits. This one would modify the ten-snapper and the twenty-fish recreational aggregate bag limits, and the guidance we received from the council is they wanted an alternative that would establish a twenty-fish aggregate that would include the species in the current ten-snapper aggregate and the twenty-fish aggregate.

Then they wanted some specific bag limits for certain species, and so Sub-Alternative 2a would say that, within the twenty-fish aggregate, no more than ten could be gray trigger. 2b would put Atlantic spadefish at ten fish within the aggregate. 2c would be, within the twenty-fish aggregate, there could be no more than ten of any one species. Then Sub-Alternative 2d is, within the twenty-fish aggregate, there could be no more than five fish of any one species.

Then I just have a little star here that, obviously pending approval of Amendment 41, the mutton bag limit is going to be five per person within that twenty aggregate already, and so these are what we're going to be analyzing for the council in June, and if there is any desire to make a recommendation about a particular one or additional alternatives that you could think could be considered.

MR. THOMPSON: I will just make one comment. This comes from a headboat operator that read through this, and they don't want any change. They like the way it is now. Once again, they're selling tickets for potential. Rarely is it ever met on that, but they want the redneck from Sumter to think he can catch that many fish, have the potential.

MR. FEX: I would like to comment. One thing that I see that it could address is our issue from the commercial sector, how they're keeping recreational fish on a commercial trip and end up selling it. I do like this, because we had that issue with the triggerfish, which I believed caused an issue with the stock, with the commercial fishermen selling those fish, and so I do see promise to it, to hopefully solve that problem, and I know that's bad, because this is a recreational limit, but I apologize to the commercial guys that have used it.

MR. LORENZ: I am looking at this that there seems to be a need for more and more species to have a slightly reduced take on this, like putting a maximum of ten fish. I guess the only thing I would kind of lean to would be wouldn't it be just wonderful to make it as simple as you can, and so the 2c and the 2d look like, to me, something that would be more favored than just continually breaking out species after species after species as we go on. We may get a lot more mileage out of a regulation by leaving it with a 2c or a 2d, if these reductions are desired.

AP MEMBER: I agree with Bob. Without any guidance on average catch per trip, you need to keep it as simple as possible.

MR. JOHNSON: Didn't porgies close this year, recreationally? Again, my concern is, when I look at some of these species that aren't as abundant, and we're throwing them in a pile with a species that is very abundant, how is that going to affect management, or is it not?

DR. COLLIER: Right now, what we're talking about is the bag limits and not necessarily the ACLs for the species, and so the ACLs have already been established, and those would need to be changed, as opposed to this bag limit, which is set up this way just to control harvest, and so they're

a little bit different. The ACLs are going to stay the way that they are, as far as the groupings for those, and so the porgies would remain the same, no matter what you did with this. Just remember that. Just because you are changing the aggregates, it doesn't mean that you're changing the ACLs for the species.

MR. FEX: Thank you, Chip. I think his concern was though, if you were able to keep twenty fish of any species, they might just keep twenty porgies. Then, if that intercept got caught, then it might extrapolate and the season might be closed. I might be wrong, but I think that was his clarification, but thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: There is no limit on whitebone porgy right now though, is there? What is the bag limit?

DR. COLLIER: Twenty.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay, and so you're not really changing anything there then, I guess.

MR. ATTACK: It depends on which alternative you go with. If you go with like d, then the most you could have would be five of those. Therefore, you would probably be less likely to hit the ACL and close that species down for the year with the existing ACLs. I kind of think it would be nice to consider that one as a preferred alternative, unless the people think that they really need more than five fish of one particular type out of that aggregate.

MR. MOSS: I would actually prefer 2c, and, again, I'm speaking as a recreational yellowtail angler down in the Keys. Five yellowtail, especially in the summertime, when they're smaller, is not -- It's not a lot. I mean, I'm not trying to be selfish, but five yellowtail isn't very much. I mean, as it is, in that, we get -- It's going to be down to five mutton, which not many people get that anyway, and five mangroves. I would like to see it, at the very least, stay at ten yellowtail, and so, if we could keep 2c, I would prefer that. I am perfectly okay with the twenty-fish total aggregate of all the stuff and then ten of any one, but that's just my two-cents.

MR. HERRERA: I second that, for Dave. The recreational doesn't even come close to hitting the ACL, and so there is really no need to bring it, as far as recreationally, less than ten.

MR. R. FREEMAN: What I've heard the last couple of days brings to mind that we have a real need to separate the South Atlantic region more so than it is. In 40,000-plus hours of fishing out there, I have never caught a yellowtail, I've never caught a mutton, and, when you go out there when it's quite restrictive, say five b-liners or bass or whatever, then, when they catch those, are you going to sit there anchored on this same spot, where you're catching an occasional b-liner or an occasional bass, and keep throwing back b-liners?

I would like to see a more flexible bag limit that does not lead to killing fish and trying to get a limit of the twenty aggregate, and so I think 2c, of the options up there, makes as much sense as anything, but, still, the fishery, what you catch in different areas, is really not consistent. There's a thousand miles of coastline, from the North Carolina border down to Key West, and you've just got too much variation and the habitat and the species of fish that are there.

Last year, we hit a spot, and, within an hour, we limited the boat on b-liners, and now we're going to sit there and try to catch a few bass that are also in that same spot and look for a grouper or something, and we never caught a single red grouper last year. Maybe a couple of gags, but we're not fishing specifically for them, where a neighbor runs strictly grouper charters in a twenty-eight-foot boat, and he consistently will limit out, because that's what he is doing. He is taking ten gallons of porgies and using these bait, and he's quite successful with the gag grouper.

MR. FEX: Robert, we, on the advisory panel, for the last twenty years, have tried to force or tried to get a south management zone and to separate it out, so we can manage it separately, but that's an act of Congress. Even the Gulf Council and South Atlantic Council got together and tried to accomplish that. The last motion we sent to the council was to try to get a south Florida section.

I even though maybe a south Florida advisory panel. That way, as we sit here and regulate the yellowtail, which has nothing to do with North Carolina -- We have looked at that idea, and, believe me, it's a struggle, and it's allocation separations and stuff, and so it's a tough one. I just figured I would note that to you.

MR. JOHNSON: This is a question, and I should know it. On my boats, we only keep ten triggerfish a person, and my guys really don't like to keep that many, because they don't like to clean them, but is there even a -- What is the bag limit on triggerfish in North Carolina and South Carolina?

MR. FEX: Twenty.

MR. JOHNSON: Twenty. So this, in effect -- That's what I am asking. I mean, I have heard, in the past, a lot of discussion from people up that way that ten is just not acceptable. They have to have that higher triggerfish limit, and so, if you pick this alternative, basically you are establishing a ten triggerfish per person limit for them. I mean, I am okay with that. I would like to hear some people from up this way weigh in on it though.

MR. THOMPSON: I am really opposed to that, because it really does -- Especially on our headboats, in particular. When they run an overnight trip, that's how they begin. They go for the triggerfish, so everybody can get their twenty, and then they go look for the b-liners, because they've got to be so species specific on those long trips, but it is -- At any time, they need a lot of triggers, and they catch a lot. When you get up in 700, there is a bunch of triggerfish out there, and they're not in trouble. There is plenty of them. **Out of that whole complex, I don't think really anything is in trouble, or we have any numbers that anything is in trouble, and so I really would like to make a motion just to keep status quo and go no action on this.**

MS. BROUWER: Did you make that as a motion?

MR. THOMPSON: **I will make that motion.**

MR. FEX: Is anyone going to second it? There is a second. Is there discussion on the motion at hand?

MR. MOSS: I am actually perfectly okay with that, and, again, as a south Florida fisherman, the twenty-fish per person group doesn't really affect us much. I mean, triggerfish and all that stuff is

kind of bycatch to us anyway. As it is, like I said, we've already separated out mangrove snapper, and we're going to separate out mutton snapper. Blackfin and cubera, they are not very frequently caught. I mean, you can target them, but you get a couple here or there. I am perfectly okay with leaving the status quo of everything the way it is. Like I said, ten yellowtail, I am happy with that and all that stuff, and the other stuff doesn't affect us anyway.

MR. FEX: I have a concern, because we sit here and talk about we don't even have an idea of how many recreational people there are, and we have fisheries like -- You talk about triggerfish not being in trouble, and the assessment came out, and it didn't give us any promising results. As a commercial fisherman who is on the water, we don't see people meeting the thousand-pound trip limit on the triggerfish.

As a recreational fisherman, a guy that can catch twenty triggerfish, I'm impressed, with a rod-and-reel. I would like to see those guys on that headboat, and I would like to know the name of the vessel, because I want to go on it. I want to be able to go catch twenty triggerfish on that headboat with a bunch of other guys doing it, and so I'm impressed.

MR. THOMPSON: New Inlet Princess.

MS. BROUWER: Just some clarification. What I am hearing is that you would like no action, as far as the whole action, which means we would continue to have a ten-snapper aggregate and a twenty-fish aggregate for species that are not within the ten-snapper aggregate, and is that what I'm hearing?

MR. THOMPSON: We already have three on the red porgies, five or seven on the sea bass, and, if it came up to it, if it was a species identified, we could do that. Kenny, what you said about the triggerfish, we all know that happens, and I have law enforcement friends in South Carolina working very hard to make a few cases, and that's really how you stop it, but we already have laws on the books for that, instead of making more regulations.

MR. HULL: We also have a charter boat that we operate, and the customers that come to our charter boat, they might fish once or twice a year, and they expect to be able to go out and catch enough fish, enough triggerfish and enough banded rudderfish or wherever, where they can go up to twenty fish, to make it worth their while to fill their freezer.

I mean, this is their access to the resource, to get some meat, and to have a good time on the water, and so that's why I support this. I think that you're controlling your snapper limits already. On these other species, and especially those two that I mentioned, they are very plentiful in our area, and it's something that they've learned to expect, and so I think that we should leave it alone and leave it where it is for now.

MR. ATACK: I can't support this motion. I think we should go with the Alternative 2c, where you can have the twenty fish. You can still get your twenty fish per trip, and then a maximum of ten per species. I think, for the stock of the fisheries, that it makes more sense to be a little more conservative.

MR. MUNDEN: I concur with Jim. I think that 2c is a much better option.

MR. JOHNSON: Is there an alternative that -- I know status quo basically has the snapper separated out, but there is not an alternative that separates out the snapper and then has a twenty -  
- The twenty-fish aggregate is what we have now, but there's not one that separates them out and has a ten-fish aggregate. Right now, we can have a twenty-fish aggregate, but the snapper are excluded. That's the status quo. I just wanted to make sure that I understood.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion of the motion at hand? **Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand, eleven; all opposed, raise your hand, six; abstain, two. The motion passes.**

MR. JOHNSON: It would be nice to have the results of the triggerfish assessment. I think what we saw in that assessment is it really didn't show the fishing mortality had any effect on the stock, and I don't think anybody really believes that, and so it would have been nice to have the results of that assessment, because triggerfish is the driver, to me, in all of this, and I don't want to see us get in a situation because we want to -- Florida already has more restrictive triggerfish laws than the other three states, and I don't want to see Florida fishermen penalized because a headboat up here wants to go catch twenty triggerfish a person and then us have no season.

That is my concern, and that's why I abstained, because I am for access. Year-round access is how we make our living, and if year-round access means that we can catch ten fish instead of twenty, then so be it, because we're selling a trip. We're not selling dead fish. If they want that, they can go to the fish market.

MR. ATTACK: Part of this was to make it simpler too, and so one question I have is should we add another alternative then where it would be Sub-Alternative 2e, where we still have the twenty-fish aggregate, and then it can be twenty fish, period, so that it's not a maximum of ten per species. Just combine the two different bag limits together, the species, and make a one common twenty fish instead of a ten of snapper and twenty of the others. Would that make sense to have that as an alternative to go out for public input and scoping, versus, right now, no action would keep the two different aggregates, and so I think part of what we were trying to do -- I thought the goal was to make it more simpler and easier. Would everybody be in agreement to run that out as an option?

MR. THOMPSON: I think it's pretty simple now, but, to go with Robert, if the council, and through assessment, decides we can only have ten triggerfish, that's fine, but, currently, we are catching twenty sometimes, and we want it, and we need it. We could bring that down to species-specific, is what I'm looking at, instead of taking that big group, which is a big group of fish. If you get on a grunt roll, you might catch twelve or fourteen of them, but I kind of hate to go in there and do that with a charter, so that I can come out and catch the grays off of it later, but I just think status quo right now is fine.

MR. HARTIG: Robert shook something loose in my head about the porgies. We have closed it two years in a row early, and is there any interest in looking at the porgies specifically and reducing the number of porgies within the aggregate to extend the season? If you reduce it -- Like you're saying, Robert, you make your trips, and you want to be able to catch fish on every one of your trips. It seems to me, if we looked at porgies and reduced the number of porgies that a recreational fisherman can keep, we can extend that season.

We heard a lot, from the headboats especially, about porgies. I mean, it's an important fish for them. When it closed, we heard a lot of opposition to the closure, and so we haven't even talked about it. You said we need a full year of fishing, and I just thought, porgies, well, shoot. We're closing it half the year, six months early, I think, last year, and so is there any interest from this AP, and I know it's not up there, but in investigating the porgies and trying to extend the season by lowering the bag limit on porgies?

MR. FEX: Thank you, Ben.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Ben. To that point, yes, I think we should. I think we should maybe look at establishing a -- Not to be confused with -- This is not red porgy, but this is all the other ones that are always misidentified. Really, what does the group think, a three-fish per person or five-fish? I mean, do something. I think anything is better than what we have.

MR. THOMPSON: I agree. If you want to make a motion for the council to explore it, I will second that. I mean, it is what it is, and they're going to change it anyway.

MR. JOHNSON: **I will make a motion, Kenny, that the council explore bag limits of the porgy group of three or five, just different bag limits.**

MR. THOMPSON: I will second it.

MR. FEX: All right. Any discussion of the motion at hand? **Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand, seventeen; all those opposed, one; abstain. The motion passes.**

MR. ATTACK: I opposed this because I really think it would have nicer to make things more simpler, where we had just a twenty-fish aggregate, from law enforcement, and then you could have -- I really like the maximum of five or ten fish of one particular species. It makes it clean and simple and easy to regulate. Now we're going to throw in another bag limit of a separate fish on top of the existing complex that we have of ten snapper, and so, from a fisherman standpoint, the recreational guy, how many of those guys know which one of those fish go in which aggregate when they catch them? That's the nice thing. If we just had a twenty-fish and then we did a maximum of a certain species, any particular species, it makes it clean and simple and easy to regulate, and so we're just making things more complex again.

MR. MUNDEN: The AP approved a motion for no action. The way I look at this, that is no action on the options that are listed here, and I like what Jim is coming up with, because, when I look at this, you can have ten in the aggregate bag limit and then twenty of species without bag limits, and so a recreational fisherman could go home with thirty fish. I think that we really need to recommend to the council that we add another option, as proposed by Jim, and that would be for a total of a twenty-fish aggregate, rather than the thirty that you can put together now.

MR. FEX: I will note, during the visioning process, that's what people wanted, something a lot more simple and streamlined. They don't have to worry about this and that, and so that is definitely noted.

MS. MARHEFKA: Again, this has not gone out to formal public hearing yet, and so the way I see our job here is to give the council our ideas of the range of options, so that they can make sure they have the right range of options when they take it to public hearing. Then the public gets a chance to weigh in, and so I don't think that any of this is mutually exclusive at this point. I think that we put in things that we really think are reasonable, even if we don't all agree on it, and let it go out to public hearing. Then I assume we will get a more narrowed-down version in October, when we can really get down to the nitty-gritty, but that's just my opinion.

MR. FEX: Good point there. If Jim or anybody else wants to bring something forth and put up there for recommendations, just for the public in general to consider --

MR. MUNDEN: **I move that we add Sub-Alternative 2e for a twenty-fish aggregate bag limit.**

MR. FEX: Do we have a second on that motion? We have a second. Any discussion on the motion at hand? **The motion is recommend that the council explore a twenty-fish aggregate of species currently in the ten-snapper aggregate and the twenty-fish aggregate.**

MR. JOHNSON: Just discussion. Jim said that no more than five of any species, I think. Is this how you want this motion or did you want the --

MR. ATACK: That's already as an option. That's 2d, but this is good, to have just the twenty-fish with no limit on particular species inside of it, just for going out and exploring it.

MR. JOHNSON: Gray snapper was in this aggregate, right? You would be, in effect, changing a five-fish bag limit? No? I am just trying to --

MR. MOSS: As I understand it, you would be keeping the individual limits. As an example, mangroves are five. You can keep mangroves. Down in the Keys, I could keep five mangroves and then my five yellowtail, to get to that ten total for snapper.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. I just wanted to clarify that, that it wasn't just saying that you could have twenty fish of any species and that's it.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion?

MR. HULL: Just one more. Basically, you're taking ten animals away from the catch, the total aggregate, is what you are doing overall. I think that's something that you should throw out there to the public, too. Like Kerry said, we should be throwing reasonable things out there, such as no action or doing this. I would support it, for them to explore and possibly take out to the public.

MS. BROUWER: Just to clarify, one of the sub-alternatives then would be for that either three or five limit on the porgies within the aggregate, correct? Okay.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion?

MR. R. FREEMAN: I am somewhat confused, out in left field or whatever. We're taking ten fish off of the current status. Is this being based on ACLs being met or what is the driver that we are

making a 30 percent, 33 percent, reduction in what these people can expect to take home on a good day?

Fishermen are optimists. You can continue to book charters if you can offer them something, but, when the limits get to where they are so ridiculously low, they will say that they ain't spending money, that much money, to go fishing, because of regulations based on what? What is the driver behind reducing the thirty-bag limit or whatever, the potential for a thirty-bag limit, and reducing the flexibility of the boats?

MR. FEX: The intent is just to bring it to the public. The public wanted some simplicity in it, and the twenty fish is also combined with your three grouper and your twenty mahi and your king, and so it isn't like you're taking too much from the fishermen. Some of these bag limits aren't even getting met. As we sit here and don't know everybody that's going fishing, as a said, is a concern, and we are also concerned about some of these species that we can't even catch.

We also look at it as it's not science driven. It's professional driven. This is anecdotal evidence, which is actually our opinion, but we are the professionals on the water. All we're trying to do is be on a little bit of a conservative side, because we don't want to exceed these ACLs, because, once you put them into overfishing, then we have more issues. Then we sit here and argue more regulations, and so this is just more of a proactive measurement, and so I understand your point, but twenty fish plus three grouper, that's a lot of fish for a day worth of fishing, and so we're just trying to somewhat be proactive, is what I think.

MR. JOHNSON: So vermilion snapper are not in this. Black sea bass aren't in this either, are they?

MS. MARHEFKA: No.

MR. JOHNSON: Red porgy aren't in this either, and so, I mean, your twenty fish just went to twenty-five or twenty-eight, and you can help me with my math. I mean, you're at -- I don't think this is really going to make a big effect on anything, myself. I am not sure how -- Other than triggerfish. I think this is the only thing, the triggerfish landings, that it may affect, in certain areas on some really good fishing boats.

MS. MARHEFKA: I went back to the need for action for this entire vision blueprint, because I think that question was a valid question, and it says that it's to improve access to the snapper grouper resource. Well, one of the ways to improve access is to make it so that you have a year-round fishery.

Also, you could argue that you may be improving protection for spawning fish, and, also, one of the needs for action was to reduce the discards of many species, one of them being gray trigger, which some of us are concerned about, and so I feel like this range of alternatives is well within the need for the purpose of why we're doing this document.

MR. FEX: Thank you for that clarification.

MR. MOSS: I just have a quick question. It seems, to me, that these two separate bag limits, the snapper bag limit and then the species without bag limits, is almost kind of regionally driven, if

you will. Again, I live in my little south Florida bubble, and so the part that affects me is obviously the top part, the snapper bag limit, and I'm curious, and I will put it out to maybe Robert or Jimmy, and you guys are kind of in that area where it kind of melds a little bit, but how often would you even be close to hitting this thirty-fish total bag limit?

MR. JOHNSON: Probably never, because the bulk of my catch is going to be vermilion snapper and red porgy and gray triggerfish, which I have a self-imposed limit on my boat. I just don't see the need, and we catch a lot of fish, I mean plenty of fish. Some of these other species, we're not commonly catching, like jolthead and whitebone porgies. We catch a few, but I just don't think it would affect us at all.

MR. HULL: I agree with most of that, except that rudderfish and triggerfish -- Triggerfish is a big driver for our charters, and they routinely will catch twenty triggerfish, and, Robert, as he said, he imposes his own ten. That's his desire. Rudderfish, too. We catch a lot of rudderfish, and it's important to those charters to have the ability to do that.

Again, if it was -- Again, they're going to catch their vermilions. A lot of those other porgies, as he said, we don't catch, and so it would have some impact. It wouldn't be devastating, but, again, Kerry made some good points as to the purpose and need of why we're doing this, and you did also, that it's proactive. Would it be good thing for the resource? Yes, it could be. Is it necessary? Well, maybe.

Then you say, well, how is it going to affect the citizens? Well, it's going to affect some more than others, and so I guess -- We're not going to make the final decision on that here, and so it's good to send it out to scoping, and let's hear what everybody else has to say about it, too. I agree with that, all the options, from no action to all of these things we're coming up with. Let's do it. Let's put it out to the people.

MR. MOSS: I agree, and I agree completely with what Kerry said as well. If we're going to take a proactive approach, I am fine with that. I am just curious how many people are kind of, for lack of a better term, dipping into both bag limits and, like you said, catching your twenty triggers and then going out and getting five more mangroves or ten more snapper total up by you?

MR. HULL: Yes, that happens a lot, and Robert can go catch a lot of these snappers, and so can a lot of the other fishermen in our area, and so, yes, they can get thirty fish, easy. I mean, you can go catch ten of those snappers, and then you can go catch twenty banded rudderfish pretty easy and triggers. I mean, it can be done. It can be done pretty easily.

MR. JOHNSON: Banded rudderfish are in the jack complex presently, right? Are they in this? They are in this action? That complex closed this year recreationally as well. I have heard, especially on the commercial end, guys complain about almaco being shut down because of banded rudderfish, and I know that we're getting off in the weeds here, but I think those are things to consider.

I personally do not keep banded rudderfish on my boat, because I had to go to court one time because an FWC officer wrote me a ticket for one, because they are closed in state waters. Well, there's a slot limit in state waters, and we don't catch the little ones. We catch the real big ones, and it's just not worth the hassle, to me, and so I throw them all back, but that's just me personally.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more ideas you guys have got? All right. **All those in favor of the motion at hand, fifteen in favor; all those opposed, one; abstain, one. The motion passes.**

MS. BROUWER: Moving on, Action 4 would modify the seasonal prohibition on recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers, also known as the shallow-water grouper closure. Here, we have several different alternatives, and this is based on -- We got lots of different comments during the scoping phase of this amendment, and, also, there were some alternatives that were brought forward when the FWC was doing some public workshops back when, as Kenny suggested, there was a joint south Florida amendment that was being developed at the time, and that ended up not going forward, but there was a lot of input that was captured as part of that process, and so some of these alternatives are coming from that.

Alternative 2 would prohibit recreational harvest and possession by area. This is something that folks, during the visioning, the port meetings, said that they wanted the council to consider. Right now, we have two sub-alternatives. Sub-Alternative 2a would be in federal waters off of east Florida, from the Georgia/Florida state boundary south to the end of the council's jurisdiction. Then the closure would apply during certain months of the year, and those are left blank, because we have to take a look at the data first, and I do have some data to show you here in a second.

Sub-Alternative 2b would then be a closure in federal waters off of Georgia and the Carolinas, from the Georgia/South Carolina border north to the North Carolina/Virginia border, again, for certain months of the year. We could set it up that way.

Another option would be to prohibit recreational harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper species, excluding black grouper, south of 28 degrees, which is approximately off of Palm Bay, Florida, and I am not sure exactly where 28 degrees came from. I do know that we also have the circle hook prohibition at that latitude, and so for consistency. Then we have sub-alternatives within that for several different portions of the year, January through March, February through March, and so on.

There is an alternative that would prohibit harvest and possession of only black grouper in federal waters off of a certain area, and, of course, as you know, black grouper is a fishery that is based off of south Florida, almost exclusively. Then, again, you would have an option to select the appropriate closure just for that species.

Then Alternative 5 would prohibit recreational harvest and possession of red grouper in federal waters off of the appropriate area, and this was to give folks the option to explore different closures for red grouper off the Carolinas, where there seems to be more of a concern that the current closure isn't quite matching up with when these fish are spawning. We have some options there, 5a through 5c, for different lengths of time during which harvest of red grouper would be closed.

Again, the same sort of thing, consider that black grouper is undergoing an assessment and there has been some issues there. We are not quite sure how that is going to proceed, and then, of course, the red grouper assessment that I just mentioned already, and the stock is apparently not doing well, and so I do have some information here that Mike Errigo was able to pull together rather quickly.

Here is the average landings before the closure, and so this is 2004 through 2009, broken down by state. We did combine Georgia and South Carolina, for confidentiality issues, to avoid that, and so you can see that obviously May is a big month here, and the blue bars is for all the states combined, and so you can sort of see the distribution of the landings there, and this is just for gag, and so we have it broken out by species. That's the way that the council requested that this be prepared and presented to them in June.

These are the landings post-closure, and we put them on the same axis, and so it's the same range here, from zero to 90,000, and this is in pounds. That is for gag, and here are the annual landings, and the shallow-water grouper closure was implemented in 2009, and that's represented there by that gap. Then we have the same sort of thing for red grouper and scamp. Here is red grouper. Again, prior to the closure, you can see that very few, hardly any of the landings, were coming from Georgia and South Carolina. The majority is concentrated in North Carolina, and some in Florida. Here is post-closure.

Then these figures show -- Here is the annual landings of red grouper, and, for scamp, here is pre-closure, 2010 through 2015. Here are the annual landings, and so the patterns seem to be pretty similar. Then, just to get a little bit more information on black grouper, this is showing you the percentage of a A fish versus B1 fish, and this is based on the MRIP survey. Of course, the A landings are based on intercepts where the species was caught and brought back, and so there was the interceptor that could identify the fish, and the B1 landings are those based on angler information, where the angler tells the interviewer that, yes, I caught that and it was killed, but it wasn't available for the interviewer to identify.

We broke it out that way, just to get an idea of what the percentages are, A versus B1, and then here is east Florida, and here is just the Keys, and so you can see the majority of the fish that were landed, and this is between 2004 through 2015, our A fish. It's 91.7 percent, and the harvest is mainly focused off of the Keys, and this figure down here shows it really well. Basically Florida and all of the South Atlantic, the two lines are pretty much right on top of each other. That is the information that we were able to gather for you quickly, to see if there is any recommendations that you might have for how the council would want to analyze this action.

MR. MUNDEN: Myra, I would like for the staff to at least refresh my memory as to when the peak spawning period is for Alternatives 3, 4, and 5. When would most of these species be spawning?

MS. BROUWER: The current shallow-water grouper closure was meant to capture the majority of spawning for all the species in the shallow-water grouper complex, and so the majority of them are spawning in the spring months, sometime between January and the end of May. The problem has been that, in recent years, especially off of North Carolina, folks have been saying -- During the visioning project, fishermen came forward and said we're catching lots and lots of red grouper in spawning condition after the season opens on May 1, and so the council needs to consider adjusting some of those seasons. We don't really quite know what's going on, but this is what we see on the water, and so that's one of the reasons that prompted this.

The other one is this issue of access. If there is a shallow-water grouper closure during that portion of the year, and those fish happen to be in Florida, but then, by the time that it opens up in the Carolinas, then folks don't have access to those fish or the whole idea of making it so that

everybody is going to have access to the resource at least during some portion of when those fish are available off of their respective coasts of where people are fishing, and so that's where the council is coming from, but, as far as exactly how to modify that to accomplish that for everybody, it's going to be tricky.

For that reason, we have those options there to consider maybe rolling closures by area, and there is obviously pros and cons to that. There may be some fishing effort shifts and things. The AP had cautioned against that before, but, nonetheless, here we are, and the council wants to sort hear what you guys have to say about that.

MR. FEX: To answer Red's question, I've got a piece of paper that explains it. Gag, the peak spawn is March and April. The red grouper peak spawn is February through April, and the black grouper peak spawn is January through March. I don't have scamp on this paper.

MR. R. FREEMAN: What region? I can't believe Key West and Hatteras are going to have the same spawning season.

MR. FEX: It's just in the document right here, and I understand, and that's what this is all about. That's what the whole amendment is about, but I just answered his question, and so it doesn't have the region on this piece of paper, and I apologize.

MR. LORENZ: I just wonder, at this time, thinking here, in order to make any kind of intelligent recommendations, I would like to keep -- Have availability for red grouper later on in North Carolina and address the potential that, yes, a little later, there do seem to be some in spawning condition, and that's an important species for North Carolina.

It just seems like it's a little early. We're either six months or twelve months early to speak more intelligently on this, pending that assessment of the red grouper. They are overfished, and are we going to end up looking at reducing those we can keep and things like that? You could do it that way also. You could reduce the fish or you could have a longer closure, and so I'm just questioning if we're -- It's difficult, because we're just a little early to be able to do anything.

MR. ATTACK: We're not really being asked to give a preferred alternative right now. We're just asked to look at the alternatives there and make sure that we have the right range that can go out for public comment and further analysis. One thing that I don't see in these alternatives is -- I think one of the concerns, in past years, was that red grouper might still be spawning come May 1, in certain areas, and red grouper is going to come up in this stock assessment. Action is probably going to come out of the stock assessment for what we're going to do with red grouper anyway, as far as we may modify another month or two of closure on it, or whatever we do.

With scamp, I think there was a lot of report that they were still spawning in May up until June 1, and so, when grouper season opens on May 1 off of North Carolina, there's a lot of scamp that are still full of roe, and so I think one option might be to add another month to avoid that spawning, and so a lot of talk was about just extending the closure like another month up our way, to better protect those grouper during spawning season, and I don't really see that as an alternative in these alternatives.

MR. FEX: Yes, and what I want to explain too is the four-month spawning closure, I was around when it first came into effect, and they were grouping the grouper together. It was six-hundred-and-some-thousand pounds. If you did the math, the season wasn't going to last the whole time. The spawning closure was an idea to go ahead and, if you're going to close them, close them during the time they're having their stuff.

The first year, we met the quota on the gag, and so it kind of hit right on. Now we're kind of right where it needs to be. Any closure at the end of the year closes all grouper, and so, those four months, if you open them sooner in Florida, those guys might hit it pretty hard, and gags will be closed there in October, and so you've got to look at some of those concerns.

Believe me, we want to get the most we can out of it, but it was designed to get the true grasp of when most of the grouper were spawning, and it's been pretty set on. Also, red grouper, I did conversion factors for two years, bringing in grouper, straight to the dock, to the scientists, and they start in December. I don't hear anybody ever say that, but they do. They are full in December, and they go into May, but the four months hit pretty much in the center of it, and so any extension of it is going to cause discards from trying to catch one species to the other, which we don't want to do, and so I just wanted to throw that out to you, because I was around at the beginning, and we fought that, and it's ironic that it took a lot to get people to accept that spawning closure, but now we're looking at, well, let's extend it a little bit more, and so it's kind of weird how that worked out.

MR. JOHNSON: I have an issue with changing a closure for an area when you have an ACL that's for the region. You are going to get pushback from somebody somewhere. He's going to be like, well, they're fishing in Florida, and we're not fishing here, and I just think that that's -- I mean, I understand the reasoning behind it, but I don't think it's the way to go. If you're going to have an ACL that is for the South Atlantic, then your closure needs to be for the South Atlantic. Is it perfect? Absolutely not. Does it need to be extended? I don't know. That's something that the people doing the work -- I have done some of that work with shallow-water grouper, and it's pretty spot on in northeast Florida.

The closure pretty well covers the majority of the spawning activity. I think they did a pretty good job with it. My concern is we've had a four-month closure for all these years, and we still haven't seen this huge increase in the population, and that's what we really should be talking about, why is that, and trying to find out what the reasoning is behind that.

MR. HERRERA: Again, I don't know exactly how David and Greg feel about this, and Richard, but, the way I see it, it was hard for us to swallow that bullet when it first happened down there. It affected charter businesses, and it affected the commercial, and we've gotten used to what it is, and I agree with you guys that we have an established ACL, and if you let one group fish and stuff, that group is going to be putting on the pounds. We have it pretty well covered.

I have also seen black groupers with roe in May, but when we really, really have the groupers in the reef, they are closed, and so they are building. At least the black groupers, I have really seen that difference, and I say we leave it and don't mess with this right now.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more feelings about what's going on?

MR. MOSS: I completely agree with Manny. As it is now in the Keys on opening day, it's getting to be kind of like the lobster mini-season is down there, where you can walk across the water and never get your feet wet with all the boats that hit it, come May 1, and that's even with it kind of coinciding with what is traditionally your high point of the year for muttons, too.

If we extend it out, to where you're now having an open season come June, or extending that by another month, and then you're kind of not out of the mutton season, but April and May is when everybody loves to target the muttons, at least from a recreational perspective. I shudder to think what it's going to be like trying to go down there to fish.

How these fish come up without dents on their heads from all the lead that is hitting them, I don't know, but I think it has worked. As Manny said, we're seeing more and more blacks come up, and it's nice. It was tough to swallow at first, but everybody is kind of used to it, and I don't want to see us move, especially without a lot of information coming forward.

MS. BROUWER: Up on the screen -- Chip just dug this up, and it's a figure that shows you the spawning seasons for the various snapper grouper species, and so I know it's hard to see, but you've got gag right here, in February through April, and red grouper is over here. April seems to be the peak. Then, of course, over here, you have the reference of where that information came from. Scamp is down here. Again, the peak is in April. I don't see black grouper, but there is some spawning season info for you guys.

MR. ATTACK: On the scamp, the Florida is in April. In North Carolina, what we're seeing is like the May and June, and so that makes sense.

MR. MOSS: I will say it again on the record, to echo what I think it was both Robert and Kenny said, but the idea of this closure was to kind of get the best bang for your buck, to cover for the region. I think it does that. It gets a lot of the spawners, even from the Keys, all the way north. Yes, you're going to get some that go into May and June. Even down south, you will get some fish that are spawning in May and June, but you get the bulk of your spawners and you cover that, and I think it's been okay. I think, again, it's been hard to swallow, initially anyway, but I think, for the most part, we've gotten our bang for the buck, as far as covering the girth of the spawning seasons for them.

MR. FEX: Would you guys like to make a motion to propose no action or any recommendations? We need to something to move forward with, please, or not.

MR. JOHNSON: **I would make a motion for no action, to just leave it like it is.**

MR. FEX: Do we have a second? Okay. From everybody. All right. Any more discussion on the motion at hand? **Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand. The motion is unanimously passed.**

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Moving on to Action 5, this one would remove the minimum size limit for the recreational sector for the deepwater snapper species that still have it, and that's just three. The queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper all still currently have a minimum size limit of twelve inches total length, and so there's only one alternative, either do nothing or remove that, and the idea here, of course, is to reduce discards and mortality.

MR. JOHNSON: Is this just a south Florida fishery? Is anybody catching these fish anywhere else? **I would make a motion to remove the minimum size limit.** Because of the depth they're caught in, they're going to be dead anyway.

MR. ATTACK: I will second that. Is there a bag limit on those, or is that part of the twenty or the ten thing?

MS. BROUWER: I believe they're included in the ten-snapper aggregate. However, some of these, they were included in the option to create the deepwater species aggregate, because these are deepwater species, and so they would be removed from the ten-snapper aggregate, if the other action goes through, and put in the deepwater species aggregate.

MR. FEX: To note that, that would make that another -- It would take some of the fish out of that twenty that we were worried about earlier.

MR. JOHNSON: Just a question. Are these the only deepwater species that have the minimum size limit? I mean, snowy don't, right? We're just getting this more in line with existing regulations?

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion of the motion at hand? **Seeing none, all those in favor, please raise your hand. It's unanimously passed.** Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Action 6 addressed black sea bass, and this is an action to possibly reduce the recreational minimum size limit, and there are three alternatives. Alternative 2 would reduce it to twelve inches total length, and Alternative 3 would put it down to eleven inches total length, which is currently the minimum size limit in place for the commercial sector.

Again, recall that the council recently approved an amendment last year to increase the bag limit. In the course of doing the analysis for that action, we realized that there were a lot of issues with fish being discarded because they are undersized, and so there was some information included in that amendment that was updated. This is information that is not in your briefing book, because we just did this the other day.

This table up here shows you the number of black sea bass discards inside of three miles and outside of three miles for 2014 through 2016. Then at the bottom is the average, and so you are looking at pretty high numbers of discards, 1.9 million, inside of three miles. It's 1.8 million outside of three miles.

In terms of landings, again, inside of three miles, we have about 27,000, and this is, again, in numbers of fish. Outside of three miles, it's 217,000 fish. Then, in terms of percent, you can see that, inside of three miles, the discards are 98.6 percent. Outside of three miles, it's 89.6 percent. Then here is the percent for the landings, 1.4 inshore and 10.4 outside.

During the scoping phase for this amendment, we did get a lot of support for folks saying, yes, let's reduce the minimum size limit down to twelve inches. Then some people said, well, let's make it the same commercial and recreational, and so there was also some support for taking it all the way down to eleven.

I should remind you that there is -- I forgot to mention that there is an assessment. The results for this assessment, which is ongoing, will be available later this year. Another thing to remember is that the ABC for black sea bass is based on a particular selectivity pattern, and so any change in the minimum size limit is going to affect that as well.

MR. THOMPSON: I just wanted to know if there was any -- You said bring them both to eleven inches, and was there any support to bring the commercial up to twelve inches and make it twelve and twelve?

MS. BROUWER: There was a little bit of support for that. I'm not sure that -- I think there would be some analysis that would need to be done, as far as the mesh size that's currently in place and whether that would be adequate, if the size limit were to go up, but there was -- I remember a mention of that possibility.

MR. THOMPSON: I know I've talked to a couple of trappers on that same thing, and their only thing -- They don't mind going up to twelve, but they just have like three or four years to change the mesh size, because that's about the life of their trap, and so they could just phase it in.

MR. FEX: To that point, I did -- At the Morehead meeting, I did have some people complain about that, I think the year before last, because -- One guy, it was kind of ironic. He said if we went up one inch that he would lose 70 percent of his catch, and I was thinking, wow, that's a sad subject that 70 percent of your catch is that small, but I just wanted to note that. Are there comments?

MR. R. FREEMAN: I would like to see the twelve-inch size limit. Fishing sea bass most of the time, we would be anchored up, and you're sitting there trying to catch thirteen-inch fish and probably throwing back five twelve-inchers, and the survival rate on them is not that great. We're fishing 100 or 130 feet, catching these fish, and so I would much prefer seeing that size limit reduced at least to twelve. Eleven is not much sea bass, but twelve makes more sense than trying to stick to the thirteen-inch.

MR. HULL: I agree. When you're discarding 90 percent of your harvest, and you've been discarding 90 percent of your harvest for those years, you're just -- You're not doing anything any good for anybody, not even the stock, and so it should be reduced so they can start harvesting some of these fish. Biologically, it's the way to go, and, also, economically, it's the way to go for that sector. I mean, these people are not harvesting any bass. They're just wasting the resource.

MR. ATTACK: I think the other thing you've got to look at -- I think, when we came to the thirteen inches years ago, it was the number of fish that would be landed versus the ACL versus length of season, and so, when the length changes, the number retained will go up, and then the season would be shortened, and so then the bag limit will have to change. We went through all of this back when this occurred before, and so it's good to have these options on here to go out for comment and look at. Then we've got to decide what's really best for the fishery and the ramifications of the changes.

I really think they should be the same for commercial and recreational, and I'm not opposed to both going to twelve, but I would like to really see the analysis on what is the proper size for that

fish versus the spawning and the selectivity and what is going to give us the highest ACL in the long haul, and then any size change will affect the bag limit, or you're going to have a short season.

Then the other thing to think about it is, well, if we had the limit now at eleven and we weren't throwing all of these back, in two months, are they all going to be less than eleven? Then we're going to be back at 95 percent discard again, and so there's a lot of issues to look at when you look at this, but this is, I think, a good range for at this point. It will come back to us, and then we'll see what happens with the assessment.

MR. FEX: Yes, and, to that point, it was the recreational sector, back in the day, that went to thirteen inches. It was Duane Harris, I believe, that was talking about that, and so just to note that.

MR. BOWEN: I just wanted to remind everybody, if they didn't realize it, that there is an ongoing assessment right now going on with sea bass, and so these talks are good and helpful, but I just want everybody to keep in mind that there is an assessment that's going on right now, and so we're anxiously awaiting the outcome of that. Thank you.

MR. FEX: Thank you, Zack, and we do know the repercussions of how assessments make our regulations have to change.

MR. JOHNSON: I think, when you're discarding 98 percent, that something is not right, and I do support the twelve inches, the change back to twelve inches. I wish we would have had that coupled with the discussion about the bag limit, back when we went to seven, when only 10 percent of trips were even reaching their bag limit, which made absolutely no sense. All we did was increase discards, because people -- The guys that were decent sea bass fishermen were discarding more just to get those extra couple of fish. It really was not a good decision, in my humble opinion. I would support that, if that was a motion, or I can make a motion, and I will. **Motion to change the minimum size limit to twelve inches.**

MR. FEX: Can I get a second?

AP MEMBER: Second.

MR. ATACK: That already is up there, and we're really not recommending a preferred alternative now. This is going out for comment, and so you've got the twelve-inch size up there, the eleven-inch, and the thirteen. Making that motion really doesn't --

MR. JOHNSON: Whatever alternative that was that was offered, Jim, that's what I want.

MR. FEX: Thank you for the clarification there, Jim. All right. Any more further discussion of the motion at hand? **Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand, thirteen in favor; all those opposed, please raise your hand, six opposed; any abstentions, none. The motion passes.**

I will note though, a while back, we did look at mesh sizes. We had a discussion here, a presentation done, and Tom Burgess did a thing with it, and so there is information out there. Eventually, if the commercial sector wants to go to twelve, there is information and there is ways to work through that, and so just to note that, because I know it seems unfair. That was one thing

in the visioning too, how a commercial guy gets a different limit than the recreational and then it causes conflict of interest between each sector. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. The last action in this amendment would reduce the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off of east Florida. This is something that, as I mentioned yesterday, the minimum size limit was increased in 2015 off of east Florida, to fourteen inches, and that was done to match what was in place in the Gulf. Then there was a minimum size limit imposed off of the rest of the South Atlantic states to twelve inches.

Now it turns out that, in south Florida, there's been indication that there is a lot of discarding going on, because the gray triggerfish are not getting to fourteen inches down there, and so the FWC has already reduced the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in state waters back down to twelve, and they have requested that the council take action to do that for federal waters as well.

The rationale for this action, which I just mentioned all of this, and another thing to consider is the gray triggerfish stock in the Gulf of Mexico is currently undergoing overfishing, and so the Gulf Council is actually considering an increase in the minimum size limit in federal waters in the Gulf to fifteen inches. Currently, in state waters in the Gulf, it is fourteen inches. This one is a little complicated.

MR. HULL: I believe, at our last AP meeting, we made a motion to recommend that they do this, that we reduce it back, which I made the motion, and I had Jessica McCawley speak on the subject. She spoke on the reasoning behind it, and we need it back to twelve inches, to be in line with the rest of the states in the South Atlantic. Florida should not be penalized with a fourteen-inch size limit just because they wanted to make it the same as in the Gulf. With all of that reasoning, when they go to fifteen in the Gulf, let's just make it fifteen in the Atlantic to make it simple, and that was why they did it, but that doesn't work.

We have different habitats, even in the South Atlantic side, from where Robert fishes and where I fish. The triggerfish are reaching different sizes, and so, below me, down to Cape Canaveral, they're even smaller, and so it's hard to manage the entire range with one size limit, but I believe that, if we're going to have twelve inches everywhere else, it needs to be twelve inches off of Florida also.

MR. FEX: I have a question. Does anybody know what the minimum spawning size is for gray triggerfish?

MR. JOHNSON: Five inches. 50 percent are sexually mature at five inches. They're little guys. I am pretty sure I'm right on that. I was in that assessment, and so they're very -- They're harem spawners though, and so that raises some issues, but they get sexually mature really quick.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion? Would you like to make a motion to what you said there, Jimmy Hull?

MR. HULL: **I would like to make a motion that the AP recommend that the council reduce the size limit off the federal waters of east Florida to twelve inches total length.**

MR. FEX: Do we have a second to that motion?

AP MEMBER: Second.

MR. FEX: All right. Is there further discussion of the motion at hand? **Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion at hand, sixteen in favor; all those opposed, none; abstentions, one. The motion passes.** Guys, let's go ahead and take a fifteen-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. BROUWER: Item 4 on the agenda is Review of the Vision Blueprint Commercial Amendment, and so this is Regulatory Amendment 27. It's Attachment 4 in your briefing book. We will do the same sort of thing we just did for the recreational amendment. It should go a little faster, because some of the actions are going to be the same, and you have already had discussion. Unless there is additional input from the commercial sector on those same actions, it should go more quickly.

Action 1 would establish a commercial split season for blueline tilefish. The first few actions in this amendment are going to all deal with potential split seasons for various species, and so the idea here is to split out blueline tile, and the alternatives are modeled after what is currently already in place for vermilion and gray trigger, where you have two quotas and you apportion a certain percentage of the commercial ACL to each one of those seasons, Season 1 and Season 2.

Alternative 2 simply looks at two six-month seasons, and we have left the percentage of the ACL blank, to allow some flexibility there, if the council wants to look at 50/50 split or a 60/40 or what have you, and so that's where you guys could have some input. Then Alternative 3 allows you to modify the length of the season, and so you could potentially have a longer season on the front end or vice versa, and so, again, items to consider for this action are a blueline tilefish amendment has been slated to address changes that are going to come out of the new stock assessment, SEDAR 50, which is underway, and those results are expected in 2018.

We have also heard that the blueline tilefish -- We know that this tilefish has been very dynamic in recent years. There has been a lot of changes, as far as regulations. We talked yesterday about Amendment 32, and then Regulatory Amendment 25 made some more changes, and so fishery-dependent data have, therefore, been affected, and this is obviously going to have some implication for whatever analyses are conducted, and so those are just things to keep in mind. With that, we can carry on.

MR. BUFF: This is one thing that we really depend on where I'm at, is the tilefish and the snowy. It's something that we do every single day, and, in my opinion, for what this is worth, the tilefish and the snowy need to kind of go together, because there is no sense in having one open and one closed.

I would also like to comment that that season kind of carries us through into the vermilion and the triggerfish opening in July, and so that kind of keeps something coming across the dock for those months when vermilion and triggerfish are closed, until they reopen again, and so I would just like to kind of throw that out there, that this is something that we really do, and I don't know that it needs to be modified at all, and, if it is, if you're going to modify it, then we need to figure out

how to do the golden tile and the snowy in there with them, because there is no sense fishing for one and throwing the other ones back.

MR. FEX: To that comment, I know Scotty wanted to kind of get a shift on the golden tile season on the hook-and-line, but noted that the council did not want to change that, because of the snowy and the interaction in the deep water. The guys are out there for golden tile, and then they come in and get the snowy, and so there is not going to be a change in the golden tile hook-and-line fishery, and so I can't opinionate on it, but, yes, to your point.

MR. HUDSON: Looking at the landings from updated yesterday, we have an ACL of just short of 88,000 pounds. Right now, we're at 36,000 pounds, 40 percent, and, at that pace, and based on what I saw for last year, most of the snowy catches -- The snowy blew by last year, and also the blueline a little bit, but it seems like that peters out by the end of the summer, or before the end of the summer, and so apparently the catches get a lot more accelerated during the next few months.

I know, in our region, and, of course, Robert mentioned the area where we have a predominance of snowy, 200 to 300 foot, and a bycatch of blueline tile, but, north of Hatteras, they've got a clean blueline tile fishery with no bycatch of snowy, and so it's a weird arrangement. Until we finish this SEDAR 50 that we're currently involved in, that I'm involved in, and our assessment is already scheduled for the end of May, in Atlantic Beach, and then that will unfold over the next few months, we really don't have a lot of answers, because of the fact that we're bringing in the Mid-Atlantic stuff and a lot of other considerations.

I personally think that no action, until we get some numbers and get some reality, because, with our 200-pound trip limit for snowy, and I always found that, when I lived and breathed that stuff, back in the 1980s, I would have 80 or 90 percent snowy and the remainder would be a bycatch of blueline tile, usually four to seven pounds.

Just like Bobby said yesterday, that small mouth on that darned blueline tile, and it's just not like the bigger mouth of the snowy grouper, and so there is a big difference, and he was talking about the independent surveys, but I am just talking about fishing in general. That made it so that, back in the 1980s, that was not a very -- You didn't get paid very well for blueline tilefish back then, but, nowadays, all fish seem to have a good value. I would say this is something I would rather see wait, but I don't know -- Until we can get numbers or increases or something, to make it more palatable, because that situation in North Carolina is way different from ours down our way.

MR. FEX: Yes, I definitely will note that, but, back in the 1980s or 1990s, there wasn't much demand for blueline. All of a sudden, it has dramatically increased.

MR. JOHNSON: This is a question for Scott. These guys are targeting blueline and snowy, but not really vermillion and trigger, or is it part of the same trip? You made the comment that you all sort of need them to carry you through to that next opening, and so, with a January 1 opening, I'm just wondering if it would be better if that opening was a little later than January 1. I am just trying to sense the needs of the market and the fishermen. When we fish for snowy, it's part of a trip. We go and we catch our b-liners, and then we will jump out there and catch our two boxes of snowy. It's part of the same trip. We're not doing a targeted trip.

MR. BUFF: Robert, for what our boats do, and the point I was making is that, if you split that season up, it carries us -- Normally, our b-liners will close in March, on a normal year. The last couple has not been normal, and that, being able to catch those fish, carries us from that April 1 all the way into July, because I think the snowy and the blueline have closed somewhere around June for the last couple of years.

The golden tile, the split season on it, I don't think that would work, because we're catching the ACL, but it's only up into October or November. I think, last year, it might have even went further on, and so just being able to have those fish coming across the dock is really important to those guys on the boats, to be able to add that, and they are, to answer your question, even in January, February, March, and April, as long as the b-liners and the triggerfish are open, depending on what the weather is going to be, they're either going to go catch their snowy or their tilefish or they're either going to catch their b-liners, depending on what the weather is going to be.

They're doing that as a group trip, until the triggerfish and the b-liners close, and so my point was, was once that closed, we used that with just to keep them something to do up until, and just the point being, if you're going to close the gray tile, you need to close the snowy, too.

I talked to Jack about this a lot, and, to back up what Rusty is saying, north of Hatteras, they do have a fishery up there that has nothing to do with the snowy, and so it's back to the same little thing we talked about in Florida. It just depends on where you're at, but, from where we're at, this is something that we really depend on. **I would make a motion to have no action.**

MR. JOHNSON: That was sort of what you're trying to figure out. So you're really supporting no action. The way it is right now, those fish carry you to that July opening. May 1, we have shallow-water grouper open, and so we have these other things to fish for, and so, pretty much, how it is right now, you don't support a split season.

MR. BUFF: That is correct, and, if you're going to split them, you need to split the gray, the blueline, and the snowy, because, where we're at, they're together. The golden are in a different area, but the blueline and the snowy, from where we're at, there is no sense in throwing them back if we're -- They are dead. They're done.

MR. ATTACK: Last year, June 1 was when the blueline closed, and they reopened it for a little bit, and the snowy closed like June 14 last year. The golden tile, they went the whole year, because they hit 97 percent, and so it worked well last year.

MR. BUFF: I know everybody is going to throw rocks when I say this, but, from my standpoint, I would have rather left the trip limits the way they used to be, so they would have lasted the whole year, and I know everybody is going to fuss, and it is what it is, but a hundred pounds all year round, like of like what Robert was saying, is better than 200 for five or six months, and they kind of go hand-in-hand.

MR. FEX: I recall I think there was a slight bump in the snowy, and that's why we switched to that, and so I mean it's just kind of like -- It just made more value to some of the trips, and so that point is noted. Can I get a second to the motion at hand? Robert. Is there discussion on the motion? **Seeing none, the motion is the AP recommends Alternative 1, no action, on splitting**

**the commercial season for blueline tilefish, and all those in favor, please raise your hand. The motion passes unanimously. Thank you.**

DR. KELLISON: I just wanted to give a quick follow-up, unrelated to that vote, but related to snowy grouper. The comment that they're pretty much dead when they're going back in the water, related to the descender device discussion that we were having recently, Brendan Runde is a grad student of Jeff Buckel up at NC State University, and he's been finding, with relatively small sample sizes so far, but some surprising survival with snowy grouper that he has caught deep that he has put back down on the bottom quickly, and so just some potential light there, and I believe that Brendan has presented that work to the council.

MR. FEX: Thank you.

MR. BUFF: My point was that we shouldn't be interacting with them at the same time, and we try our best, when they get to their trip limit, is we get out of there. We try to go do something else, even if they have more of one or the other, and so just having all of that together really makes a big deal for the trip itself, but to your account, yes, but we just try not to.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Action 2 would establish a commercial split season for red porgy. This is something the AP has had a good bit of discussion about, and so we have -- Red porgy, of course, there is a restriction on commercial harvest January through April, and so Sub-Alternative 2a would allocate the directed commercial red porgy ACL into two quotas, 50 percent to the period of January through June, and so potentially get rid of that closure, and 50 percent to July through December, the same sort of thing that we have for vermilion and gray triggerfish.

Then Sub-Alternative 2b leaves it open, so that you can modify the length of the season and the percentage of the ACL. Then Alternative 3 would remove the seasonal harvest limit for red porgy and then allocate it like I just said. I'm sorry. Alternative 2 would maintain that closure January through April, and Alternative 3 would remove it and then apportion the commercial ACL to the two different seasons.

If there are other alternatives the AP thinks should be considered, now is the time to bring that up, and then items to consider in here, I just had this statement from the assessment. In the terminal five years of the assessment, the stock seems to have ceased rebuilding, or perhaps even declined slightly. The increase in stock status in the early 2000s appears to have been initiated by strong recruitment, and then there was a severe reduction in fishing mortality beginning in 2000.

Then there has been more modest increases since 2007, and there is below-average recruitment, and so the stock is still in an overfished state. Red porgy spawn from mid-November through mid-April along the southeastern U.S., with a peak during January through March, and there is a standard assessment that is scheduled for red porgy in 2019. Again, items for you guys to consider while you discuss.

MR. FEX: I am going to make a comment, or not a comment, but a personal opinion. We have thrown this out there before. I think this thing is part of trying to eliminate some discards. MARMAP surveys in the summertime. They are not out there in the wintertime. I am in there fishing in the wintertime, and porgies are -- There is a lot of them.

The problem I see is they're from forty feet and they go out to five-hundred-and-something feet. That's a pretty large amount of area. MARMAP is not grasping and seeing that when we are. Also, there is another problem with the stock assessment. I think Roy said that the discards -- The discards are part of our reporting. A lot of the vessels don't report discards correctly. Some of the owners of the boats report the discards and not the captains, and that's a problem, because that is part of your issues.

When you get discards, they need to be reported, because then the scientists can see that the fish are out there, and so we're not catching -- We're throwing the fish back now, but the scientists are not seeing them in the wintertime. Also, the issue with discards too is, when it comes to the end of the year, and you can't catch vermilion and triggerfish, people are still fishing to try to catch a red porgy, and then they're interacting with vermilion at the end of the year, as they try to catch grouper along with it, and that's sad, because a porgy is only worth two-dollars a pound, and vermilion and triggerfish are worth three and four-dollars a pound. It's sad to that, and so I would actually -- I can't say I would support it, but we have actually supported that many times before, and so are there comments?

MS. MARHEFKA: This is one time that I am actually speaking on behalf of Mark, because this is a discussion we had before he left. This definitely brings back a lot of PTSD issues, red porgy, and the stock assessments and the issues with MARMAP. We have been down this road before. I, at this point, would be very hesitant to do anything until we sort of see what's going on with the stock, because I just -- I am very worried about going back down it again.

I think the discard issue definitely has some merit, but, on the other hand, there's a market issue at play, where, when we don't have vermilion for the market, we have some red porgy to fill that snapper spot, which is really nice to have. Mark's message, I will say, and you guys can call him. I will give you his number, and you can yell at him. If you start catching a bunch of red porgy when they're closed, move off of a spot. If you start catching a bunch of vermilion, move. That's how he sort of wanted to address it.

Since I don't go out there, I am just going to let that lie where it lies, but, for right now, I would be very inclined to let's keep it the way it is. Also, because of the spawning, I would be very against, right now, with this sketchy assessment, removing the January to April closure, and I just think we need them for the market during that time, and so that was just my thoughts on it.

MR. FEX: One more point to the discards that I forgot to mention was, when May 1 opens up and we go try to catch a grouper, and then we're trying to catch that red porgy, there will be some discards of vermilion.

MR. HUDSON: As information, last year's quota was 164,000 pounds whole weight. We only caught 70 percent, and so left 50,000 pounds uncaught.

MR. JOHNSON: I do support a split season, just because of the discard issues. What I would like to see though is, on that first January 1 opening, the trip limit be less. I would want it to be a discard fishery. In other words, it's 120 fish, I think, when it opens. Make it half of that, but give the fishermen the ability to -- They're not going to sit there and probably target them, because they're catching b-liners, but at least let them keep these fish that they're throwing back. That will

serve a couple of purposes. It will put a little bit of money in their pocket, and it will also give the scientists some samples that they haven't been getting in January and February.

I wouldn't allocate 50 percent to that January 1 opening of the ACL. I would make it a smaller allocation, maybe 25 percent, but something just to get some of those fish to the docks, to keep the fishermen from discarding them, because I really think in the future, at some point, we're going to have to go to these types of management where, when we have fish that co-habit in different areas that we can keep them, instead of trying to single out and catch this species and throw this one back and all that.

MR. HULL: Robert, that's a great idea. I think that's a good compromise, and maybe that should -- That is not an alternative, presently. I think that would be a good additional alternative, along those lines, to put a small part -- More of a discard that you can keep while you're targeting vermilions, because that is what is happening for us, too. It still provides enough protection during the spawn, because it's such a small amount, and that really makes good sense. I like that.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would support that. I also wanted to ask Myra -- I am remembering -- There was a specific, dedicated red porgy bycatch logbook for a couple of years when we were going through Amendment 12, or maybe there was a small study, because I seem to recall Mark keeping track of every red porgy he discarded, and it makes me think of what Kenny said. We were capturing that information at some point, and are we not still?

DR. COLLIER: That was part of a fishery resource grant through North Carolina that Mark was recording that information.

MR. ATTACK: I would suggest, if you make that motion, to do the sixty, also do like a thirty, so that when they -- Kind of a range for the off season, so that, if it looks like the numbers really need to be thirty, so we don't blow through the ACL in the regular season or whatever, that it might be good to have a range of numbers there when you present your motion.

MR. JOHNSON: You could add with a range of alternatives, as far as --

MS. MARHEFKA: You haven't made a motion.

MR. FEX: Robert, would you like to make a motion towards what you're discussing?

MR. JOHNSON: **Yes, I would like to make that in the form of a motion, to consider trip limit modifications to address discards and still consider a split season, do analysis to consider what that low trip limit should be, with a range from maybe thirty fish to sixty fish.**

AP MEMBER: I will second that.

MR. FEX: Was that thirty to sixty that you would like --

MR. JOHNSON: That's fine. Just a range of trip limit options.

MR. FEX: For clarification, Robert, was that for the first wave of the season?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, for the first wave, during what is now a spawning closure.

MR. FEX: All right. Thank you. I just wanted that on the record.

MS. BROUWER: Just for clarification, the seasons then would be equal in length, six-month seasons? Are we talking January through June and June through July or some other way?

MR. JOHNSON: In a perfect world, I would like to see all the small-mouth fish closed at the same time. I mean, realistically, and I know that's hard to do through trip limits, but the problem we have now is, when b-liners close, triggers are still open, at ten boxes, and I know people want to go make money. I understand, but, if we're trying to really get at discards and the discard issues, sometime in the future, we're going to have to look at fish that are caught together, that they open and close together. That is not a motion, but I am just talking.

MR. THOMPSON: Robert, on that same point, we have a fair number of pinkies that are caught in the deep water also, and so if you have -- They're going to be dead. If the snowy are open, you're going to catch a few pinkies. Would you leave them open for that also? That's just a comment. I am thinking out loud there.

MR. JOHNSON: This is commercial. If you're talking about commercial, snowy is open January 1, and so, yes, this would help that as well, because you would be out --

MR. THOMPSON: I understand that, but what you just said about the closure, if you have the b-liners and triggers closed, but let's say snowy would be open, and would you be throwing them back then or leave them open? I am just kind of throwing that out there.

MR. FEX: We are currently throwing them back now, with the snowy open, and so we're trying to -- We're trying to get those species to the scientists, really. Any more discussion of the motion at hand? **Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand. The motion passes unanimously.** Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Action 3 considers a commercial split season for snowy grouper, and we have already had some discussion about that, and so the same sort of idea here, with the same alternatives.

MR. BUFF: I would just kind of reiterate what we said a while ago. I don't mind if you split them, but, if we do, we need to do them both, and so I really -- I don't want them split, but, if that's what everybody wants, I am fine with it.

MR. FEX: The way it's currently going, it seems like there is a deepwater fishery commercially, at the beginning of the year, until it kind of goes away, and golden tile and everything is open then, and so I would just note that.

MR. JOHNSON: I would support no action, simply because the snowy are the grouper for the marketplace when all the other species are closed. It's not as important to the fishermen or the market if snowy close in June, because you have the other grouper species, and a host of other species, open. I think the way it's going right now is pretty good.

MS. MARHEFKA: Except for last year. Just to play devil's advocate, and I don't know about you guys, but we couldn't catch shallow-water. I mean, they were open, but they weren't biting, and snowy was, and so, even though technically you could catch a shallow-water grouper, you didn't have any grouper to catch, and so it's just to play devil's advocate. I am looking at preliminary 2016. The shallow-water grouper species, we only caught 22 percent. Not that I want to shift the effort, but it's not like that fish was really making it to the market.

MR. JOHNSON: Just for discussion, to that point, is there any -- What does the group think about maybe relooking at the snowy trip limits, I mean if we're trying to extend something? We went to 200 pounds, and the result of that was we ended up with a fishery that closes. If we went back to a hundred pounds, would that give us a year-round fishery for snowy? That's just for discussion.

MR. HUDSON: Last year, we did go past the 125,000 pounds, or 126,000 was the allocation, and we landed almost 147,000, 117 percent. This year, we've got an additional 10,000 pounds, and so we've got a 135,000-pound ACL now, and so I'm not sure how that's going to shape up as the year unfolds.

MR. FEX: I will say that was one of our issues when we did get that bump in the snowy. We thought that let's raise it to 200, and we knew it was going to shut down, but it's the benefit of gaining the profitability on the trip or do you want to extend the season, and so it's all just based on that.

MR. BUFF: Back to what Robert said a while ago about the fish closing and opening, the small-mouth and the bigger-mouth fish opening and closing at the same time, if we're going to do the snowy, we would need to also cut the blueline tilefish back in half as well, and, like I said, I'm fine with that. If we want to go to 100 and 150 and split in two seasons, I am fine with that, too.

It doesn't matter, but, at some point in time, we're going to have to figure out how to open and close these fish at the same time and get the ACLs to be caught at the same time, so we can not interact with them while one is closed and one is open. I would just like to throw that out there. At some point in time, as Robert said, we're going to have to figure out how to adjust the ACLs somehow and the fishing seasons somehow so we're not interacting and having all these discards and being able to put these fish on the table, instead of throwing them back in the ocean.

MR. HULL: You've got some alternatives here, two of them, which just have different insert percentages to developing a split season at those specific dates, and so do we need to add any other alternatives, other than what is here? Scott, what you just said, is that represented in one of these alternatives?

MR. JOHNSON: To that point, I mean, you could even look at having a higher trip limit from January to some point. Then, when the shallow-water grouper opened up, lower the snowy trip limit. I don't know if that addresses discards, but you could do the same thing with the blueline tile. You could lower that limit, just to keep -- I mean, she was mentioning that they didn't see that many grouper come into their market, that many shallow-water grouper, and so that would allow for that steady supply.

MR. BUFF: Where we're at, if you give us 300 or 500 or -- Our boats are catching this ten-box trip limit, which is what I call the golden, the gray, and the snowy. We're catching those ten boxes

of fish in a day or a day-and-a-half, and so, if you give them three boxes, they are going to catch them, and they're just going to go and go and go and go. My point is I would rather see it strung out, and I know nobody wants to hear that, and my guys are going to cuss about it too, but, at the end of the day, I have a market, too, and I would love to have those fish on that market, but, if you're going to split one -- Whatever you do with the blueline, you've got to do with the snowy.

That is my point, I guess. If we're going to split them, if we're going to cut the trip limits -- Even if you cut them, you're still looking at 750 pounds of fish. If you cut the blueline in half and the snowy in half, and you've still got the golden at 500, that's 750 pounds of fish at about a four-dollar-and-fifty-cent average, or a five-dollar average, fish. That's a pretty decent trip to be able to have, and that's what my guys are doing, and adding it with their vermilion and their triggerfish, when they're open, and so that makes the biggest stocks of the year for the boat and to pay those guys.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would love to hear some discussion from you guys that know much more than I do about what we think is happening that we're not seeing the shallow-water species. It will help me make a better decision about what to do with the shallow-water grouper, specifically. What do you guys think is happening and why we were only at 22 percent last year? Maybe I'm just married to a shitty grouper fisherman, and you can say that.

I would just love to hear the discussion, because I do think, looking at it from a market perspective, I would just like to have some kind of grouper all year long, and so that's why, for me, the two go hand-in-hand, and I don't have the experience that you all have, and so I would love to hear what you're seeing out there and what you think is happening.

MR. BUFF: To answer your question, there is a lot of factors in this stuff, and everybody knows this, but I don't think everybody thinks about it. You've got the weather conditions, and the water temperatures. The migrations, or however you want to put that, from where the fish travel, but like this year -- So far this year, I have had tons of my guys talking about how many grouper they're catching, and it could have been an off year.

We have had off years with all kinds of fish throughout the years, and maybe last year was just an off year for that fishery. Now, the red grouper, I don't know. I think we've got some issues there, but, my guys, all they're talking about is they can't wait until grouper season opens, because of all the interaction that's been going on. Maybe we just had an off year. The water temperatures are warmer, and all of that contributes into what we're catching and what we're doing. Even like the spawning seasons, I think that water temperature and where they're at and what they're doing, all that changes from year to year.

MR. ATTACK: When you're looking at the shallow-water grouper, that's only a 55,000-pound ACL. The other shallow-water grouper that's not part of that is -- Like he said, the red grouper, which I think we're all concerned about, and the scamp and the gag, and so those numbers are much higher, percentage-wise.

MR. JOHNSON: I think that's the million-dollar question that she asked, and I think she was really talking about, when she said shallow-water grouper, including the gags and the scamps and not just that specific -- I don't have anything to back this up, but I honestly believe that what is going on with the grouper population is not fishing mortality. I think there is something else, and

I don't know if it's the estuaries, where they're settling out, or what it is. I am sure that the state agencies are doing their sampling in the estuaries and getting the little baby groupers, and that would be interesting, to me, to see if they're encountering the same numbers they have over the years, because, good gosh, we've given these fish a ton of protection. We have restricted the bag limits, and we've got a spawning closure. Look what happened to red snapper when we gave them protection. They're everywhere, but we don't see that with grouper, and I know they're two totally different animals, but, still, that would be a question for Dr. Kellison or someone much more qualified to answer than myself.

DR. KELLISON: I will attempt a response to that. I have no real thoughts on, population-wide, what's happening to them, but, just in terms of like state data, I think there's probably not a lot out there. I don't know what the State of Florida does on their fishery-independent monitoring program, but I know that on the west side of the coast, the West Florida Shelf, they do a good job with gag. Then maybe I was hearing from Ben Hartig earlier that they catch red groupers as well.

They might get good data on some groupers on the east coast of Florida, but I am not aware that there are any long-term surveys within Georgia, South Carolina, or North Carolina that collect good information on any of those grouper species. Some, really, but not good data like they do with a lot of the more abundant estuarine species, and so that's a challenge.

One discussion that we were having during the break, which is part of the bigger-picture challenge, is, I think, for a lot of these species, it's still not clear exactly what is happening with their early life history. We were talking about sea bass particularly, which is not what you're talking about, but sea bass -- A lot of people consider them estuarine dependent, but I am confident, and others - - Jimmy over there is nodding his head, but there is a component of that species that settle offshore and don't use estuaries in their early life history, but we don't know what proportion of the population settles offshore versus settles in estuaries and how that might change over time.

I think that that is probably true for gag. Definitely, in the Carolinas, they come into the estuaries and settle in the seagrass beds, and you can see, in October, if you go in those near-shore wrecks, they are covered in little gag that are moving offshore, but I also wonder whether some component of them settles offshore, and so a problem is -- It's like basic science. We don't have an understanding, a full understanding, of the life history of a number of those species to be able to establish and understand like fishery-independent survey data, and so that's not helpful, but at least we're aware of some of the gaps and trying to get there. Thank you.

MR. FEX: I've got a comment on the estuary issue that I think is -- I note it. We have a slot limit on red drum. I don't think if you guys know where they catch all of them, but they catch them up in the mangroves, in the estuaries.

I catch a lot of them, when I go in Florida, but we let that big fish grow, and we have protected that big red drum, and now, if you think about all the red drum on the inshore reefs and everything, you might think about that as an estuary issue, as we look at goliath grouper eating other fish and sharks up in the estuaries. As we let that big fish keep growing and populating the estuaries, we might to think about that as a concern. I mean, not that I want to go out and slaughter red drum, but we have protected that fish, and we let them get big, and they're populating.

MR. BUFF: I hadn't even thought about that until he just said that, but there is huge schools of red drum at our place, I mean all year round, and they're huge. You pull up on them, and the water is just gold for a mile, and I have never seen them like before, but we're having the same issues. To back up kind of what Kerry and Robert said down there, we had no grouper fishery last year either. It didn't matter if they were open. Normally, the boats would come with 500 or 1,000 pounds of grouper all year round, or what time it was open, and that didn't happen.

Kind of, in a way, I agree with what Robert said, too. I don't know if it's the pressure or if it's something going on in the fishery itself, but one thing that I have heard numerous times in here this last two days, and it's something that people don't take into account, is, ten years ago, there was very few boats that could go twenty miles offshore.

Today, in the world we live in, almost every person that goes fishing has a boat that is capable of going fifty or sixty miles offshore. Over time, this, I guess, the spread of those fish has went further and further and further, because the boat ranges have got bigger too, and I think that everybody in here, no matter what the fishery is that you're talking about, we're underestimating the amount of recreational fishing pressure that is put on these fish.

Guys, I am on both sides of the fence. I've got recreational boats, too. I've had charter boats and headboats and commercial fishing boats. I've been on both sides of this, and there is no right or wrong answer here. We're all in this, and it's everybody's fault where we're at today, and so I'm not pointing fingers, but tons of people have boats that can go forty or fifty or sixty miles now, and I think that we really underestimate what's going on with these boats and what they're catching.

MR. BROWN: I just want to reiterate what you all are saying, but, last year, when it opened, from May 1 until about the beginning of August, we just weren't catching any grouper, and we were fishing a lot of known spots, you know that I've caught many of them on, and they just weren't there, and so I started talking to some of the divers, because we've got quite a few divers out of Charleston, and they weren't seeing them either. They said that the wrecks and the good spots where they had dove before -- They would tell me that they might see one, and that would be it. They just weren't there. Then we got around to about the beginning of August, and, all of a sudden, some fish started showing up and we started catching some decent amounts of them, but there was a period of time that they weren't on the reefs.

MS. MARHEFKA: **Maybe what I would like to do, if it would be okay, was to sort of formulate a motion that talked about** -- I forget who had the idea of a step-down in the trip limit. Myra, can the trip limit thing happen? Can we add a -- Right now, we're talking about split seasons, but can we --

MS. BROUWER: Sure, yes. You are welcome to.

MS. MARHEFKA: So we're not limited to --

MS. BROUWER: No, not at all.

MS. MARHEFKA: So maybe the idea of a step-down. I mean, there is only a month's difference right now between when shallow-water opens and when snowy closes. Yes, by shallow-water, I mean all the May 1 species. They closed on June 14. Snowy closed June 14 last year, and so I

don't know how much good a step-down when the others open would do, but, basically, I would like to -- What alternative can we add to take out to the public that would get at having some kind of grouper in the market all year long, and if that meant a trip reduction for snowy and blueline? There is not one option that I would not consider. I would like to give the staff latitude to look at the numbers and see, with the caveat being, if you start catching shallow-water, then yay, I guess.

MR. HUDSON: Looking at the SEDAR 36 results and the projections through 2019, we have a little more increase next year, and a little more increase the following year, and that's where it stops. I don't know what the plans are for being able to go further in the future, but the part that bothers me is in whole weight, the 6.7-pound whole weight average. That's only going to be until -- Now it's going to be at seven pounds, starting next year, is the average, and, of course, if you get on clean snowy, outside of 300 foot, to 600 foot, you ain't going to see a seven-pounder. You're going to see twenty and thirty and forty-pounders.

MR. HULL: If you went back to -- Not considering the split season, but, if you just brought the trip limit back to a hundred pounds, that would maybe accomplish some of the same thing you're trying to accomplish, which is to have fish available for a longer period of time. I know, in our market and restaurant, if I can have a hundred pounds of snowy, I am happy, just as happy, almost as happy, as having 200.

I think that could maybe solve some of the problem too, because, if you start -- As Scott said, if you start messing around and splitting this, you're going to have to split -- In your area, you guys split the blueline, and so then it starts to get kind of convoluted. Anyway, that could be another option, but it wouldn't fall under the split season action.

MR. JOHNSON: Most of our step-downs happen at 75 percent, I think. Like, for b-liners, it's 75 percent of the ACL is projected to be met, and I think gag are the same, but, in this case, you might even look at something at like, if 50 percent of the ACL is projected to be met, you could go to a 50 percent reduction. You could go from a 200-pound trip limit to a hundred-pound trip limit. There is a lot of options, and I think her point is to give the council leeway to explore those options.

MR. FEX: Did we get a second to this motion? All right. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: I am going to reread what I have up on the screen, to make sure I have captured your intent. The motion reads: **Consider a trip limit step-down/reduction in the snowy and blueline trip limits to coincide with the opening of the shallow-water grouper on May 1.**

MS. MARHEFKA: Really, this is what I want to say. My understanding is the intent of the split season, at the beginning anyway, was to increase the length of the fishery, and so what I want to say is, as an AP member, I would like the council and staff to explore any possible means that it takes to make that happen, and I don't want to limit -- That is one option, but another option may be, like Jimmy said, or like Robert said, other variations of trip limits, and so, whatever wide parameters you need to look at to achieve the intent of having the longest fishery possible. Is that bad?

MR. BUFF: I agree with Robert. That's a pretty good idea right there. I think that would go a long way, and everybody would win, and so the guys are going to get the trip limits that are going to be fairly decent when everything in the wintertime -- Then, as that fills the 50 percent, it's going

to cut it half, and you can do both of those fisheries the same. That would make those last. We would at least get them up into maybe August, maybe, or maybe September even.

MS. BROUWER: So do you want the step-down or the trip limit reduction to coincide with a date, or do you want it to be a certain percent of the ACL? We can do both. There is no reason why only a certain percent of the ACL being met triggers a step-down. We could analyze it both ways.

MR. BUFF: Like Robert said, at 50 percent, I think that's -- I mean, has anybody else in here got a comment on it? This is something you do, and you better throw your two-cents in here too now.

MR. MERSHON: Number one, last year was just a piss-poor grouper season for the shallow-water grouper. The divers that are in our area, they went on out to the break, and they were coming in with their limits, and so the fish just stayed offshore a little bit further. Now, as to who is the better fisherman and stuff like that, it was just piss-poor.

On the snowy, I personally have no problem with a step down, especially when you figure that 50 percent of the quota is probably going to be getting pretty close to when the shallow-water grouper is going to be opening up anyway, and so if I knew that I could still -- If I was on the break, and it was a little bit of a slow day, and if I still knew in June or July that I could maybe shoot offshore and grab me a hundred pounds of snowy, it could make a piss-poor day into a good day. Of course, nobody wants to know that you've got a step-down, but it prolongs the b-liner season and it prolongs everything else, and so it could be a needed resource for our future of it, to have that grouper on the table.

MR. BUFF: One more thing is it makes it worthwhile when you can catch the blueline and the snowy grouper. The guys don't want to ride fifteen or twenty miles just to catch a hundred pounds of fish, and so that's kind of -- If we could figure out how to get that stuff to intermingle together, to where it opened and closed sometime close to the same time, that would be in the perfect world.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion of the motion? **Seeing none, I will read it. It is to consider a trip limit step-down reduction in the snowy and blueline trip limits to coincide with the opening of the shallow-water grouper on May 1. Consider other options to lengthen the season and include a step-down when a certain percentage of the ACL is met. All those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand. It unanimous and approved.**

I would like to make a comment though, just to note that how the commercial sector is even trying to limit themselves to keep the season open year-round, as we do with the recreational, and so that's just --

MS. BROUWER: Okay. More split season options. Action 4 would establish a split season for greater amberjack. The commercial fishing year is from March 1 through the end of February, and so, again, we have alternatives that would split the season evenly, or some other way, and different percentages of the commercial ACL could be attributed to each of the seasons.

Things to consider here are, as I said, during April, commercial harvest is limited to one amberjack per person per day or one per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive. Again, the council's

intent here was to not only lengthen the season, but have more equitable access to the resource throughout the council's jurisdiction.

MR. FEX: Ben, do you have any opinion on what is up at hand? The only reason I'm asking is you talk to a lot more jack fishermen than I do. Has anybody brought this forth or your personal public opinion that you've heard?

MR. HARTIG: Kenny, thanks. I kind of liked your thought process of what you did with snowy and blueline in that last thing, where you talked about a step-down there. We haven't talked about a step-down for amberjacks, and that may be something that you might want to entertain, but the real concern is that North Carolina got cut out of the fishery this year, as you well know, and so the equity concerns of this council, and this goes to blueline tilefish, and I don't want to complicate your discussions that you've already had, but the council has to think of things other than some of the things you're thinking about.

The equity concerns and the changes in the fishery that have occurred in the past has actually disenfranchised North Carolina from some of the deepwater fish, because of the way the seasons open and have closed before they have had access at the time they fish, and so that is just something that the council has to deal with other than some of the things that you do, and so that's something that we will have a discussion on when you bring your recommendations before us.

To get back to amberjack, North Carolina was cut out of the fishery. There is major equity concerns. The fish is now worth -- It's a two-dollar-a-pound fish now, and it's worth more than twice as much as it was when we put the regulations in place years ago, and so you could live with less fish on a trip limit, for one thing, because the fish has increased in value, if you want to stretch it out that way.

The other way is the split season, which would give the seasonal aspects, North Carolina, at the time when they catch their fish. The good thing about Florida, with the change of the season, is Florida will have access in March, which is why we changed the season to where it was now, and so we would be able to -- Everybody would get a shot at some fish with a split season.

North Carolina would be able to get theirs, and the fish would have already -- The migratory pattern for jacks is they move into the Florida area from -- It starts in March, when they start coming in, March, April, May, and it used to be into June, when the fish come to south Florida to spawn. Then they move back to the north, after that period of time, and that's when North Carolina has their access.

The split season would allow Florida access and North Carolina access and take a lot of those concerns. It would deal with it, or at least everybody would have access to the fishery, because, after the fish have left Florida, we're not going to have many fish caught. We do have a short fishery in October, which I'm not sure where those fish come from, but we have a month where fish do show up, in October, for a month, but that would even allow us, in a split season, some access to those fish then as well. I think the split season is a win/win for everybody. I mean, North Carolina gets their access.

MR. FEX: Thank you, Ben.

MR. ATTACK: A while back, we had a thousand-pound trip limit, and I believe the AP had a big discussion about that, when they went to 1,200, because we were concerned about meeting the ACL and having a closed season, and so that still went forward, even though we had concerns about that. It looks like we should have maybe not gone to the 1,200-pound trip limit, and so that's the other thing that I think that we should add to this, is the option of changing the trip limit back to 1,000. The season closed last year in October, and so it was closed for almost half the year.

MR. JOHNSON: Wasn't there a reallocation after we put that trip limit in? Didn't they reallocate some of the amberjack ACL to the recreational sector?

MR. FEX: I don't recall that.

MR. JOHNSON: Wasn't that through Boyle's Law? That didn't happen? The amberjack ACL didn't have a reduction?

DR. DUVAL: Robert, are you talking about -- It might have been, and I would have to look it up, but just during the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, when we went through and used the 50 percent long-term plus 50 percent short-term average harvest to allocate between the sectors, and is that probably what you are referring to? I can look it up and see if greater amberjack was one of those species that was included, but I forget, off the top of my head. It might have been.

DR. ERRIGO: Amberjack was included, and there was a -- There was something that went wrong the first time. There was a mistake that happened the first time it was calculated, and then it was recalculated after the fact, and the allocations changed a little bit. I don't remember what direction they changed in or how much they changed, off the top of my head. There were a bunch of species.

DR. DUVAL: It looks like it was down, and, with those corrections -- There were a number of species that had corrections that were made to those landings streams. One set of corrections had to do with application of the new MRIP catch estimation methodology as well, and so we had to go back and recalculate all of those.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I just vaguely remember a change, and so that was after we had voted on the increase to the twelve-box limit. Florida used to have very large landings during the month that they spawn, and Florida pretty well developed that amberjack fishery, and now we don't have a fishery during that month. I don't know, but I don't really have huge landings in amberjacks. We do catch them on my commercial boat. We don't target them, but there are some people in our area that that is their fishery. I think one of our guys probably catches about 40 percent of them, probably 40 percent of the ACL. I don't know what the numbers are, but he catches a bunch. He is very good at it.

MS. MARHEFKA: I wanted to give support to what Ben was saying. Mark does target them. He does usually limit out. It is something that does help us pay the bills for a part of the year, but I fully support lengthening the fishery for as long as possible, because it is now the only species that I can't sell everything of locally. We actually have to usually put amberjack on a truck to Canada, and so I would rather have the fishery last longer and not have to do any of that and give these guys a shot at it, and so I just wanted to give some support to what the council is looking to do here. I don't think it will really hurt anyone, personally.

MR. HULL: Yes, and amberjack is vitally important to our fishery, my boats and my businesses, and, as Robert said, some of the other guys in my area who target them extensively. Talking to them also, they would support a split season to spread out the quota. In looking at these two alternatives, you've got one of them that the difference between them seems to be that you can change the time period of the split.

Then there is the percentage in those time periods, and so I think that what they've captured on these two is pretty much all you can put forward, is to get more information on those two question marks. I think that, overall, most everybody I know would support splitting this, to extend the season, and then it's just a question of the numbers that you're going to put in here, which would take further evaluation.

MR. HERRERA: Just to further complicate this, this year, for the first time ever, we didn't have it open in January and February. I don't target amberjack. I never have, and I don't plan to ever target amberjack, but we have them on the reef, right with us, with the yellowtails and everything else, and it's terrible to have to discard them. I wouldn't even care to have a thousand or even 500, but even if we are able to keep a couple hundred, and they're worth a lot of money, at that time of year, and so this, for us, was a real problem this year, for the first time ever. If somehow, some way, we can have a small catch limit, where it's not a targeted thing, come January, it would be great for us.

MR. FEX: To that point, we do have some people in area that that's all they do. They run out, and jack is the only thing he's catching, and so I do see your rationale for a trip limit decrease, because, just like Ben had said, the value has gone up, and so the loss in profitability will probably be outweighed by the price.

MR. HUDSON: The preliminary numbers for this year, and we only had one month of fishing before we did this one-month closure for amberjack, was 24 percent, 187,000 pounds out of the 769,000-pound allocation. Come May 1 and thereafter, I don't know how long it will last. Last year, it lasted until October 4. Then, of course, you had the season change and the closure for those several months afterward.

MR. BUFF: Back to what Kenny was saying, and I think Robert too, we have a lot of day boats that just do this, and that's what they do year-round, or not year-round, but, when it's open, that's kind of what they target, and so we just need to think about everybody as a whole. I am for splitting the season. I think it would be great, but there are some other people that is not going to like it.

MR. JOHNSON: Do we want to entertain some kind of step-down for amberjack? It's at 1,200 pounds, and is anybody interested in that? I have no problem with a split season, but I just -- That's just for discussion.

MS. MARHEFKA: I wanted to ask Scott a question, but maybe it all gets to it. Again, I think it's just whatever it takes, in my mind, to achieve equity in the fishery and keep it open, so that the guys up north -- So everyone can have it at the right time of year. If it's a split season or if it's a trip step-down, I know that's not helpful, but I feel like there would need to be some analysis to figure out which works better. My question is, is it really going to -- What number do you think that those guys really need? When do they start getting really hurt, those day boat guys that are going just for those? What poundage do you think really starts hurting them?

MR. BUFF: I don't have an answer for you, but I know you take that fish and it's a two-dollar fish. Ten boxes is \$2,000, and so do the math. If you've got a guy that's doing a center console that is burning \$300 worth of fuel, and I'm with you all. I would love to see the split season, and I even thought about why it shouldn't be back at ten boxes. That's 200 pounds a trip. Then everybody is happy and split it up in the season. Get half of it upfront and half of it in the next.

It doesn't matter, but I'm with Kerry. We're in the same situation. We have a retail market, and we have restaurants, and the more we can put the equity into our fishery and sell the stuff locally, number one, the more money we're going to get out of it, and it's also the people are going to have access to it, instead of putting fish in a truck and sending them to Canada, and so that's kind of -- There is a fine line there to where you start hurting somebody that this is what they do.

MS. MARHEFKA: I guess that's my question. My question is will it eventually -- It is being Pollyanna-ish to think that it will eventually equal out for them? Obviously, when I am putting my fish on the truck to Canada, I am making way less money, a good bit less money, than when I am moving it locally or keeping it at least domestically.

Will these guys eventually see an increase in their price if there is less fish on the market? I mean, where are you putting 1,200 pounds of amberjack? That's a ton of amberjack, and that's not the easiest fish to make move, and so could they eventually -- If they had less fish, would they eventually make a little more money off of it, because the market would need the fish? I don't want to hurt them either, but that's a lot of amberjack.

MR. ATTACK: I know some guys that are moving their amberjack for \$2.50 a pound, and they're keeping it in the state. You're right that if it goes on the truck that -- If the fish house is paying them that, then they're going to make more money, and so, yes, it should equate back to the fishermen making more money.

MR. BUFF: Kerry, or I guess for both of you all, you can only use so many of them locally, is kind of what we're getting at. Yes, you can get \$2.50 out of them, but you can't get but so many pounds that you can sell for that, and so I don't know what that happy number is. I don't know. I know that I can do math pretty good, and it don't make sense, at some point, for these guys that are used to going and catching -- Just say 250 is \$2,500, and that's a pretty decent day for them to go fishing, and so there is always going to be winners and losers. It just how we can make that the least would be the best.

MR. HARTIG: Kerry, just in Florida, it all goes out of state. I mean, there is a small smoked fish market, but that's -- Like Scott said, that's not a lot of fish. It does mostly go to Canada and other parts. The other thing I would add is, yes, we suffered a closure in amberjacks last year, but that's a good thing. We have been watching these age-zero fish in 2012 and 2013, that I see when I'm catching bait on shallow-water wrecks in Florida. We saw huge numbers of amberjacks back in 2012 and 2013.

Now those fish are large enough to enter the fishery, and so there's a lot more biomass in the fishery now than we had in recent years, and so it does cause problems in management. For the fish itself, it's a good thing, because there is more amberjack in the water, and we have protected some of that, and allowed some of those fish to spawn this year, in April.

The other thing I would just say about jacks is, in Florida, in the state waters, there is a three-month spawning season closure, and Florida has put out a number of wrecks in state waters, which are in the depth that the amberjacks want to be. What we've seen, over the years, is, and I think why only a one-month spawning season closure has worked for amberjacks, is that a number of these fish in Florida have learned to get out of federal waters and go to these wrecks in state waters, where they are protected.

We have a large portion of the stock that is protected for three months in Florida when they're spawning, and so it works, even with just the one-month closure in federal waters, because a number of other fish get protected. That's just an aside, but it is interesting to watch the stock over the years, and, for the first time in quite some time, we have seen quite a big increase in biomass.

MR. FEX: So this isn't really a motion, or is this fine the way it is, where it will be added as alternatives?

MS. BROUWER: It's fine. Either motions or recommendations, but I think, if you see me capture something up there that you guys are good with, then that will get passed along.

MR. BUFF: How much longer would the season last, and the rest of you may know this, if we had it at ten boxes? How many more months would we get that, and is that even an option?

MR. HUDSON: You really need to see the analysis, because you would have to go back in time a little bit. The quota was higher in the past, and I'm not sure whether the trip limit was. It was whatever it's been, and then you had that almaco jack factor that used to be mixed with our greater amberjack and no longer is. It's separated, and so there's a lot of consideration there that the analysis should be brought to us at some point.

MS. BROUWER: Scott, I think we have enough guidance from you all that you would like to see that thousand-pound trip limit analyzed. Then, like Rusty said, we would bring the numbers back to you all.

MR. HUDSON: The proposal of a thousand, is that a step-down from 1,200, by starting at 1,200, or is it start at a thousand and then consider a step-down at some point, to spread that out into the winter, because you did close last October 4, and so your October, November, December, January, and February were closed.

MR. FEX: It's whatever we want, and so, if you want to throw some options up there, do that. That's what we're sitting here trying to figure out, what you would like to do.

MR. HUDSON: That would be better for the jack fishermen to say, because Florida -- I have heard that South Carolina has had some pretty good jack fishing and stuff, in recent years, and so some of what we had inshore isn't still up to par, compared to where we have to go offshore to get our amberjack.

MR. FEX: All right. They will do the analysis on it. If you guys have any numbers you would like to put up there, this would be the time to do it.

MS. BROUWER: Am I hearing that you would like to see maybe a trip limit reduction, to 1,000 pounds, and also a step-down to something below that when a certain percentage of the ACL is met?

MR. ATTACK: Yes, and I think what we're asking to see is what would the trip limit need to be for it to run year-round. When you do the analysis, then you will see that. It might be 1,000, or it might be 800, but, when you run it, you will see what the options are. Then the other option is to keep it at 1,200, and then what have we got to drop it to, say on May 1 or something, to run the rest of the year? Would it then have to drop to 600? We will see what fall out of the analyses, I think.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. The next action considers a trip limit modification for vermilion in the second season, and so, right now, the trip limit is 1,000 pounds gutted weight, and the commercial ACL is split into the two seasons. There is a step-down when 75 percent of that commercial quota is met. The trip limit is reduced to 500 pounds.

Based on your recommendations and what we heard from the public during scoping, there is an alternative here that would implement a 750-pound gutted weight vermilion snapper commercial trip limit for the second season. Then the commercial trip limit is still reduced to 500 pounds when 75 percent of the second season quota is met. There is an alternative to remove the step-down altogether when 75 percent of the seasonal quota is met and, instead, implement a 500-pound trip limit for the second season only.

To consider here, we have just the closures, as they have occurred recently, and some things that some of the members of the development team brought forward. If you look at the table, the trip limit step-down may just not be working as well to promote the season remaining open, and also step-downs add administrative burden, and there is a lot more uncertainty when, for example, the Regional Office says, okay, the step-down is going to happen when we project that this amount of pounds will be landed, and so there's always going to be some uncertainty there. If you look at this table, there has been closures, and it has the dates for when the step-downs have occurred in recent years, going back to when we first started with the split seasons.

MR. FEX: I will note that we did make that step-down and trip limits partially for the gluttony of the market, where you bring in too much fish and then you get cheaper prices for your fish. The step-down also was just to keep the season extended, but I don't think its original intent was to extend the season throughout the whole year. I would just make that comment.

MR. JOHNSON: I am just looking at the table here, and it looks to me like uncertainty has gotten better, because we haven't busted the ACL in the recent years. We are getting 98 or 99 percent. To me, part of that step-down was to keep that from happening. When you have a higher trip limit, you are more likely to end up with an overage, but, when you slow it down, it allows them to count the fish better, so to speak, and so I like it. I think most fishermen I talk to like the way it's set up now.

Now, as far as the second opening, the rationale for adjusting trip limits was the fact that you have these other species available, and so, in January, vermilion are the -- That's the trip. That's what most boats that are leaving are targeting, except for some of the people that are fishing for snowy and blueline, but I don't -- I mean, it seems to be working just like it is, but, if I was going to do

anything, I would look at maybe reducing the actual trip limit on the second opening to allow for those fish to be in the marketplace and for fishermen to be able to catch them for a longer period.

MR. BUFF: From our standpoint, July 1, the first boats to hit the dock that week are going to get some really good prices then. Towards the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>, those boats -- You've got the sixty to a hundred boxes of fish on the dock, and, last year, we threw eight boxes in the canal, because we couldn't even give them away. We gave part of them to a church and the food bank, and most people don't want to cut fish.

I would like to see it at 750 pounds and then it step-down to 500, just because of the glut of fish when this stuff opens up. You can't do nothing with them. You stand at the dock and throw 800 pounds of fish in the water because you can't even give them away, and, I mean, think about what I am telling you all. That's 800 pounds of b-lines thrown in the canal because we couldn't even give them away, because nobody wants them.

Once you get that big glut of fish coming in, and it's overloading the market, and then, when we need them, we don't have them, and so the price would be better. Kenny, you can probably chime in on this too, because this affects you just as much as me, but to have 750 pounds last for most of the year, I would go for that more than having ten boxes and to be able to get rid of having all the fish that you can't do nothing with. People think this is a joke, but it's not. You only have so many markets for this fish, and we can't eat 800 pounds of fish.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree with you. I would rather have it longer, and did we not have some of this discussion too in reaction to some of the boats, in is it north Florida, that are doing these -- They're switching out crews, and doing multiple very, very short trips that most of us are not capable of making. Therefore, they're landing a ton of fish on the market and lowering the prices and hitting that quota quicker, and did we not -- I am not making a judgment call on whether or not those guys should be doing it, but I believe that some of this was in reaction to that, if I recall correctly. I am correct? Okay. I agree that I think -- Again, it's another way to keep the fish in the market longer and keep the prices higher.

MR. FEX: I will recall that was one of our motions that Scott brought to the last meeting.

MR. HULL: Most of the vermilion boats in my area would support an option to either have a reduced trip limit overall for both seasons or to come down in the second half. Either way, we can live with that, whatever it's going to be, 750 or 500. I think 500 is probably the lower limit of reality for us. If you go below that, it's just not worth it, but we certainly would support either one of these alternatives.

MR. BUFF: I would like to see that in both seasons. I would like to see the 750 and then a reduction to 500 after 75 percent, and I think that works for everybody, and we're all going to lose a little bit on the front side, but I think we'll make it back in our fish prices at the markets.

MS. BROUWER: I am hearing to analyze the two alternatives that we have in addition to cutting down the trip limit to 750 for both seasons. Got it.

MR. ATACK: Right. It's like Alternative 2, but you want it for both seasons.

MR. JOHNSON: I can't support the both seasons. First off, in January and February, northeast Florida has just the same kind of nasty weather as you guys have up this way, and those guys sit there at the docks sometimes for ten days, and they get a little window. It's not like July, when it's beautiful, and you're going. There is just not enough access. The weather is the big player there, and so I don't want to see somebody limited during that timeframe.

I think it's important that they can capitalize when they can, because the weather is a real driver, really throughout the whole b-liner fishery. Everybody likes to talk about Florida and how we have better access, and you need to come fish with me. We're running forty-eight or fifty miles, and it ain't pretty, most times, in January and February. I couldn't support that. I could for the second season, based mainly on the availability of all the other species. To me, that makes sense. You are not hurting somebody financially. When you've only got a handful of species open in January, I don't think we need to burden the fishermen with a lower trip limit. That's just my personal thoughts.

MR. FEX: I will note that this vermilion season has lasted a lot longer this year, partially because of the weather and the cold water, and so we're kind of restricted, in that sense right there.

MR. HUDSON: Of course, you have the carryover from the first season to the second. Just like last year, there was less than 2,000 pounds left, but it carried over, and so that's a bigger deal. Of course, we can't carry it over from the second season, at least not right now.

MR. HULL: Just to follow up on that, this action is only for the second season, and so that's what we're commenting on, not changing the first one, but I agree with you. That was a good point about the weather factor in January, but I would support this, again, for the second season, one of these alternatives.

MR. ATACK: I guess, at this point, I would support also having that as an option for the first season, for it to go through and look at and analyze, and we're not making a final call right now. I think it would be good to have that option in the document.

MR. HULL: Just one other comment, to bring it up. There was a lot of concern about, in the vermilion fishery, that you have trip boats and you have day boats. Well, we'll spend the night. It's still kind of like a day-boat fishery, and I know, up in this area, and, Scott, in your area and Wayne, and Charlie's area, it's trips. Having that small amount of catch limit for vermilion was pretty -- There was a lot of argument about that, that you're going to ruin this particular bandit boat basically is what -- A bandit boat needs to have more catch, and so I don't know. That's just still -- You say some people are going to get hurt, and I think we still need to throw that out there, and they can comment at the appropriate time, but I think that should be something that we're going to hear about, too. Things are changing though, in our area. There is no bandit boats left in our area. It's all day-boat fishery.

MR. ATACK: I have one other question, Robert. As an alternative, would you also like to see the 50 percent of the quota, dropping to 50 percent of the trip limit, like you did on the other fishery? The option would be to start out at a thousand -- Right now, at 75 percent, you drop to 500. The seasons are closing in March every year, and are you happy with them closing in March each year?

MR. JOHNSON: Every year is different. It's still open right now. I don't mind the step-down. I supported that, and I will continue to support it. Like I said, the only heartburn I had with this was the second opening, because it's different. I could support a less trip limit for that one, but the first one is important to -- There's just not as many species available for the market, number one.

Our price stayed high the whole time. There are no day boats in St. Augustine. Every boat that I know that commercial fishes is a traditional bandit boat that is making three to five-day trips, and so I think that it's important that they keep that thousand-pound trip limit for that first season. The second season is a totally different dynamic.

Again, there are so many species available and better weather, a lot of things that allow them to do a lot more, and so I think the step-down, going to 500, is a good thing. I think fishermen have learned to adjust to it, and, unlike what Scott said, we get good prices pretty much year-round for vermillion. I don't know if it's just going to local markets. It must be. I am happy with the way it is. If we want to adjust the second season, that's fine. I am good with that.

MR. FEX: All right. You guys have expressed your opinions on it. Do you want to make a motion towards it? This is just going to public scoping, and so you'll be able to see it again.

MR. BUFF: **I will make a motion that we go with the 750 and we reduce it to 500 after it reaches 75 percent.**

MR. FEX: On the first season or the second season?

MR. BUFF: **The second season.**

MR. FEX: Okay, and that was one of our AP recommendations at the last AP meeting, and so I would just note that. It wasn't just something we brought up. Any further discussion on the motion at hand? **The motion is to have the second season at 750 and then step-down to 500 after the 75 percent is met. All those in favor of the motion at hand, please raise your hand, sixteen; all those opposed; abstention, two. The motion passes.**

Let's go ahead and break for lunch. Let's meet back here at 1:30. Thank you again for your time.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. FEX: All right, ladies and gentlemen. We are going to go ahead and get started.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. We're going to continue on. We left off with the commercial split season for greater amberjack. We talked about trip limits and step-downs, and here is Action 6, which would implement a commercial trip limit for the other jacks complex. This is a complex that includes lesser amberjack, almaco jack, and banded rudderfish, and remember that we had talked about potentially establishing trip limits for this complex a couple of years ago, a few years ago, before the council got going with the visioning project.

Then it was kind of put on hold for that process to move forward, and so here we are talking about it again, and we did get some support from the public for establishing a trip limit for this complex, and so we have a range, under Alternative 2, for trip limits of 500 to 300 pounds whole weight,

and then Alternative 3 looks at establishing a trip limit just for the almaco jack. Again, it's 500 to 300 pounds whole weight.

This is the very preliminary, or actual old, trip limit analysis that was done when we were considering this a few years ago, and so this is showing you the percent that would be landed under the various trip limits, and so it goes from no trip limit to down to 200 over here, and so it's looking back at 2010 through 2014, with the average over here on the right. Again, this is something that you all had talked about and recommended the council discuss it.

MR. HULL: I thought that we had previously recommended taking the almaco jack out of the complex and giving it its own ACL. Did we not? I think we did.

MS. BROUWER: I believe that was the recommendation. In order to take almaco out of the complex, that would have to be done through a plan amendment, but my understanding is that, if you want a trip limit just for almaco, you don't necessarily have to take it out of the complex. You could specify a commercial trip limit just for that species and have it still remain within the complex. I am not sure what that's going to do to the monitoring of the ACL, but I think, procedurally, that can happen.

MR. JOHNSON: But they're tied together, right? If one -- The rudderfish could be a choke species, per se, for the almaco jacks, and I think that was why we really wanted to see the almaco sort of be stand-alone.

MR. HULL: At times, and I'm sure in your area too, we do catch a lot of almaco. They're available. Then, when they close down, we're sitting here discarded almaco, and so -- On the analysis, it shows the percent that would be landed under various commercial trip limits, but it doesn't tell you how long a time it would take to land them.

MS. BROUWER: Right. Like I said, this was something that was put together back in -- Maybe it was 2014, when we initially started talking about this, but we have not revisited this analysis since then. Basically, we just want to know whether these two alternatives include options that might be feasible. Then the analysis, of course, would proceed, and we would have something back to you in the fall.

MR. FEX: I have a question for the dealers. Can you give me a price for an almaco and then a banded rudder? What is the price difference?

MR. HULL: We are the same price as amberjack on almaco. On banded rudderfish, it's generally a dollar a pound.

MR. FEX: So what would be the jack -- A dollar for the banded rudder, and then two-dollars for the jack, the almaco?

MR. HULL: Correct.

MR. FEX: All right. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Alternative 2, that basically is just a 500-pound trip limit for almaco or banded rudderfish, either or, or both combined? You can't have more than 500 pounds, because, I mean, to me, the almaco jacks are probably more plentiful and more available year-round. We see the banded rudderfish at certain times, mostly when they are spawning, and they are thick, but then, the rest of the year, they sort of aren't as many, and so, personally, I would support Alternative 2 versus Alternative 3. I wouldn't want to see almaco at 500 pounds and no trip limit on banded rudderfish and then have it be like it has been, where the banded rudderfish actually shut the fishery down.

MR. HULL: Again, I think that -- I don't have enough information here to really recommend anything, other than the alternatives you have, but I think that there should be some more information, even going to the public, as far as length of season and when it's been closing and why it's been closing, so that you could make some more accurate comment.

MS. BROUWER: Sure, and that would be the intent, Jimmy.

MR. FEX: Would you like to make more of a preferred, or do you think you would like it combined, the jack complex, or more of just the almaco under the trip limit? I know Robert made a comment about that, but at least put a preferred towards that. I would just ask that, maybe.

MR. HULL: The problem, for us, has been that you've been shutting down almaco. The complex is shut down, and it takes away our access to the almaco. I don't know what -- Because they are grouped like that, that's why we recommended taking the almaco out, and so that didn't happen. Again, I think that you need more information to come up with a trip limit.

I mean, we're talking about -- We just talked about reducing the amberjack trip limit, and so we catch more amberjacks than we do almaco, and so the 500 pounds, the alternative there, these are reasonable. I think that these are reasonable alternatives, but I really think that there needs to be -- As Myra said, there will be more information in the document going out, and so I would wait until we have more information before I would recommend anything.

MR. JOHNSON: I would say this though. I would rather see a trip limit for the whole complex than just single out almaco, because, again, the banded rudderfish have been the driver that's been closing down the complex, is my understanding, and, Jimmy, you know as well as I do that when those banded rudderfish show up on the south end of the break down there, you could literally catch as many as you want, until you get tired of catching them. They get thick.

DR. COLLIER: When you're thinking about stuff like this and you guys are saying you need more information, it would be nice to provide us with what information you would like to see. That way, we can make sure that analysis is -- That we try to do that analysis in the document, so it's there for you next time.

MR. HUDSON: Something I had talked to Jack Cox about, probably a year ago, is he brought up the banded rudderfish, and I think he mentioned something about a group down around Fort Lauderdale that gets a good swipe at them. Then he said that, when he gets them up on his end, they go into a sushi market, and so you might want to check with him to get a little more information on that, and I don't know what the landings rates were on banded rudderfish, but, like

it was said, almaco seems to be more of a consistent fish to run into in most of the regions, besides those two places that I just mentioned.

MR. HULL: I think, to address Chip's question, or request, it would be to see analysis of, in the past seasons, how long the season for this complex was open and when it shut down. Then possibly, for these alternatives that we have, what would that do to the season, their estimate of how long it would be open with these different trip limits, and so that would be the information that I would want to see, so I can look back at history, because I can't remember all of it, and see what happened in the past with no commercial trip limit, and so let's see what it does with -- What does the analysis show that it would do?

MR. JOHNSON: It would also be helpful, to me, to be able to see what percentage was almaco and what percentage was banded rudderfish in the landings, so we would know which one was the driver.

MR. HUDSON: The lesser amberjack has had so few landings, historically. There had been discussion, I think, in the last year or two, of having stand-alone allocations for both banded and almaco, because of the ability to catch a fair amount of both.

MR. FEX: Any more discussion on any more analysis you would like to see? All right. Then let's move forward.

MS. BROUWER: Here is where we start getting into actions that we have already talked about for the recreational sector. This action would consider modifying the shallow-water grouper closure for the commercial sector, and so you already know what the alternatives look like. They're the exact same thing that we've already gone over, and the same breakdown, over here. Here is the gag landings, pre-closure and post-closure. You can see, definitely, that the closure has had quite an effect in shifting effort for the commercial sector, whereas the recreational was a little bit more spread out.

Here are the annual landings for gag. Next is red grouper. Again, North Carolina dominates the landings for the commercial sector for this species. Here is post-closure and the annual landings for red grouper and then, finally, for scamp. There's a bit more landings here in Georgia and South Carolina. Then here is post-closure. Then the same sort of thing for black grouper, over here.

I don't know if many of the same remarks that applied to the recreational sector would be the same here. We don't need to have that that discussion again if you are comfortable moving forward and just adopting what you have already recommended for the recreational sector.

MR. FEX: I will make a comment. I know, if we did start swinging and changing and we kept the recreational for that four months and then we shifted commercially, I think we would have fights between each other. Not so much here, but in the general public, and so I would just make that comment. Have you guys got any suggestions to keep status quo or anything you see?

MR. MOSS: Do we have to make a motion for that?

MR. FEX: She says we don't have to, but I personally would, just because of the fact that we don't want to be doing exactly what I just told you.

MR. ATACK: **Basically, for the record, in the recreational, we decided to take no action on this action, and I guess we want to recommend the same thing for the commercial, no action, on this action.**

AP MEMBER: I second that.

MR. FEX: All right. Any further discussion? **Let's see hands in favor, please. It's unanimous.**

MS. BROUWER: The next action deals with that minimum size limit for the deepwater species that you have already established is a good idea to remove. Then the last action, again, removes the -- It changes the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish off of east Florida for the commercial sector as well, and so the same sort of thing there.

To wrap things up, these two amendments, we're going to have as much analysis as we can have for the council to review in June, as well as your recommendations. To the extent that we can craft alternatives to include some of the things that you guys have recommended, we will have that for the council in June. They are scheduled to approve these two amendments for public hearings, and those would take place in August. There is lots of different things to consider, but that is currently what the timeline is.

MR. ATACK: I had one question. On the recreational, when we had the minimum size limit changes for black sea bass as alternatives, and there is no mention of black sea bass in the commercial side in this amendment, and so do we need to add that as an action, because there has been talk about maybe, across the board, going to twelve inches or analyzing -- We asked for all the analysis on the recreational side, and so there could be action on the commercial side, depending on what comes out of that, right? Do we need to make a note on that in this or will that just come out from there or from the assessment that's coming up?

MS. BROUWER: It would be up to the council. They have not given us guidance to include an action to change the size limit for the commercial sector, but certainly that can be a recommendation from the AP, to consider adding an action to this amendment to do that.

MR. ATACK: **I guess then I would make a motion that they consider adding an action to this amendment to change the size of the commercial to match up with the recreational, to whatever size that's going to be, whether it becomes eleven, twelve, or thirteen, but it would be good to have the same size across the board for both user groups.**

MR. FEX: Did we get a second on that motion? All right. Any discussion?

MR. STIGLITZ: What was the reasoning that we went to eleven inches? Wasn't it for the traps?

MR. ATACK: Back when this took place, we were at ten inches on the commercial, and I think the recreational was small, and the original intent was to go from ten inches to eleven on the commercial and then go from eleven to twelve the year later. That was the original discussion, because the trip size would have to be changed. That was the original intent, and the recreational was going to be at thirteen. Then nothing ever happened on that phase two, and the traps have stayed where they are.

The other thing about it is, a year ago, we had that big presentation on mesh size versus selectivity and efficiency, and, I mean, basically, the trap mesh size we have now is really not right for the eleven-inch, and so there should be a trap mesh size change to reduce discards and also bycatch, but I think it would be -- If we go across the board, it will be much better.

MR. PHILLIPS: Part of the reason that they're using that size fish is the mesh size. You can't get a mesh size that will automatically go to a twelve-inch fish or a thirteen-inch fish. They are using that mesh size, and we tried to find some two-inch mesh, and we couldn't find anybody to make it without it costing a fortune, and so a lot of the guys just finally said that we're just going to leave it alone. It sounds good to match stuff up, but you really can't do it easily, because of the mesh size that's available.

MR. FEX: Charlie, we did have a presentation, and Tom Burgess did all that, and we sat here and looked at it, and we added it up. I think it was \$500 to change out the traps, and I understand where you're coming from. It's just an analysis, and you are the council. We are the AP, and we're just looking at ideas to better -- We're just trying to make it even. It looks bad on everybody when you're doing it this way or that way, and so I think that was the only intent of it.

MR. PHILLIPS: I called those guys that made that mesh, and they didn't want to do it. They made a special mesh run for Tom, for that experiment, but we talked to them. Tom talked to them, and I called everybody I could, and Jack Cox called them, and we couldn't find anybody that would do it again, and so it was a problem. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: I sort of have kind of maybe a recommendation or something for consideration under the motion, and whether the motion passes or not, and I know we haven't voted on it, but it would be an appropriate time, and I just wanted to mention it as an idea. With black sea bass, we keep having this situation where there seems to always be a lot of them, even inshore, but they aren't very large until you go offshore.

Maybe there is some reason for that, but, if we move towards a consideration for the commercial sector, looking at possibly increasing the minimum size, it seems like eleven is a small size. One thing I saw in some other fisheries, and I think I have read about it happening in Alaska, and maybe Canada has done this, that they have these ideas that, instead of going for maximum sustainable yield, what can the fishery take, with respect to the population, that you start to manage for the maximum sustainable economics or maximum economic yield.

I know we have an economics expert in the SAFMC, and I don't want to give him too much work, and I don't know quite how you would fund this, but I think, with sea bass, and with this pot fishery, this might be an excellent species to take a look at that. What would mean, in the analysis for the commercial fishery, if you gradually weaned that pot fishery to trying to target and catch larger fish? Will we get to a situation where you have -- The way the curve goes on the price, I don't know, but we're letting the fish get larger, and maybe having a sustainable large fish population, you might actually be able to capture less total pounds in a year, but get more money from the catch. I just wanted to put that out there as something to consider in an economic analysis.

MR. HULL: I have been using black sea bass pots for the last twenty-five years, and, in my area, off of southern northeast Florida, the black sea bass do not get big. The predominant size is right

in the ten-inch or eleven-inch or twelve-inch area. The eleven-inch is actually a perfect size for us, and, as far as marketability, we have no problem marketing an eleven-inch fish. We didn't have a problem marketing a ten-inch fish.

The problem is the habitat that you're in. It's just like the triggerfish in our area. They don't grow as big as they do in other habitats, and so we're going to be discarding animals, and we're going to be wasting the resource, and I'm against that, and we talked about this earlier, Jim and I, and there is a stock assessment occurring right now.

If there is a biological reason, which they have looked at all of that in previous stock assessments, but, if there is a biological reason that you need to raise the size limit, then I am willing to accept that, but I don't see a biological reason, and what Robert is saying here is he thinks there might be an economic reason, but I disagree with that.

The majority of my -- If you went to a twelve-inch size limit, I am going to have a big reduction in my catch, and the argument is, well, you will let them grow bigger. No, you won't. They're not going to grow bigger where I pot. They are going to go somewhere else, and so I'm against it, and I don't support it, unless there is a good biological reason to do it, and I don't think there is. You have had -- Look at on the recreational side, where you've had a thirteen-inch size limit for how many years, and look what that did for the biology of the animal, and we're still saying where are they at, and so I don't see where the size limit is going to help us, biologically, and it's going to harm us fishermen economically.

I don't know if anybody else on this AP uses bass pots, but I know the guys in North Carolina is where predominantly it happens, but I've been doing it off of northeast Florida before anybody was doing it off of Florida, and so I would be opposed to raising the size limit. I think the eleven works well.

It would be better if we had a mesh a little bit bigger than what we're using now. I use two-inch mesh, the whole trap. The whole pot is two-inch, and so there is still a few fish left in, just like that analysis shows, but it's hard to find a mesh that is just perfect that they make, and they won't make -- As Charlie said, they tried. We tried to come up with a different mesh, and we can't get it, and so I would say leave it alone until after the stock assessment. If they say, hey, it will make a big difference if you guys do like you've been doing recreationally and kick back all of these fish, then that's what we'll have to do, but I would leave it alone at this time.

MR. STIGLITZ: I support Jimmy. If it's going to affect the fishing, and, like he said, we haven't seen a big increase with the thirteen-inch for the recreational side, and there is no reason to make that man go out there and work harder and make less money. We are supposed to work smarter and not harder.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion? Let's vote it up or down. **All those in favor of the motion at hand, please raise your hand, four; how many opposed. The motion fails.**

MS. BROUWER: The next item on the agenda is just a quick discussion or rather gathering of information on a particular type of gear that we've been hearing has become more popular, and so it's a gear that is included in the allowable gear for harvesting snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic, and here is a little diagram of what it looks like. This, of course, is not targeting snapper

grouper species, but it's the same sort of setup, where you have a buoy and the line that extends vertically.

I have included in here the definition that is in the regulations currently for buoy gear. You can't have more than ten hooks connected between the buoy and the terminal end. The weight can be no more than ten pounds at the end of it. The drop line must be no greater than two times the depth of the water being fished, and so on and so forth.

Also, something to consider here is hook-and-line gear is defined as automatic reel, bandit gear, buoy gear, hand-line, longline, and rod-and-reel, and so buoy gear is technically considered hook-and-line gear, and so here are some points to bring up discussion, things that we have recently heard.

Buoy gear is being used to catch golden tilefish and blueline tilefish off of South Carolina. It has been reported, in the past, off of North Carolina, to catch mackerel and red grouper, although this apparently was done a while back. There is accounts of folks targeting blueline and golden tilefish with this gear. Discards appear to be associated with vessels targeting blueline that are found in relative proximity to the snowy grouper, and so we want to know whether there is some conflict there and some potential for more discards.

There has also been some information saying that this is being used to sort of skirt the current regulations for the use of longlines for golden tilefish. The endorsement holders, as you know, are required to have their own trip limit. They have their own percentage of the commercial ACL. The council clarified the regulations that were put in place for golden tilefish harvest in Amendment 35, most recently because there had been some misunderstanding of the regulations, and some folks were able to fish on the hook-and-line trip limit when the longline season closed, and so that was taken care of with that amendment.

We just wanted to hear from the AP. Do you all know what species are being targeted and where? Could this type of gear potentially pose a threat to habitat? Is the gear being used in areas that there is going to be likely interactions with protected species? We have been dealing with that, most recently, with the right whales. Is this type of gear being used in areas that are close to bottom longlines, and so inside of fifty fathoms or south of Port St. Lucie, Florida, and what is the potential for lost gear with this particular gear? These are just some questions that we threw together to get some added information from the AP on what is going on with buoy gear.

MS. MARHEFKA: I wanted to add that Mark and I were talking about this, and he said there was also a time, although not recently, that this gear was used to fish for red grouper, in the like Onslow Bay area, on that sandy, shelly bottom, where the gear wouldn't get hung up, and so that is another species that has, in the past, been targeted by this gear.

MR. BUFF: We use the buoy gear a lot in the golden tile fishery, and only in the golden tile fishery, and I don't do this myself, and so I can tell you what I am told. In the golden tile fishery, that is just a mud bottom that is a huge area, and they use this so that it will drift and cover more area.

The drawing that was presented on the board is incorrect. That is not the way the gear is run. You cannot have a hook more than thirty foot off the bottom. Most of the guys are running seven four-

foot increment leaders, and so that runs seven hooks, and it cannot be anchored. It's got to move with the tide, and it doesn't work well, except in certain conditions, on the tide. This gear is very expensive. It costs about \$1,200 a boat to buy this stuff, and we're only using it, from my perspective, on the golden tile, because it covers such a huge area.

What this does for our guys is it cuts their golden trips. Instead of spending two days out there catching them, you can do that in a day, and the trip limit is 500 pounds. We didn't catch the ACL last year. It has nothing to do with the longline boats. It's in the hook-and-line, and so just so everybody understands that we're not using it to snowy fish and we're not using it to catch the gray tile. We are using it, from my standpoint, on what we're doing, it's only done on the golden tile, because it covers a big area.

MR. LORENZ: Just a question to the group. If this was being used, for those that might know, and maybe Scott. If it was used for something like mackerel and grouper, I know that we talked of, at least with the tilefish and all, no minimum size, et cetera, because to not bother throwing back a dead fish. Species like a red grouper or a mackerel, that we do have size limits and all, with this gear, would we expect a lot of dead discards, if you had a discard, or can the fish be -- I presume it's sitting out there a long period of time, and so I have my doubts, but could fish be released alive?

MR. BUFF: They're not leaving these out there. They are monitored. We are basically putting them out and turning around and going back to the beginning and coming back, because we have the markers on them. If you left them out there for a long period of time, you would lose them, of course, and so that's kind of -- They're just setting them out and turning around and going back to the front of the line and pulling them and coming back. You can only catch so many fish on them, and so you're really easy to monitor where you're at, as far as your quota and what you can have, and so there is really no discards.

AP MEMBER: How many can you put out at a time?

MR. BUFF: We only use five of them, and so just FYI. We set five or six of them at a time, per boat, and that's all five total, yes. Some of the guys will put six, but, most of them, five is what they're running.

MR. HARTIG: Scott, the regulatory aspects of this, the definitions of the amount of line and the distance between hooks, has that always been a rule, or has that just recently been implemented?

MR. BUFF: What I was told was the top hook could not be more than thirty feet from the bottom, it could not be anchored up, and you had to set them within -- We set four-foot apart, which would give us seven hooks, and that was basically what I was told, that you couldn't anchor up, you couldn't have no hooks up in the water column, like what it's showing on the drawing. That was incorrect.

MR. HARTIG: I didn't remember all these regulations that pertain to buoy gear in the past. Maybe I didn't pay enough attention to it, but someone had told me that recently new regulations had been implemented on buoy gear for the snapper grouper fishery, and so I was only wondering where they would have come from and how they were arrived at, but I will find that out. Michelle said

that our regulations have been the same for a while and that they had been discussing something in the Gulf about pertaining to buoy gear.

MR. JOHNSON: The one line was talking about joining them together, and that would not be buoy gear, right? That looks like an enforcement issue there, wherever it was, that said that what we have heard, that polyball longlining. That is not a reason to outlaw buoy gear, because somebody is breaking the law.

MS. MARHEFKA: When I first heard about this, I had questions about it. The way Scott describes it sounds exactly the way it should be, and nothing brings up a lot of concern about that at all. My concern initially, my gut feeling, was worried about someone trying to -- The longliners fishing on -- Somehow being able to skirt and fish on the hook-and-line quota.

Then my second thing, and I just want Scott to discuss it, because he understands the bottom better, but my understanding is that it wouldn't even be an effective gear if you came anymore and got anywhere near rock bottom, because your gear would get hung up, and so it's not like it could be a gear that encroached and starting being much more effective than bandit or any kind of vertical hook-and-line gear that was unbuoyed, because it would get hung up and you would lose your gear, and the fact that your gear is very well tended. It's not really being out there left.

MR. BUFF: From my understanding, there has been several people use this to do grouper fishing, and it does not work, because it gets hung up and you lose the gear. How it's written, that cannot be anchored. It has to drift with the tide, and the only reason that we use it on the golden tile is because it covers a big area, because you're not pulling up and saying, okay, here they are and here's the bottom and we're going to fish. It drifts in a big area and covers a lot of mud bottom, but I have heard people using them before, but I think that was very ineffective, and they lost a lot of gear, and I know of nobody that is doing it at this point.

MR. MUNDEN: As a member of both the Pelagic Longline Take Reduction and the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction, as the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries representative, when I first saw this information, I was concerned about the possible impact on whales, particularly right whales, and also species that are of concern that are taken in the pelagic longline fishery, primarily pilot whales and sea turtles, but, after looking at the information, the first thing that came to mind is that, well, in order to conserve and reduce interactions of large whales with pot gear, and also gillnets, they have to have a weak link between the buoy and the standing line. If you've only got a ten-pound anchor, there would be nothing for the whale to pull against, and so a weak link, from my opinion, would not be satisfactory.

Based on what Scott has said and others, in the pelagic longline fishery, we are concerned about, as I said earlier, pilot whales and sea turtles, but, under the pelagic longline take reduction plan, they can set up to twenty miles, twenty nautical miles, of longline gear. To my knowledge, this has not come before either of those take reduction teams, but I really don't see any great concern, from my perspective, about this gear and marine mammals.

If it does get before the take reduction team, they could take a totally different turn, because, as I said before, one of the problems that I have with the take reduction teams is they like for one-size-to-fit-all. If it has a buoy and a vertical line, then that's a threat, in the minds of some people, no

matter whether it might be a black sea bass pot, as they use from Virginia north, which is the size of Volkswagen, or a crab pot or a black sea bass pot like we use down here.

MR. FEX: Thank you for that.

MR. MERSHON: In my area, we've got four or five of them that is doing it, and I don't know how many out of Little River, but just out of the Murrells Inlet area, and we've got four or five boats that is doing the buoy fishing. They do target the snowy and the gray tile. They are using a piece of chain for the weight, which it doesn't get hung up on the bottom quite as much as if you've got a chunk of lead hanging down there, and they say it also helps with the golden tile, because it stirs the mud up and gives, I guess, the tilefish something to swim over there to look at.

With that, and I said I agree that there's going to be no interaction out there with a whale, in the areas that we fish, and I do know that, like I said, they're targeting the snowy and the yellowedge grouper and the gray tile, the blue line tile, whatever you want to call them, and they just -- I just want it to be known that they do target.

Now, a lot of them are using a little bit shorter rig for when they're targeting the snowy and stuff like that, so they don't get the rig hung up in the rock, because a snowy is going to probably try to get back in a hole down there, but I just wanted to let it be known that they do target heavily down my way.

DR. KELLISON: I was just going to point out, when the discussion first came up about grouper fishing, that I think I've read or heard that, I think ongoing, that this gear is used on the West Florida Shelf to target red grouper, and I don't know if any of that happens in the South Atlantic.

MR. FEX: Actually, we had a guy up there in North Carolina that was doing it for red grouper, inshore of the fifty-fathom marker, and that was a concern with us, but I think he got out of it, because of exactly what Scott had said. The red grouper will run you into the rocks, and you're losing your gear, and so I think it just got less effective for it. He would get them out there in the sand bottom, but he quit doing that, to your point.

MR. HUDSON: What Red brought up with the whale team and stuff like that, the vertical lines, we went through three-and-a-half seasons of having no black sea bass pots until we could get all of that evaluated for just those thirty-two endorsement holders. At HMS, we have a gear definition for buoy gear. If you bear with me, I will read this short -- One or more floatation devices supporting a single mainline, to which no more than two hooks or gangions are attached. It's only used for swordfish and BAYS tuna. It can't be used for bluefin tuna or shark.

Going on, this gear may be free-floating, and it is not required to be attached to or in contact with a vessel. However, it must be released and retrieved by hand. Vessels utilizing buoy gear are limited to possessing or deploying no more than thirty-five floatation devices. Fishermen must mark each floatation device and buoy with, one, the vessel's name, and, two, the vessel registration number, U.S. Coast Guard documentation number, or HMS permit number. Monitoring equipment, such as radar reflectors, beeper devices, lights, or reflective tape must be attached. If only reflective tape is used, the vessel deploying the buoy gear must possess onboard an operable spotlight capable of illuminating the deployed gear. Individual buoy gears must not be attached to one another. That's what we have in our HMS.

DR. DUVAL: Kenny is right that this was used for red grouper up in Onslow Bay a few years ago. I am not so sure that the gentleman who was using it quit because he was getting hung up so much as the red grouper just started going downhill, and there had previously been a project -- I think it was Jack Cox who put in a proposal to look at doing something with Sea Grant to try to develop some tracking devices for the buoys, so that you wouldn't actually lose them and you would be able to relocate them when they were in the water, but I can't remember if that was actually funded, but I can check on that.

We have been receiving anecdotal reports from folks that there are discards of snowy grouper with this gear, I think due more to the trip limit, and so that's a concern to me, given that snowy is under a rebuilding plan, and so we just wanted some more information about how the gear is being used and are there any modifications that we need to be considering because of that, and so that's one of the reasons why this is before you right now.

I can also check and see -- I thought that I saw something come across my inbox related to buoy gear regulations in the Gulf, but I don't want to misspeak on that. We can check in with Gulf Council staff and see if there were some modifications there. I do know, from the fisherman who was previously using that to target red grouper, that it was a very clean gear, and so that was one of the reasons why folks were excited about it, was because those catches were clean at that point, but, if there is increasing discards or concerns about loss of gear, those are the things that I am concerned about, because those are not problems that we need to be having in this area with this type of gear, and so thank you.

MR. FEX: I know one thing that might need to be at least addressed or checked is how many one person can actually operate at one time. If you're throwing gear out there, how many should a vessel be able to possess? If you throw out thirty sets of buoy gear, are you actually be able to control that? That would be one thing, as a fisherman, that I know. It would be personally hard to keep track of X amount once it got to a certain point.

MR. ATTACK: Do we have an idea of how many of these are being used? I imagine, on the trip tickets, they mark down buoy gear when they turn in their commercial trip tickets, and so it would be kind of nice to know the universe. Is there ten vessels in North Carolina or are there 200 vessels on the South Atlantic? That would be kind of nice to know, how many. Is there any kind of reporting requirements if they lose a rig, like for a ghost fishing concern? How many rigs do they lose in a year? That might be interesting to know also.

MR. FEX: To note that, the one guy in my fish house that is doing it, he's using ten buoy gear, and I think that's pretty much unchecked.

MR. JOHNSON: To the point of ghost gear, it's really no different than losing an A-frame on a bandit reel. I mean, you've got a little bit more line attached, but you're not -- Really, the only way you're going to lose that gear is if it parts off and you lose the buoy. You're going to find the buoy, or most people are. That's just like fishing with a -- It's not like a sea bass pot, that you've got a trap down there still catching fish after you lose it and you're waiting on a panel to fall out. I don't see ghost gear as an issue with this. Once the bait is gone, it's gone. You've just got some hooks down there.

MR. FEX: Any more? Seeing none, we will move on.

MS. BROUWER: The next item on the agenda is --

MR. MERSHON: It looks like South Carolina has like four to five boats, and some are using up to sixteen balls, but most of them is like right at about seven or less, to keep up with it, and that's coming from our data sources here, and so I know there's a few others who tried it, and I think they figured out that their bandit reels wasn't going to pull the load, and they didn't want to spend the extra money on the -- I call it a hyped-up bandit reel, but it's got a different kind of motor and stuff on it, but, as of right now, that's what is going on in South Carolina on the buoy fishing.

MR. FEX: Yes, and, to Michelle's point, I could see if you went out there and threw out your twenty buoy gear and started bringing them back and you've all of a sudden got your X amount of golden tile. Then you would be like, well, I've still got five more buoys out there with fish on it, and so I could see there would be a discard issue with that. All right.

MS. BROUWER: The next item on the agenda is a Discussion on Limited Entry for the For-Hire Sector, and there is a presentation and a white paper that were included in your briefing book. This is information that was presented to the council at their March meeting. The council didn't have a whole lot of time to discuss and develop this idea further, and so my understanding is that this is going to come back up for discussion in June, and so here is Kari.

DR. MACLAUHLIN: I am going to go over Attachment 6b. This is the presentation. Attachment 6a is the white paper, and so the presentation doesn't go into as much detail as in the white paper. This is the same presentation that the council received in March.

We presented this, at the council's request, in March. It was a collaboration of council staff. I wrote the basic stuff for the white paper, but there was a lot of input from council staff, council members, and Southeast Regional Office staff gave us some pointers also, and that was really, really helpful. What we wanted to do was just present things for the council to keep in mind if they decide to go down this road for limited entry for the for-hire snapper grouper.

They had first talked about limited entry for the for-hire sectors of snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, and CMP, but then, in December, they had decided that they would only focus on snapper grouper, and then they asked staff to put together this white paper of things to think about if they wanted to develop this, issues that limited entry can address, and then a summary of all the public comments and AP comments that we have received, and so, like Myra said, they had a really short discussion in March, because we ran out of time, and so they will pick it back up in June.

As most of you probably know, the AP has approved motions, not with everybody in support. There were some people in opposition, but you have approved several motions to recommend that the council look into limited entry for snapper grouper for-hire permits, and they know that. For this, really, it's just, as the council gets a little more in detail in thinking about what they want to do, their management goals, why they would want to look at limited entry, when they get more into detail in June, what we were hoping was that you guys, if you had any more detailed or specific recommendations for management goals, for different ways to meet those goals, with these different design elements that they could use, that you would give those to us and we would pass them along to give to the council in June for their next continued discussion of this.

The presentation outline and the white paper outline that goes into a little more detail, we start out with an introduction, just some basics about the limited-entry permits, how limited entry could address issues. We have some different issues that you can use this tool to address, a summary of public input, visioning input, AP input, and then different design options that the council could consider for limited entry.

Here is a little bit of background information on these. These were the snapper grouper for-hire permits by homeport, and we pulled those in January of 2017. You can see the breakdown by state and region. About 5 percent of the vessels, and so about sixty or seventy, are headboats, and so I had determined that by getting the headboat information from the Beaufort Lab and then tying those, so we could identify them, at least working as headboats part of the time and reporting to the headboat survey.

The headboat hotspots are Calabash and Little River, and, by hotspots, that's like nine boats, or maybe ten, and then we have the other headboat locations and then also the charter boat hotspots. Those are by homeport, but you guys know all of this, and so I'm not going to get into that.

Here are some of the issues that you could use limited entry as a tool to address, if it is identified as a problem in the fishery. One is data quality and reporting compliance. You have talked about this. We have the charter and headboat reporting requirements coming in through the generic amendment, and there has been some concern that, because it's an open-access permit, there may be people who are non-compliant with those reporting requirements. Then it would also improve the information that we know about the vessels participating in the for-hire sector, about the vessels, what they're catching, just better data and information.

Another issue it could address is limiting the number of vessels interacting with red snapper, so you could prevent an increase in the vessels fishing for and having bycatch, but open access permits, like it is now, would just allow anyone to obtain a permit, and I believe that this was in your briefing book.

This graphic is something that the council staff had put together and the council had looked at at their March meeting. It's just an idea, some ideas, about red snapper management, and so we wanted to show how limited entry would kind of align with something like this, if this is something that you all would be looking forward to, or looking into. We had presented this to the council in March, to show how maybe an idea like this, if this is something the council wanted to explore, how limited entry would kind of go along with it.

Limited entry can also address issues of overcapacity. There seemed to be some concern about this, in that these are just issues that limited entry can be used as a tool to address, if it is something that the council identifies as an issue in the fishery, and so I guess we have had some folks talk about there has been concern about saying that there is overcapacity, and we are not saying that. Maybe that is something that the AP can comment on or the public can comment on, and so overcapacity, or excess capacity is just there is more boats than needed to reach the ACLs to reach the demand for charter and headboat services.

The overall number of the snapper grouper for-hire permits has not changed in probably ten years. It just kind of fluctuates a little bit. However, there may be some decrease and increase around the

regions, in different areas and different ports, but this limited entry could be a way to cap or reduce the number of vessels, if that's something that the council has decided is a goal for them.

Limited entry can also professionalize the for-hire fleet. We have heard from some people about unlicensed operators and some concern about competition with the permit holders, especially the federal permit holders. Limited entry would require more of an investment, and so the result could be a more professionalized fishery, more full-time fishermen involved, and then you could also -- It could cap or reduce the number of vessels offering charter and headboat services.

Here is the public input. We had presented to the council that the Snapper Grouper AP had discussed limited entry and approved motions to recommend limited entry, even though there were some opposed, several times, and so at least in April of 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. Then, at your last meeting, in the fall of 2016, you discussed it again, and we provided the council a summary of your comments there, and then the AP had approved a motion, with thirteen in favor and three opposed, to support limited entry for the snapper grouper for-hire permit.

We also heard, during the visioning port meetings -- Some folks talked about the snapper grouper for-hire permits, in North Carolina and Florida. Some suggestions were to make the permits two-for-one, like snapper grouper unlimited commercial, establishing a control date or a moratorium, having some kind of landings requirement to get your for-hire permit or an income requirement, requiring some education or training, and then establishing a maximum limit of for-hire permits. When it's retired, it would go back into a pool.

In the last year or year-and-a-half, we have received some public comments. Most of those have been in opposition to limited entry, and folks who are opposed to it note that there has been no sharp increase in the number of permits. There are alternatives to improving reporting compliance, if that's a concern of the council, and then there's also a concern that limited entry would lead to sector separation or IFQs.

Some comments that we have received in support of limited entry for the snapper grouper for-hire permits are to cap growth in the fishery, improve compliance, and then reduce the loopholes of vessels without a federal permit being exempt from federal requirements in state waters.

Next, we get into, in the paper, considerations for limited entry. These are different ways that the council could develop a limited entry program, things that they would have to think about, but definitely we tried to stress to the council that they will need to first develop clear and specific goals for the limited-entry system. What is it that the council is trying to achieve through limited entry? We will talk about moratoriums, different types of permits, eligibility, transferability, and there is some other design features.

The council could put a moratorium on permits, where there are just no new permits issued after a specified date. It could be in place for a designated time period, five years, and then the council will come back and look at it, or until a permanent limited-entry system is in place. This would allow some time to collect some information and evaluate the fleet. For king mackerel commercial permits, the Gulf reef fish, and CMP charter headboat permits, they had a moratorium first, for three or five years, and then they went in and put in a permanent limited entry.

The council would also have to think about permit type, or types. They could just have one limited-entry permit. They could have one for headboats and one for charter boats. They could also have separate permits associated with specific areas or species. This would be like an endorsement, but, actually, the Regional Office had asked us to -- They would recommend setting up a permit associated with an area or a species instead of an endorsement, so that it would have that renewal requirement, and then a limited entry permit with conditions, like a trip limit, kind of like the 225 commercial, even though that would be complicated to enforce.

For eligibility, this would be who would get a permit and/or who would maintain a permit, and eligibility will affect the number of permits, and so the council needs to be really clear about their management goals. Do they want to keep the same number of permits? Do they want to reduce the number of permits? That will go into making a decision about eligibility. They could just use a moratorium date. That would cap the number, but it wouldn't reduce. They could use the control date, which they have published. That would also just cap the number of permits at whatever it was at the control date.

The Regional Office also had recommended that the council, if they wanted to look into this, look at a double control date, in which you have to have a permit at Control Date A and then Control Date B, so that people wouldn't try to get in right before a control date goes into effect. They would have to keep it for a year or something like that.

Some other examples of eligibility to either get a permit or keep it would be a number of years with the permits or maybe a level of involvement, landings or something like that. You would have to have some reporting in place to get that. Reporting compliance, maximum number of late reports. Once the reporting requirements go into place, there are some other requirements, like certification, captain's license, or education and training.

The council would also have to look at transferability. They could set it up with no transfers. That is going to probably result in a reduced number of permits, if that's the goal for them, but it would remove the exchange value for limited-entry permits. When a permit is not renewed, the council could say it's permanently retired or it would go into a pool and it would be made available in some kind of specified interval to new participants.

They could have family transfers, where they would have to define family, but only allow the transfers between families. They could delay transferability, where there is no transfers for a couple of years. They could evaluate the program and then allow it. There are open transfers, where you can transfer to anyone, or U.S. citizens only, or a two-for-one-requirement.

The Gulf reef fish and CMP charter/headboat permits, they actually have -- I have this incorrect in here. The Regional Office told me that you can transfer to a vessel with a higher assigned passenger capacity, but your permit has a passenger capacity associated with it, I think from the initial permits, and you can't be higher than the lowest. If your permit has a six-passenger capacity associated with it, but your boat has a ten-passenger, you always have to go to the lower one, and that is just to cap fleet size and growth.

Other design features are limited entry can be designed to meet any management goal or mitigate any potential negative effects, and so there could be renewal requirement, so somebody has to be participating at a certain level. We could have reporting compliance, if you want to use it. It's a

way to make sure that people are reporting properly, or you could also have a mechanism or a trigger to make additional permits available, and that's going to give a little flexibility to the program to adapt, and so minimum threshold of permits or some specific biological status of a stock.

For example, the Gulf, one of their limited-entry permits is, if the -- If red snapper is no longer overfished, one of the statuses of the stock, then it will automatically -- I think that was an alternative in the amendment, if the status of the red snapper in the Gulf changed, then they would open it back up. That is all about the white paper, if you have any questions, specific questions, about that.

MR. HUDSON: Kari, can you go back to Slide 4? This is just an edit. The Florida east coast, you are missing Ponce Inlet.

DR. MACLAUHLIN: For the headboats?

MR. HUDSON: Under headboats, yes.

DR. MACLAUHLIN: Okay. I didn't put all of them. I don't think I put all of them in there, but I will add that. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: I was looking at the numbers here for Florida's for-hire fleet, and I mentioned to several people in this room about a phone call that I got on the way up the road from St. Augustine from a charter that had been canceled by a charter boat in northeast Florida called the Minnow. I never heard of it, but I did some digging into this.

The guy said he booked through an online site called Fishing Booker, and so, just out of curiosity, I went to that site. In Jacksonville, I think there were seventy-two boats. In St. Augustine, there is a bunch of boats. I didn't count those, but maybe twenty-five. Most of these vessels, I had never heard of. Now, they're all fishing. A lot of them have pictures. One guy has a picture of about thirty or forty little, twelve to fourteen-inch, red snapper laying in his cockpit. That is his ad.

This is what the for-hire industry is facing, and I don't see this changing, and I know it's an enforcement issue. I have heard that time and time and time again from this group, but enforcement is not happening, for some reason, and I don't know, but I encourage everybody here to go to their hometown. Just get on your computer and just Google "Fishing Booker", wherever you live.

Just see who, in your neighborhood, who is running charters and you have never heard of them. They have no federal permit, and half of them don't have any kind of insurance. I guess they have a captain's license, but I'm not sure, but I would encourage all of you to do it, and you will see why this has really struck a nerve with me, because I knew this was going on, and one thing I didn't see up there that I -- Maybe I missed it when I stepped out briefly, but was there any kind of exception given for a historical captain?

I know, in the Gulf of Mexico, there were people that had been in the industry for years, and they had run other peoples' boats. They were legitimate fishermen. That's all they had ever done, and

you don't want to exclude -- I wouldn't want to exclude anybody. I mean, if you've got some guys that's been a charter boat captain his whole life, and maybe he just didn't have the money to have his own boat. If, for some reason, he chooses to actually bite the bullet and go in debt up to his ears, like the rest of us, he should have that right.

He should be able to get a permit, but when you go to this site and you see all of these people you are competing against and you don't even know that you're competing against them -- The way this system works is people pay a fee, a deposit, and I'm sure it's non-refundable, and this online booking site takes that deposit and then they put them in contact with these potential charter boats. I will go ahead and warn you, once you go there, it will pop up on your computer every time you open it, because they've got cookies or something, and so I went on my phone, and I'm like, oh my gosh. Now it's on my Facebook page and it's everywhere, and so I had to delete it all.

I am going to talk to law enforcement when I get back to Florida about this, because this is obviously -- There was a young man that started in the business and ran his first trip with his new Grady-White, about two weeks ago, and he had a seventy-year-old passenger that went out a day when everybody that was professional was tied to the dock, because it was twenty-five to thirty knots out of the northwest.

He charged out of the inlet and she lost her balance and cracked -- It did something, but three vertebrae in her back. They hauled her off in an ambulance, and that's what I feel limited entry would prohibit. I think those people would get less and less, but, right now, they're in the shadows. I don't think that number is accurate at all. I added it up, and it's 678 boats on the east coast of Florida that are for-hire boats. That's the accurate number.

I would gather to say that there is so many more people that are running charters than 678 charter boats, and we need to find out who those people are. We sat here and talked about the recreational sector and how we need a reef fish stamp to identify that universe, and we can't even identify who is chartering, and I just see this as a means to do that. Thank you.

MR. HULL: There is lots of good in this, and then there's some other things that are not good, but one thing that I want to make sure that the council is aware of is that, if you are a legitimate multi-sector operator, commercial and for-hire, and you have permits in your portfolio and you go to transfer or to move permits, the permitting office bundles your permits when you make the movement. If you lease a vessel, they are going to make you -- If you have traditionally had a for-hire/charter boat permit, federal permit, it will then -- That control date is going to come into play, because they're going to reissue it to you, and you're going to lose your history as like a historical captain at that time.

I raise this issue because it happened to me about a year-and-a-half ago, and I talked about it at the last meeting. I actually talked to the permits office, and they saw the problem, but they said that we have no way of tracking these open-access permits, because they're not numbered.

To track back, in the permitting process -- Anyway, not to just keep going in a hole on it, but it's something that the council needs to be aware of. They need to look at that, so that you're not taking people and eliminating their historical access as a permit holder and as a charter boat because of some permitting function in the way they do it.

MR. BUFF: Kind of just to touch on what Robert said, I was in this business for about fifteen years, and you would just really be surprised at how many people operate these boats, and they don't have a clue about the permitting part, the inspections for their boats, the safety stuff that they're supposed to have, and I agree with Robert. They're under the radar, and you have no idea who these people are.

You will probably be really surprised in your own area, if you pulled this up and saw who is there, and so I do agree with what he's saying, and I do agree with what Jimmy said about these permits, too. I have had one forever, just because I just thought this day might come, and there is no way to track that back, because that permit is open access, and so there needs to be something put in place to keep that from disappearing.

MR. HUDSON: Looking at your 2017 numbers, Kari, and just looking at North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida east coast, and Florida Keys, you have 1,177 for-hire vessels. You've got 351 that are from the Mid-Atlantic, New England, Gulf Coast Florida, the rest of the Gulf states, and I am just kind of wondering if these are like the Captain Winter was, decades ago, coming down from Massachusetts and running out of Key West, or is it something else?

The thing that I noticed in your white paper, on the bottom of page 3, was the jump in South Carolina from 2012 from 110 to 169 in 2016. In Georgia, it's even more significant, percentage-wise, from twenty-two to forty-nine. Now it's at fifty, for this year, and so I can see a need for at least being able to know who these people are, and I have heard this story a bunch, about the safety equipment and all kinds of other stuff, and I have heard it about certain commercial people too that are operating outside of HMS and outside of HACCP and stuff.

Now, back to the for-hire thing, that is a big deal, when you're carrying passengers and have to have insurance and abide by the rules and stuff like Robert is bringing up, of people posting pictures and stuff that show they don't have a clue about what they're doing, and so I can see at least a need to, like Jimmy brought up, of being able to document and record who these people are and being able to track them, year in and year out.

MR. LORENZ: I understand more fully the issue of why folks like Robert Johnson -- Why this could be a potential good idea, but I've been against it, somewhat, to date, mainly because of the concerns, as Kari had mentioned. I mainly focused on things like the moral hazard, that these not become a permit and they are designed -- That they never get an investment value. You can't buy these and you can't consolidate these, and so rotating back in the pool is good.

The one issue where a lot are going to have, and this will be somewhat contentious with the recreational fishermen and then some of the people that serve them, the charter boats, would be that this doesn't go, as we said, the way the Gulf does. I mean, you try to go with limited entry, and then, instantly, that's okay, but you get right to sector separation and then the movement to the IFQs.

To assure that doesn't happen, to give this a shot and see if it works, does the system allow for this to possibly be tried with I will call it a sunset provision? Put it out there for -- If it comes out for five or seven years, let's see where it works. Let's see if the concerns that some of us have for moral hazard and all develops or not.

What are all the glitches that are going to come up that could slam in many of our faces? If it doesn't, it can be renewed or become permanent, and so I would like kind of the consideration that, this being an issue that may get so contentious, that to give it a shot and see if it does work, for particularly these legal and reporting aspects. Have an ability that we can take it away. Once it's there, we are not pushed or constantly worrying or wanting to -- Let's say organized recreational fishing wanting to torpedo it because we're concerned of where it's going to go down the line.

MR. R. FREEMAN: I would like some discussion on how you propose convincing this guy that already is breaking the law morally or whatever and taking parties and doesn't have the permits and doesn't have the captain's license and all of this -- Where is the incentive for him to come forward and say, okay, I want to get in line and get one of these permits and pay for the insurance?

I know, in North Carolina, I have to provide my captain's license copy, a copy of my insurance policy, and all of these things in order to get that for-hire permit, but this guy is fat, dumb, and happy at the moment, and so what are you doing to bring him to the table to get in line and walk straight?

MR. FEX: I would think a day in court to solve all of his violations that he just accumulated might solve that, and maybe it would be an incentive for him to actually do right then.

MR. R. FREEMAN: Until somebody, a law enforcement, stops him and calls him to task and gets him to admit what he's been doing -- Otherwise, he's just a guy out with a boat and taking some friends fishing, and so you don't have a leg to stand on. I mean, we can make more rules that these people are not going to abide by anyway. I am not the sharpest tool in the shed, but I see the potential, and I aware of some of these guys out there with no life jackets or the wrong kind and all this kind of stuff, and so, until somebody puts the pressure on him legally and financially, in his pocketbook, then it's not necessarily going to change.

I guess, kind of switching subjects, it looked like -- I think Kari mentioned that, for five years, the number of permits active now hasn't really changed, and so where is the emphasis to come up with an additional cap on how many permits will be out there?

MR. FEX: Currently, what happens is, if you do get caught, like you say, and that guy -- He can go ahead and get his permit. If he gets in trouble and gets caught, then he can go get a permit, because it is open access. That's why, kind of going to that, it will put more, like they say, teeth into it, and so it actually will hurt. It will be, oh, I did get violated, and now my permit is getting taken away, but Rusty just made a point that they have increased, the charter boat permits have increased.

MR. R. FREEMAN: That was South Carolina, wasn't it, just that one state?

MR. FEX: No, that was South Carolina and Georgia, and Georgia had increased. It's just something we have discussed for a long time. The visioning process, I attended three meetings. I facilitated one and attended two, and there's a problem, where there's just too many people in the industry, and it actually kind of just makes it less valuable. Some people get in it and they go fishing in your area and they don't do well, and then they blame the area.

Well, it might not be the area. It might be just too many people doing it, and so, some of these things, we've actually been talking about, and so I see your concern, but we've got to get a grasp on it. If there is a guy that you think is doing wrong, report him. Honestly. I apologize, but I do. I will report somebody, if they are doing wrong. I am not a narc. I am a concerned fisherman about the industry, and so that's the way I look at it.

MR. JOHNSON: I understand that they already are breaking the law, and the argument is, well, they're already breaking the law and what good is this going to do, and I just think that it would give it more teeth, perhaps, and make it more of a serious infraction.

I am not trying to exclude anyone. I want anybody that is a legitimate fisherman to be able to continue to do what they do, but, when I go online to sites like this one and look at all of these people, and I am thinking, who in the world are these guys? I know that they're not playing by the same rules that me and you are playing by, and they are never going to. Why should they? Furthermore, they are probably not even paying taxes. All they're doing is just living -- I don't know how even to put it, but it's just --

MR. BOWEN: They are living the dream, man.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, they're living the dream, without paying the price, and I heard all the discussions in the commercial sector, which I am involved in, about professionalizing the industry, and we have a charter sector that, especially with this new age of computers and all this online advertising and people are booking trips just using a credit card and they don't even know what the boat looks like, and they're looking at a picture, and they're coming from halfway across the country. They show up into town and can't even get ahold of the captain, Skipper Jerry. He's not answering his phone. He finally does and says, well, the boat is not running. Well, my deposit is gone. You would think that would cure itself over time, but I don't know. The computer is a powerful thing.

MR. HUDSON: On page 8 of the white paper, Point 4, Gulf reef fish and Gulf charter/headboat permits, coastal migratory pelagics, beginning June 16, 2003, through 2006, June 16, they began this moratorium on new permits. Now, I recall that whole shebang over there, and the goal was not only to stop it there, but to drop that limited access to 50 percent of the known permits.

Now, that didn't occur, and that would be something that I would like to flesh out from the documentation, to see what has happened in the decade plus since they went to the full-time indefinite limited entry, but I just wanted to throw that out there, because it also says that there is not a major economic incentive prohibiting people from buying into the limited entry over there. It's not like the red snapper limited entry or ITQ and stuff like that. It's actually affordable still.

Then, when I look at that 350 boats from all these other places, especially the amount that's in the Gulf, I kind of wonder how many of them were thinking about, well, I can still get these open-access South Atlantic ones, and part of the portfolio is also not just our snapper grouper, but our coastal migratory pelagics, our dolphin wahoo, everything else that goes with the charterboat and the headboat normally.

I don't, and would never, want to just start eliminating people, because I feel, in its own way, that we've seen a lot of elimination from different factors across the years. It's not like it used to be,

but, again, if what is occurring is we've got people that aren't able or not wanting or not whatever, playing by the rules that everybody else that is a professional is having to play by, or work by, that's not quite a balanced situation either.

At least I see a lot of legitimacy in the discussion and to take it public and then just see -- Besides just say, oh, this is what we're going to do. The idea of like getting a driver's license is pretty simple. You can track that, because you've got your own number. If you need to do that to these open-access permits and then somehow, as you phase into making sure that you don't have these doubling ups, like what just happened in Georgia and the big third of an increase that happened in South Carolina since 2012 to 2016, that is something to think about.

I couldn't flesh out or find in the white paper the stuff with North Carolina and east coast Florida and the Florida Keys, but it would be nice to see all three, just to see what has happened from 2012 all the way to right now, but just, to me, the example is going to be what has gone on in the Gulf that has been going on for eleven years now.

MR. HULL: To review what you have to have to operate legally a charter boat -- Robert, you can help me on this, but you have to have the open-access permit, and I'm just talking a six-pack boat. You also have to have the State of Florida license that you have to go down to the county tax office, and I forget what that cost me, but it's pretty expensive. You have to buy that. It's not free, like basically this is free. It's ten-dollars in addition to all your other permits, but that and you have to have the county -- If you're working in the county or the city, you have to have a business license, an occupational license, and what am I missing?

MR. JOHNSON: That is the sort of state requirements. Then the federal permit, if you're going to fish outside of three miles, you have to have. Then, if you're an inspected vessel, then you deal with the Coast Guard, and that's a lot of different hoops you have to jump through there, and everything costs money now. You've got to pay to be inspected now.

MR. HULL: The point I am trying to make is there is some definite requirements, and, if you're saying that these people that you think that are actually chartering vessels -- I'm sure there are, but like, over the internet, you're saying they don't have a federal permit, they don't have the state requirements, and they don't have a business license, and they're trackable and traceable. I mean, it wouldn't take much, I wouldn't think, for law enforcement to get on that site and actually do something about it.

MR. JOHNSON: You wouldn't think, but law enforcement apparently is very busy. You can also Google "deep dropping for snowy grouper" and see YouTube videos shot within the last month, I'm sure, of people bringing up two and three at a time. I mean, we can sit here and debate about law enforcement all day. Maybe if we give them some more tools, or better tools, they can do a better job, but --

MS. DUKES: I am Amy Dukes, and I work for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and I oversee our fisheries statistics section. Since 1993, South Carolina has had a mandatory reporting requirement for both headboats and for charter boats. I just wanted to add a couple of comments, not so much about limited entry, but about some of the things that were being discussed at this table.

Rusty, thanks for saying my numbers went up. A lot of that has to do with outreach. We have licensing data for charter vessels. I have the for-hire logbook that is required, and so we basically went and looked, and said, if a vessel is reporting federally-managed species, is it federally-permitted with a for-hire permit, and we actually came down to most vessels were. We have about 500 charter vessels in South Carolina, and only about 180 of them, at any given time, are federally-permitted, and so that's a pretty small percentage of my overall charter fleet.

Specifically, looking at kind of a snapshot in time, when we did this last year, we had thirty-six vessels that appeared to have federal permits that did not have South Carolina licenses, and we actually went and contacted each of them independently, and so there was only thirty-six. Most of them were commercially-licensed vessels who were only actively using their commercial permit and not their for-hire permit, but there were about twelve cases where I actually called a charter boat captain who was legally licensed in South Carolina who had no idea about the federal requirements for those vessel permits. A lot of our education and outreach has gotten those permits to go up, because of us doing this.

In addition to that, we actually looked at vessels that were reporting federally-managed species that didn't have them, and there was only like six boats that were actually giving us snapper grouper landings data that didn't have those federal vessel permits, and so that was kind of a good thing. Then, on the same thing, we looked at people who had federal permits who weren't using them at all, and, a lot of times, they just said that they had them as a just-in-case. In case this goes to a limited entry, I want to make sure that I am prepared and have that federal permit in my possession.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. With regards to the six-pack statement that Jimmy made a minute ago, in the Gulf of Mexico, a charter boat is six-pack or less. In the South Atlantic, it's fifteen people or less. If there is a fuzzy area, like open-access trips versus a charter trip, then they -- NMFS, up at Beaufort Lab, with the headboat stuff, then picks and chooses which fifteen-person or twelve-person charter boat is not a headboat or is a headboat, and so that's kind of weird gray area between the two councils.

MR. JOHNSON: Rusty, I can speak to that, because I actually had several calls from I guess it was NOAA. My wife would know exactly probably the guy's name, but my boat, the Jodie Lynn II, is licensed for fourteen passengers. It is not a headboat, because he was wondering why I wasn't reporting, because I don't meet the qualifications.

A headboat is someone that they charge by the head, hence the name "headboat", and so, if you're just charging a fee, it doesn't matter if you're licensed for more than six people. It's got to be that somebody comes and buys like a boarding pass and you're charging them. That's what we ended up getting to. That was the discussion, after numerous phone calls, because I actually asked, why am I not reporting? The Sea Love, the headboats, they report. Why I am not reporting, and so that was the definition.

MR. HUDSON: The key, Ken Brennan told me, was the charter or the flat-fee type of approach versus by the head. Now, I remember, at Inlet Harbor, we would have a rotation on folks that would have by-the-head, but that was going back in history, and so they normally have charters, but then there was times you would just have to kind of be one of the three out of twelve boats that

would then be picked and then do open-access trips, but that has changed a lot over the last forty years.

MR. JOHNSON: I can't say enough that I don't want to exclude anybody, and I think it's a great thing when I see an increase in federal permits. That means that somebody that has been operating actually said, wait, I'm supposed to have this permit and they actually went and got one. That's what we want, but, at some point, I don't know how we make people do that if there's just really no penalty for not doing it.

MS. JEFFCOAT: I believe that this limited access is great, and I don't think if we do or don't that it's going to cure the problem with these non-compliant fishermen. I don't think that's going to change anything. I do believe, like Robert does, that we have to account for and not exclude the people who have been in the industry, or their family has been in the industry, for years. I think that needs to be looked at, with our historical captains and family.

MR. BRAME: I think the recreational fishery is about access, access abundance, and I think putting limited entry -- I would rather see us go down other avenues to try to fix these problems than limited entry first. Let's number the permits. If it's illegal, it's illegal. Because they've got a limited-entry permit, it doesn't necessarily mean they're going to abide by the law anyway.

If his permit is taken away from him, if he goes and gets another one, that's another illegal act, and so his permit has been revoked, and you can't just go get another one. I'm sure the judge wouldn't care much for that, and so I think I would rather pursue other avenues to try to fix these problems that Robert has pointed out and still maintain an open-access fishery.

MR. MERSHON: I like a few of the opinions. I will be sixty years old soon, and I ain't going to be a commercial fisherman forever. The old body ain't going to let me, but you know what? I will be a hell of a charter boat captain, but yet you're telling me that if I didn't already go get my permit that I am screwed for my future, and is that not right? Is that what everybody at this table is trying to tell me, all because you're afraid that somebody is going to take your dollar bill competition-wise, because the guy next to you might run a cheaper charter?

That is the way I feel about this whole thing. There's not that many new permits. There is a few new ones in South Carolina. You know why? Go on Charleston.com. it was issued that here is our control date and, if you don't get it now, you ain't going to get it. Hey, I got a johnboat, and I can put a limited entry on my johnboat. Am I not correct, if it's state-registered? All right.

What do you think all them guys did? I'm sure Amy got a few of them onboard who was doing it illegal, but this sitting here telling me that I can't fish in the future, that is some screwed-up stuff. I've been in this as long as anybody in this room. Why is that fair to take it away from me? Thank you.

MR. FEX: Do you possess an unlimited federal snapper grouper permit?

MR. MERSHON: I lease one.

MR. FEX: Okay. I was just going to make that point, that you were under that same provision.

MR. MERSHON: I didn't need a permit, a for-hire permit, or at least I didn't think that I needed to go ahead and sign up for one, until it was time for it, and so now I am basically screwed for my future if this goes through, and why is that fair? Where is the provision in there for the thirty-five-year veteran of the fishery, just because I didn't have one yesterday? Is that provision going to be in there for my future? I mean, am I ranting or am I making sense?

MR. FEX: I want to make a comment. The last meeting we were here, Dave and I sat at a table back there when we were eating, and a guy was talking about that when he retires that he wants to charter fish, and it's funny, because we sit here, and we're just trying to protect the people that are trying to work to retire.

When you talk about a guy that wants to retire and then he's going to go do a job that is another job, and so I just wanted to make that comment. It was kind of ironic. You're trying to save the future for a guy that wants to retire and do that as a job. I consider retirement that I am done working, and so I guess I looked at it different. I was just trying to protect the people, and I am not opinionated on it. I don't possess one, but the general public in my area wanted that, and so I just looked at all the rational reasons. If you want to do that when you retire, I understand that, but --

MR. MERSHON: I am not talking about retiring. There is no retirement for a commercial fisherman. I mean, we've all realized that years ago. I am talking about when this old body won't let me go stay three or four days at a time, but it will let me run half-day and full-day charter trips still. That's where I am going. I am not talking about retiring. Those days ain't even in my future. I mean, I will work until the day they throw my ashes in the water.

MR. MOSS: I have got a few different kind of mindsets about this. On the one hand, Robert, I don't disagree with you that I think that there needs to be some sort of better tracking, if you will, oversight, however you want to say it, of the current people that are doing this and participating in this industry.

If we say that we're going to, quote, unquote, give this more teeth and that's going to have any effect, as far as what law enforcement can do, I think that's kind of silly. Forgive me for saying that, but I think of just in, again, my neck of the woods, the Keys, and how many people can literally walk out their backyards, on their docks, and go take a few people fishing, from little mom-and-pop websites that they set up. I don't see how giving this any more teeth is going to stop any of that, number one, but I mean that's a separate issue.

I don't entirely like the argument, and Kenny said that he and I, at the last meeting, listened to a guy say that, that, when he retires, he wants to become a charter fisherman, and I know some people kind of get offended by that, but it's no different than in my industry. My everyday job is I do landscaping, and I can tell you that there's a lot of people that, believe it or not, when they retire, they go buy landscape companies. It's no different, and they have to deal with it, and it's the same thing in my industry that I do on a daily basis.

I have to deal with them, and we call them chuck-in-a-truck, some guy with a pickup and a couple of push-mowers, and he doesn't have a license. He doesn't have insurance. He doesn't have all this stuff, and that's my competition on a daily basis, and I have to fight it. That's just the way it is. I wish it were different.

I realize that I just kind of went on a rant, but I didn't give any solutions, and I apologize for that, but I guess what I'm saying is I agree kind of with a little bit of what Dick is saying and a little bit of what you're saying, Robert, and even what some of what Wayne is saying. There has to be a better way, and if it starts off with numbering these permits and taking it from there, I am all about that, but I do get very nervous when we start to say things like "limited entry". However we want to define it underneath, it makes me very nervous, again, as a business operator in a different industry.

MR. JOHNSON: We can look at the Gulf, and everybody is like we don't want to be like the Gulf, and I understand that, but I think a permit, a charter permit in the Gulf of Mexico, is pretty doggone cheap. I think it's like -- When you're talking about getting in a fishery and buying a boat, it's not like these commercial permits in the South Atlantic. I think you can get a charter boat permit all day long over there for less than \$10,000, all day long, and there is plenty of them for sale. Call Dave Hagen. I'm sure he's got one or knows where one is at. They're not very expensive.

Now, if you want to get one that is like a headboat permit, then the price is going to go up, but I didn't say I had all the solutions. I just know that we keep talking about identifying the users, and we are never going to do that in the for-hire sector with an open-access permit. It's not going to happen. We will be talking about it twenty years from now, or my kid will be talking about it, and we'll still be wondering who out there is -- At least, with this, you would know.

Now, we can count permits all day, but that's not really identifying who they are, and so I understand it's an enforcement issue. I get all that, and I know you say, well, giving it more teeth, and why isn't everybody commercial fishing then? I mean, when they went to limited entry in the commercial sector, that gave that a little bit more teeth. There is not near as many people bending that law. There is some. There are still guys selling at the back door of restaurants, but, for the most part, that industry cleaned up, and so I don't know if I agree with that argument that giving it more teeth wouldn't help. I think it would help. I think it would make a huge difference.

You can account through that historical captain. It can be worded for somebody that has been in the commercial industry as well. Somebody that is a fisherman, I don't want to see him ever lose his ability to do what he loves. I do what I do because I love it. I don't do it for the money. I could do something else and work half as hard and make a lot more money, but I think the council could do a lot of things to accommodate people that were really professional fishermen. It's just a good discussion to have. This is the kind of discussion we need to have, to get it all hashed out, but I think, at some point, we're going to have to face reality that we're going to have to do something. If we keep going with open access, it's not going to be good.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think one of the differences that is really important to note between your day-to-day job and what we're talking about here is that we're dealing with this. I guess there are a limited number of lawns, but we're dealing with these species, and there is only so many for everyone to catch. I have a different piece of the pie, and so this does not affect me, but my experience in dealing with fisheries management is that somehow you need to get all of these people vested in the health of the fishery.

People that come and go -- I made the mistake of going down the rabbit hole that is that site, and I can tell you that I have never seen these people at council meetings or AP meetings or -- I have

been dealing with the council since the late 1990s, and I haven't gotten yelled at by them when I used to work for the council. I don't seem them invested in the process, and so whatever it takes to make sure the people that are out there using the resource are somehow invested in the health of the resource and the process of fisheries management, I think that's what the council should look at doing.

I think one of the things that came out of the visioning blueprint is talking about these professional fisheries. That's the only way they're going to last, whether it's professional for-hire or professional commercial. If they're just coming and going, they are not going to care about these decisions that we sit in here for three days and make, and so, whatever it takes to do that, without taking away peoples' ability to make a living. No one wants to do that, but that's all I would say to you guys who are in this industry. You want people invested, and you want people to care about what this fishery looks like ten years from now and not what it's like for them to make a living right now.

MR. MOSS: Make no mistake. I am not saying that just because we can't enforce it or that people are still going to do it and we should just throw our hands up in the air and say, oh well, it's going to happen anyway. I don't mean that at all. All that I'm saying is that I think we've got to be kind of careful about how we're phrasing things or putting things out there, and we can't say that we're going to do this because I think it's going to stop people from breaking the law, or even slow it down.

I mean, this is just a personal opinion, but I don't think it's going to affect stuff that much, and, like I said, I am just using south Florida as an example, the Venice of Florida, or whatever you want to call it. How many people can literally walk out their backyards and hop on a dock and take a few people fishing for a couple hundred bucks cash, and they have no -- As you said, Kerry, they're not the people that are showing up at these meetings.

They're not the people that have any idea of when closed seasons are or care or any of that. I just -- If we're going to do this, which I am not entirely against, I think it needs to be set up the correct way, but I just think we've got to be careful how we're kind of phrasing this and selling this, for lack of a better term, and what our endgame is, and this goes back to, again, what Bob was saying before. We've got to be careful what our endgame is with this, and I am not entirely against it. Some of the things that have been said, I don't entirely agree with, but that's why we're all here.

MR. THOMPSON: Robert, to address your concern about knowing who the players are, as Amy said, in South Carolina, we have been doing that since 1993. If you've got reports coming in and there's grouper and snapper on there, where is your grouper and snapper permit? Well, we could address that with enforcement that way.

We have had some issues around us, and I was talking to a couple of state house members and a state senator, and we got us two new game wardens showing up in Murrells Inlet this week and last week, and so that's just another issue. We know it's happening, but, like I said, as far as identifying it, I really think we need to get all the South Atlantic states to get into more of the paperwork, which we've had to do in our reporting, and, trust me, South Carolina has got some teeth behind that, because I have paid the fine a couple of times for not reporting on time.

MR. FEX: All right. We've got some good opinions down. Anybody else want to express their thoughts before we move on?

MR. R. FREEMAN: Just as a, I guess control measure, maybe part of what should go along with when you get this permit is that there should be a decal or something that goes on the boat. Right now, North Carolina has got a couple of them, your commercial permit and your for-hire permit and all of that, but say I see a boat out there that doesn't have any visible sign that they've got the permits. How do we report that boat? He could have that snapper grouper permit, and all it is is a piece of paper, hopefully somewhere on the boat, that you're not going to see, and so a decal that goes along with acquiring these snapper grouper permits that has to be displayed.

MR. FEX: That's a good suggestion there.

MR. MOSS: To go along with what Mr. Freeman said, it's not a bad idea, and, again, I think of Florida. There has to be then some outreach, because obviously we're a tourist-heavy industry, as I'm sure a lot of the charter boat captains throughout the South Atlantic are, but there would have to be, I would assume, some sort of outreach to make sure that tourists are looking for a properly-licensed captain.

I think of down by us, and I laugh, but I shouldn't. I see it all over the TV. There is commercials, believe it or not, that are paid for by the county that say to hire a licensed contractor. I am assuming we would probably have to do some sort of the same thing, to make sure that the education is out there for these people that are coming down, as Robert said, to get the experience.

MR. FEX: Zack, you made a point, and I don't know that I explained it, and would you like to come forward and say it? I want that on the record, at least. That way, we can hash it out. There might be something that we're not seeing that you have an understanding of.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for putting me on the spot. I really appreciate that, but I was just -- I have heard the discussion around the table, and I just feel like it might help the council if we have -- If we can hear some discussion in regards to the biological effects of the fishery with having a limited entry versus not having a limited entry, such as red snapper.

There was a chart that Kari or Myra put up that we looked at the last meeting that was kind of eye-opening, for me, but, anyway, I just thought that it might be wise to have some discussion as far as the biological standpoint of the fishery with limited entry. I think discussion would be good of whether it helps or hurts. It would give the council some more knowledge of what the professionals, like you all around the table, are thinking.

MR. STIGLITZ: If I read that right, South Carolina has 500 charter boats, and only 180 are federally-permitted. If we make some kind of limited entry and just include the 180 that are federally-permitted, what happens to the 320?

MR. FEX: They might be inshore guides.

MR. JOHNSON: We're not concerned about them if they're fishing in state waters. What we're concerned about is -- The reason that this all came to mind, to me, was after being involved in SEDAR 41. When I walked out the door, I thought, oh my goodness, here it comes again. They

are going to start talking about area closures. They're going to have to close big areas of the ocean to save red snapper. How am I going to be able to pay for my kids to go to college and pay my house payment and all these other bills that I have, because I really don't want to move.

I thought, well, who is the real problem? I hate to be blunt, but I am going to be blunt. Who is the real problem in this assessment? We've got X number of commercial vessels, and we know just about everything they do. We have X numbers of federally-permitted for-hire vessels, and we know what they do, or at least we should.

What we don't know is what this giant number of recreational vessels do. In the South Atlantic, in for-hire -- We're having all this discussion about for-hire vessels, and we are recreational vessels. We are all lumped together, and so we're going to start jumping through more and more hoops, as a for-hire industry, but we are going to be continually tied to a recreational industry that -- Forgive me for saying it, but I'm just going to go ahead and say it. For the most part, it's totally unaccountable.

We have no idea what they do and when they go and what they catch. We've got this one small group of guys, for-hire people, and we're going to sit there and constantly say that you've got to do more, you've got to do more, you're got to do more, you've got to do more, but, oh, by the way, we're just going to include you in the numbers of all these other people that aren't doing anything.

I thought, well, how does that make sense? That makes absolutely no sense. Why would we do things that way? Why would we even have, time and time and time again in fisheries meetings, charts up there with for-hire catch and recreational catch? If we're one and the same, why are we even breaking it out? It doesn't make sense to me how we can continually try to separate these groups, but then keep them included.

The only way you are ever going to really separate them is to have them federally permitted and have that number limited, or at least controlled somewhat. That's it. I mean, that's pretty blunt and plain and simple. When I look at somebody taking away my livelihood because of two-million recreational anglers that could care less, really -- They can say how deeply they are involved with the fishery and how much they care, but they're not at these meetings. They haven't spent the last nine years of their life doing what I have been doing.

I am just concerned about me. Is that self-serving? Absolutely. Yes, it is. I am concerned about my livelihood and my family's livelihood and being able to continue to provide for them, and that's -- I went home, and I thought, okay, what am I going to do if they have this widespread area closure? Is it fair to punish charter boats and commercial boats for the inability of the managers to -- It's not their fault. It's not that they're doing a bad job, but there's just no mechanism to be able to account for all of that recreational effort and catch. I thought, well, the best way to do that is let's get away from them. I love them. Some of them are my friends, but I really need to separate myself from them, and I saw this as a way to do that. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: I will just say something. I am doing this more just in the spirit, just to help with the thoughts, for somebody like Robert, but the one thing you're going to get up against is to really resolve and that would be that there is a very large contingent, and I have been one of them, of the recreational fishermen that there is going to come across the idea that the fish, if you go into a

recreational segment -- Commercial is totally different. They go out there and they totally invest for providing food. It's not a service. They are providing a product.

When you're in the charter industry, and the headboats are a little like commercial boats, to me, and so I can see a little more with that, but they are literally a commercial boat where the crew pays you to get their fish that they take home. Charter is more a service, and a lot of us in the recreational industry feel -- The recreational fishermen feel that the fish should belong to all the citizens, every citizen in the United States.

As far as some of these fish that are out here in the South Atlantic, they belong to people in Oklahoma and that sort of a thing, and what the charter industry does is you're a service provider. You provide a service. The fish and the accountability should be upon us. Find out how many of us actually fish, and all you do is provide a service. It wouldn't be much unlike if I wanted to go elk hunting. I have to go get the license and all that. Then I would hire a guide or an outfitter to show me how to do it, or to do it better.

One of the things to think about is how to get past that block, because there is a feeling out there that you don't give this public resource to a specific group that just provides a service. You are providing a service to take me fishing, whether I go myself or whether I were to pay you or a charter person to go, and that is a nut that you're going to have to crack, I think, to get this moving a little better.

MR. JOHNSON: I want to be clear, Bob, that I don't think I own the fish any more than anybody else, including somebody from Oklahoma. I don't want the ownership of the fish. I just want the right to be able to fish, and, with management, being involved like I have been and seeing some of these things, like Amendment 17A, that came very close to being implemented, where they were going to close from a hundred foot, or eighty foot, out seaward to all bottom fishing, that takes away my ability, my right, to even fish.

I don't want X amount of fish given to me. I just want to know that I'm going to be able to fish. That's all I want, and I think those are two different things. I am not looking for, hey, here is your fish. No. I just want to have the ability to continue to fish, and I honestly believe that this is a battle that -- This red snapper issue, now that overfishing is no longer occurring, I think that's going to be a battle we're going to see again in the future, and I think there's going to be a constant push to eliminate more areas to fishing and to eliminate more effort, and I just want to be -- I just want to make sure that the charter and the commercial are able to continue to at least fish.

Now, again, is it self-serving? Absolutely. I am concerned about my livelihood, but I don't want -- I have heard that from CCA guys time and time again at these meetings, how we want -- They always say their fish. I am thinking, wait a minute, they're not your fish, and they're not my fish. They are everybody's fish, and so I want to be clear on that. I don't want ownership of that.

MR. FEX: All right. I think we've got plenty of discussion. I know this one would be pretty heated. At least we kept it civil. Thank you. We will move on. I think Mike Errigo has got the next thing on the agenda. First, let's go ahead and take a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. FEX: All right, ladies and gentlemen. We've got a presentation from Mike.

DR. ERRIGO: This is going to be, hopefully, pretty brief. This is the South Atlantic Research and Monitoring Prioritization Plan, and this was the one that was for 2015 to 2019, and so we're going to look at it again and make any updates and modifications to the research plan. We just were hoping to get the AP's input on if there is any research priorities that you think need to be added here or modified in any way or taken out of here, because they're not really priority or anything like, or moved around, from short-term to long-term or long-term to short term, and things like that.

The first section here is a short-term research priorities for stock assessments that are going to be conducted within the next few years, and so you will see here there is like information that we need for blueline tilefish, which is already underway, and so this will need to be updated for whatever assessments are coming up. We have already started that update process, but scamp and gray snapper have not begun yet, and so these are still priorities. That section is for assessments that are coming up within the next few years.

Then there is the needs for the Special Management Zones or MPAs, things like that, what research and information needs we have for those. They are separate here, Special Management Zones and MPAs. Those are short-term, and so within the next five years. We have these long-term needs, and so the things that we're going to start working on, let's say within the next five years, but not to be completed, and they're things that are not coming up very soon, and so results. We don't need the results until like 2019 or 2020, you know like life history traits for our species, to help inform the Von Bertalanffy curves for assessments that are going to happen down the line. Management strategy to reduce discard mortality, and so that's the kind of stuff that's in here, and also reproductive biology on red grouper and other shallow-water groupers.

Then there is one on specific monitoring priorities, and so you will see here trying to get more funding for MARMAP and getting the long bottom longline funded and back into the sampling protocols and keeping SEAMAP funded and going and monitoring the MPAs and SMZs regularly, to make sure that -- First of all, we have a baseline, and, second of all, we can see what effect they're having, if they're having any effect, and things like that.

MR. HUDSON: Mike, thank you. Maintaining funding for SEAMAP levels sufficient to support long-term fishery-independent survey operations, something that has always concerned me, particularly with the mackerel and things like that, from Ponce to Leon Inlet south, they seem to have a much more narrow survey down that way, and it would be nice to see it expanded out to the south, and so I don't know if you can look into that, but it would be useful.

MR. BUFF: I have thought about this for months, even before we came to the meeting, and maybe this isn't the place to do it, but everybody you talk to in here is data, data, data. We're not getting the right data or we're not fishing where we ought to be or this person is not doing this or they're not taking this into account.

I don't know why, and maybe this isn't the place to do it, but why we couldn't spend one day in this AP panel and go through an assessment from start to finish, so some of us that have never done this -- Maybe we could figure out how to make this data better, and the biggest problem that we have in the whole fishery is the data to put in the model.

Why can we not spend a day to have somebody to come in here and go through this stuff? It seems to me like it's the most important thing. If we could figure out a method that worked and pick and pull the stuff that we need and how to get these people to go where they need to be going to make sure that the assessments are done correctly, instead of just saying, well, this isn't where we're supposed to be or we're not using these hooks or we're not using this bait. Why can't we sit here and take any one of them, and some of us that are not as knowledgeable as others in these assessments, and see if we can't come up with something that works better to try to improve the assessments that we're doing?

DR. ERRIGO: We are going to try the fishery reports this time around, and that, in some way, addresses that. For things that are happening right now, like red grouper, the red grouper assessment, we're going to ask the AP to comment on specific things about red grouper and the fishery for red grouper, economic considerations and effort in the fishery, commercial and recreational, things like that, to try to get at why we might see particular trends during particular time periods.

The model will tell us something, and then we need to try to interpret why those things are happening, and so we're going to try that out during this meeting, and hopefully we'll get at some of that, because then that will go to the SSC. When the SSC goes to make ABC recommendations, they will have that information on hand, so they can look at it and see, well, maybe we don't need to have as much uncertainty here, fishing uncertainty, because this looks like it was driven by a market issue, or maybe we need to add some more uncertainty here, because of this issue or that reason, those kinds of things. It doesn't -- I don't think it addresses all the concerns that you might have, but I think hopefully it will help in that regard and get a lot more input from the AP into the assessment and ABC setting process.

MR. HUDSON: Having been involved in stock assessments since the early 1990s, and it started with shark, but, once we started getting into the mackerel and snapper grouper -- I highly recommend being part of the SEDAR Pool. That way, you can bring your expertise to the first stage, generally called the data workshop, when we're doing full benchmarks, and the data workshop, a lot of that data has virtually been, and John can correct me, QA and QC -- Quality assurance and quality control and those type of things, and so we break out into like four different groups.

We will have a life history, a commercial, a recreational, and whatever, depending on the stock, and so the indices people. We have to work that way, because it's really daunting. There is a lot there, and then you have to consider what you do and don't use. The other thing, and Ken can speak to this, is MREP.

I found it extremely valuable for everybody from all walks, and so they actually have an MREP meeting in early May coming up, and so those are good first steps for folks that have not participated in the science, because we can't just bring anecdotal anything, except we can bring our insight. That's what we do as the fishing industry. We can bring that to the table, and sometimes we can even bring data to the table, because I have learned that I brought in scientists, since the early 1990s, and that's not an easy task to do, because it costs money. That's where the industry, the recreational and commercial, need to be onboard, and so that's, for me, from being involved.

Mike has been part of this, and he's been part of this with the blueline tile. He's a volunteer, because the council wants the expertise from the industry on all sectors involved. It just depends on the particular fish, and so that's the best I can say about all of that.

MR. HULL: Mike, you're asking for resource priorities and data collection and our opinions. In my opinion, where we're really missing the boat, at the federal level, is with cooperative data collection with industry, with fishermen. It doesn't seem that the Science Center wants to go down that road. In particular, you could take, right now, where you have a situation with a fishery that's been closed, like red snapper, for years, and what type of monitoring do we have of that stock, other than the chevron trap?

You really are in need of a hook-and-line data collection and a monitoring of the snapper grouper fisheries, and I believe it should be done with hook-and-line gear, and you could utilize the industry to do it economically and efficiently and year-round, in every month of the year, and it's something that you can track these cohorts right through the stock with hook-and-line gear. We have proven that that can happen. That is what would be my recommendation, is that they really put some effort into some cooperative data collection, and specifically with hook-and-line gear, which is what most all of us use.

Then the other thing would be maybe you can explain to me, and possibly others, the use of the multinomial. Maybe you can give me a quick explanation of what the multinomial approach is when they're using that in a stock assessment and what that does to the data, maybe something quickly.

DR. ERRIGO: I can give you the Cliff-Note version, if you would like. You are referring to the use of it, let's say, in like the tilefish update and stuff like that, and multinomials are used to fit the composition data, and so age composition and size composition data, in the assessment. That is like how many fish of each age or how many fish of each size were landed in the commercial sector or were landed by the rec sector and things like, in the survey, how many did they catch.

They use this type of distribution, multinomial, or they traditionally did. They have found that it potentially could be biased, and so they came up with what they called a robust multinomial, which was used in the tilefish update, and it was supposed to correct for those biases. What it would up doing, in all the assessments that it was used in, is it had a one-way effect. It seems that it reduced productivity estimates, for some reason. We're not exactly sure why or exactly how it was working to do that.

What we think is it was ignoring some of what we call the outlier data. It was seeing -- What it was seeing as outlier data could have just been our low sample sizes in the small or young ages and the big or large age and size classes. There might have been like one or two fish over here or over here. The robust multinomial saw them as outliers and would ignore them, and so that is what it was doing. The regular multinomial did not do that, and so that's what is happening. Now they're using -- Like, for red grouper, they're using a completely different approach, which is not like either of those.

MR. BUFF: I guess that's kind of to my point right there. I mean, you guys don't even believe in what you're doing, and so all I'm saying is the numbers that we're putting in these models

determines the outcome, and, until we get this fixed, we're sitting here throwing darts at a dartboard, and that is my point.

I mean, how much longer are we going to kick the can down the street? Maybe I'm wrong, but we come in here, and I will give you all a prime example. The first meeting I came to, I sat right out there at breakfast and listened to half of you guys bitch and moan about the blueline tile stuff and how bad it was and nobody had the data right and they're not fishing here and not pulling this. A lot of those people are in this room today. They walked right in here and never said a word and raised their hand and voted and it was done, over, closed, and they were back out the door.

If we're guessing at what we're voting on, why are we voting, and that's my point. The data that are going in these models needs to be correct, and we need to be 100 percent, or somewhere there close, to be able to make an opinion on what we're voting on, and some of this stuff comes back really good, and it's so good that something has got to be wrong. If it comes back bad, we've got to cut, cut, cut, cut. Guys, we can't afford a whole lot more cuts, or we might as well just stay home.

MR. HUDSON: Actually, I did say that I have been participating in the data workshop just recently for blueline tile, and now we have the assessment, I also mentioned, coming up at the end of May, in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina. That will be a week long, and that's where we are taking the data, and the data still has some stuff about it that will be discussed further at the assessment.

Then, eventually, three months later after that, or a little longer, we'll be doing the review. Then it will come to the SSC. I mean, there's a lot of work that is involved in full benchmarks, and we have pulled in the Mid-Atlantic Council on this, and so that's the blueline tile. We don't have the numbers to plug in there, but we do have expectations of what can we do to keep people fishing, because I am like you. I want to see something that resembles reality from the outputs of the science that then gives us a credible allocation for all sectors. That's the big deal.

If we're talking red snapper, we're talking 72 percent of it is recreational. 28 percent is commercial. That's the current allocation that has been in existence, but we have nothing to allocate. Blueline tile, it's been all over the map the last couple of years. Golden tile just went through a frightening thing on an update that should never have happened from a full benchmark, never. It should have just been a tweak and boom and you've got something that just resembled what you did a couple years previous.

We have a whole list of stuff that we can't even get to, because of money problems and, Jimmy brought it up, data problems and collection and CRPs. Cooperative research proposals is a big deal, because then they're working with industry and the experts from the federal and state levels, and that's a big deal, but then the independent surveys is a whole other mechanism, and sometimes that snapshot is regionally or spatially and temporally not getting the big picture.

Then we have the assumptions of the history. Scott, I know I have history going to the early 1960s in all these kinds of things that I deal with, and there is a lot of other people in the room that can say similar things, and that history sometimes that you get told about is not the same as what is used in the model, and that bothers me. I have tried to straighten some things out, but I am only one person, and I am not in charge of anything, and so the best I can say is that it's hurting all of

us, and we have to somehow, eventually, get results from science, but I keep saying we've been the red-headed stepchild here in the South Atlantic for thirty or forty years when it comes to data collection, and that's been a problem. Jimmy is right that we need the data bad, yesterday.

MR. BUFF: But you just made my point again. That's all I'm saying. The guy that is running that boat, all he knows is that he can't work but six months out of the year, because he don't care that we don't have money for a budget. He don't care that we have the model all screwed up. He don't care that the data is screwed up. All he knows is I can go catch these fish all day long, but you guys won't let us go catch them.

All I'm saying is maybe this group ought to look at how we're getting our information and spend some more time on what we're putting into these models, instead of coming in here and voting on stuff that we really don't even have a clue what we're voting on, because we're throwing darts at a dartboard, and that's kind of my point. Every time somebody brings this up, it's the same old thing. We kick the can down the street.

MR. HUDSON: Just to be quick on that, what you see on the ocean and what you hear from the science doesn't always match up, and that's a problem for all of us in the room, when we know what we've seen, historically and currently.

MR. FEX: One point I would say to you, Scott, and don't take offense at it or whatever, but, a lot of times, being involved with five or six stock assessments now, the history is what sometimes we don't see. I mean, we all look back ten years and say, oh, it's the best that I've seen in the last ten years or whatever. What happens though, when you look at a model, in the 1980s or 1990s, the fish are way up here. The landings are up, and then they drop. Red snapper was a fine example. I was like, wow, and then it dropped way down here, and so sometimes it ain't so much what we see at the present time, but it's what historically was there, and so you've got to take that in consideration.

When the science guy says, wow, you used to catch a million pounds and now you can't even catch 100,000, they look back farther than our perception sees. I didn't even fish before the history that they're looking back at, and so sometimes our perception is just at the ten-year time, when the scientist looks more at a forty or fifty-year time.

MR. BUFF: Don't take offense to what I'm saying. I am not blaming anybody. I am just saying that what we put into these models might ought to be more scrutinized than -- I mean, he's sitting over here talking about what they're doing, and he don't even believe what he's saying. How is the guy that is on the boat supposed to believe that, or how are we supposed to take that information and -- You don't even know that it's right, and is this the elephant in the room, or am I the only one that is going to call it out? I mean, we just need to fix it.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think the solution lies outside of all of us, and sometimes I forget this, and it's always good to remember at these meetings that probably the best thing we can all do is get on the phone to our elected officials and get on them about there needing to be more money down here for research, because Rusty is right.

The South Atlantic, if I recall correctly, has more managed species than any other council in the Southeast Region, but gets the least amount of budget. At least that's the way it was when I worked

for the council, and so I think everyone is doing what they can do with a limited amount of money, but don't underestimate the power. Council staff can't lobby. Council members, as individuals, I think can, but get on the horn and complain to your people and say that we need more money down here, and be loud and be noisy and be the squeaky wheel. I say that as much to myself, because I forget about that too, but we need to divert more resources, so that we can get better science, and we can do that outside of this room.

DR. KELLISON: I was just going to make the point that the data needs vary considerably by species, and so, for some species, and it's a relative term, but we might call them data-rich, and some of those that I can think of for our region might be like black sea bass, or maybe b-liner or something like that. Again, it's a relative term. It certainly doesn't mean that there's not a lot of things that we don't know about that species, but then there are other species, and a good recent example that is undergoing another assessment now is blueline tilefish.

I think, when the most recent assessment occurred, and I might be wrong about this, but I think some of the reproductive data that they used in the assessment was taken from data from golden tile, just because there wasn't any reproductive data to use for that assessment, and another point with blueline tilefish is I believe that it was determined recently that there is insufficient confidence in their ageing and that the decision was not to use that age-structured assessment.

For blueline tilefish, we don't have age-specific data, where there are other species where we do have confidence, or I should say the Science Center, the people that are doing the ageing, does have confidence in their ageing, and so we can have a more data-specific assessment, and so just the needs for each assessment, I think, vary a good bit, the data needs. Thank you.

MR. HARTIG: I have been a little hesitant to get up here. I mean, I've been trying to get better data for the South Atlantic Council for almost thirty years, and I think I've made some progress, but I think, to look at my history, I have probably failed miserably, because I just haven't been able to get what I have asked for. I mean, I have asked for Bonnie to -- Just the samples, Scott, that should be collected during a month, and just pick gag.

The ACCSP sets the number of target samples that you're supposed to collect for gag for each month for each area, and so I asked for those numbers twice from the Center. What did the ACCSP suggest to be collected and what were the results? How many were collected, over several species, and I can't remember how many species. I never got the answer. In two different inquiries in to Bonnie, specifically at the council table, and I never got the answer that I asked for.

I mean, the whole system -- You are absolutely right that a review of the entire data collection system needs to be done for the South Atlantic Council, and prioritizing species and how they're assessed, the interval between assessments -- Some species are on autopilot. Some species don't have to have these age-structured models. Spanish mackerel and king mackerel are two species that live and die by age classes, but we've been lucky enough to have big, strong age classes throughout the whole fishery. You don't need to assess them on a five-year basis.

If something comes up that you think is wrong, that you see some possible problems, by the time you do an assessment, it usually solves itself, in mackerels, and that is exactly what has happened with mackerels in the past, but to go through some of these species -- Todd mentioned a data-rich species, like sea bass and vermilion, which the fishery-independent survey does a marvelous job

of capturing large numbers of those animals. We probably actually spend more time looking at otoliths for those species that could be used for other species. We probably oversample those two, in particular, but I mean this is what -- When the Center came up and the Chief Officer for NOAA for the Science -- They came up with these reviews of the whole process, of the stock assessment and data collection.

I went to the first couple of them, and I thought we were going to make some headway, but I haven't seen substantive changes occur since those reviews were initiated, but we really -- You are absolutely right that we really need -- We have talked about this a number of times. We haven't got there yet. We get a little closer to doing it every time we talk about it, but if this AP came out again and mentioned that you just need to review your whole stock assessment process and figure out which species you can do a good job at actually assessing, and some of them we're never going to be able to do. You know that. We've got sixty species, or fifty-nine species, and only some of those -- Fifteen of them, I think, we actually do assessments.

We have talked about vermilion. I said, vermilion, it's a driver in your fishery now, in the snapper grouper fishery, and it should be assessed on a three-year basis. You should be looking at vermilion snappers every three years, to make sure that nothing is going wrong. If things are going right, you should be able to change. If they're going wrong, you should be able to change in a shorter timeframe than five or more years.

There is a number of us who are thinking about ways to make this process better, but we need to move it along. We need to do it, just like you said. We need to actually do this in a concerted effort. We need to bring people to the table. Bring the APs. Bring the scientists together. How can we do this better, because we're failing miserably on a number of species.

If you look -- Unfortunately, when they put all the otoliths and stuff together for the data review, yes, they compiled black sea bass and vermilion, and it makes it look pretty good when you put all those samples together, but, if you take all the other species where we don't sample, with gag in particular, which we don't do a very good job with the fishery-independent sampling, but we just need to start, to move in that direction.

John is aware. We talk to him all the time about doing this, and so we just need to start and do it and bring the people together to really get a concrete way to move forward, but I really appreciate your comments. They are well taken. I will add one thing. When you referenced Mike and said, well, you don't even know what you're doing. Well, actually, in the multinomial, that was a better mousetrap. It was a better way to look at data. It helped the assessment.

The confidence in that actually, from the assessment scientists, it increased, and now they have changed it. In red grouper, they have moved on to another one, and so nothing stays in concrete all that long in the assessment process. There are improvements that happen, and, when improvements happen, people want to use them to try and help their assessments along in the South Atlantic.

Now, it may not always work to our advantage. Why it's a unidirectional move in those multinomial and everything goes down, every time you use it, that is very, very troublesome, and we have made that point to the assessment scientists, but I will stop there. I am off my soapbox, because it's been so important to me, over the years, to try and get better data for this council.

MR. FEX: Thank you, Ben.

MR. BUFF: I just want to make sure that nobody takes out of context what I said. I didn't mean to say nothing directly to nobody, but the elephant in the room is that her data doesn't work, and it comes up at every meeting, and I really believe that every person in this room has the same agenda. We're here for the fishery. I wouldn't take three days off of my work to come and sit in here if I didn't care about what I was doing, and I think the same is for everybody in this room, but we constantly kick the can.

My suggestion was that maybe we take one assessment. I don't even know how they work, and maybe that's my fault, and we dissect that for one day. Just take one day out of what we're doing and put everything else aside and let's look at what goes in to make that model work, so we all know what we're talking about, and there is some brilliant people here that can come up with something that might work, and so that's just kind of my point.

I am not trying to belittle nobody, and I am not trying to call nobody out. I didn't say that you didn't know what you were doing. I said you sounded like you didn't believe it, and so I am not trying to make no enemies here, but I just think that that's the elephant in the room, and nobody wants to talk about it, but, every time you have a conversation with somebody, it's all about the data. Let's figure out how to fix the data. We are never going to get no more fish until we fix what's going in it. Then maybe we can get some more fish, and that's the bottom line.

DR. ERRIGO: Thanks, everyone. It's a great conversation, and I did get some excellent suggestions to add to the research priorities. I just wanted to let you know that if there is anything else that you think of, or something else, some other research project that you think is very important -- Like we really need to know about the discard mortality for deepwater groupers, or we really should focus on this or that, you can shoot us an email. I don't know if you all have my email, but you certainly can just email Myra, and she can relay it to me, and I can incorporate that into the research priorities for when the council reviews that at the June meeting.

MR. JOHNSON: I did have a couple of things, Mike. We do need to do a deepwater survey consistently, and so we heard talk about that earlier, that it's just not happening. I think MARMAP is not doing the deepwater longline or whatever, and the other thing is -- I don't know how you would go about doing this, because it's not in federal waters, but I would like to see some kind of work done on grouper, on juvenile grouper, in the estuaries, to see what's going on, if there is a decline or an increase or -- I know that those studies can be expensive, at times, but I just think that there is an issue somewhere, and I would like to find out where it is, because we've done all of this to protect shallow-water grouper, especially gag, and they should be everywhere, and they're not, and so I would like to know why.

MR. HULL: I just wanted to say that working with Dr. Errigo has been one of the best examples of somebody that really cares and is easy to work with and is totally honest, and he does a great job as a council staff for us. He does.

DR. KELLISON: To the point about a consistent deepwater survey, I will just note that the -- The Southeast Fisheries Science Center is undertaking an evaluation and prioritization of its fishery-independent surveys this year. I think maybe all the Centers are going to do that, but the Southeast

Fisheries Science Center is doing it first, out of all the National Marine Fisheries Service Science Centers.

It's not going to be all of its fishery-independent surveys, but it's focused on the surveys that are on the NOAA ships, and we don't even really have a full survey in the -- I think there are maybe eleven in the Gulf of Mexico, and some of those are like they have a spring ichthyoplankton larval fish survey, and they have a fall larval fish survey, for example, in the Gulf of Mexico. They have groundfish surveys in the spring and fall, for example.

In the South Atlantic, part of the trap video survey that we call SERFS, the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, which is MARMAP and SEAMAP South Atlantic and our SEFIS group out of Beaufort, like thirty days out of the 130 total days at sea that we have are on a NOAA ship, and so there's a pretty large disparity in the resources allocated to surveys between the Gulf and the South Atlantic. Then the Caribbean kind of comes in even behind us here in the South Atlantic, and so not last, but just a point that the Center intends to assess what it's doing. The bar for that is going to be feedback from the assessment scientists about -- This gets to Scott.

You were talking about what data are going into the assessments, and they're the ones most familiar with the data needs and how those surveys are satisfying the needs for the assessments, and so we'll see how that process shakes out, but it's certainly possible, I think, that in the future that we might see a reallocation of sort of the resources, at least from within the Center, that are put towards surveys, which could go to address -- I should say that part of I think what's going to be addressed during that prioritization effort is not just what are we doing now, but also what should we be doing, and so there's definitely data gaps that we have in the South Atlantic, like with our deepwater species, that are not being filled right now. Thank you.

MR. FEX: I want to make a comment. I have explained to you guys that we were thinking about electronic logbooks for the commercial sector. I did it under the pilot project. I had a tablet on my vessel, and I have told some of you AP members. You were around, but what it did was, when I went fishing, I would press "start effort". I would fish the spot, and I would report what fish I caught. Then I would end the effort and would drive to the next spot and the next spot and whatever. I did that throughout the whole trip.

I came in and I gave it to the scientists. I did that for a year. I did it two years, one with the videos on it, and then I did the electronic logbook. That is one thing that I really want to see happen. It's not so much to track everybody, but what happens is I don't think that they realize how many fish are out there.

What this does, it tracks how many spots to and where I went and whatever. Somebody came up to me, and I think it was Nate or one of the guys, and he came up to me and asked me for that data, because MARMAP wanted more places to check. Well, I gave them that data. It was the one I did through Sea Grant, the videos or whatever, and he came back to me about a year later and said, man, that bottom is so pretty with all the fish, and he was all excited.

I sat there and I grinned from ear-to-ear. I said, wow, I have finally showed them scientists something. They don't know what's out there on the bottom, but I was able to show my whole year of fishing, non-biased. I didn't pick spots to show them. I just gave them all my years of fishing numbers, and that was tracked. What I say to that is Marcel has done a guesstimation. He

always says, well, I've got a bowl of soup, and I take and I dip in, and I get a spoonful. Then I look at it, and that's what I get a grasp of. What gets me is does he realize how much is in that bowl of soup, how many spots are out there?

When I talked about electronic logbook, I think, once a year goes by and they realize how many spots, how many ledges, how much bottom is out there, how many snowy spots are out there, from one end to the next, from Key West to Hatteras, and so I support that, and hopefully it will come through, and that will be great, because then it will really show the scientists that, wow, look at all them spots, and so that's going to come along, but I have a concern with it, and I will address that tomorrow, but that's one research going on that you guys ought to look into, and I am excited to show them scientists all the fish.

MR. R. FREEMAN: One of the things that concerns me is the sampling technique, the bullet up there about the longline. They pointed out in Beaufort that they couldn't, or didn't, deploy that if the current was more than one knot. Todd says they've got maybe thirty days at sea to do all the sampling, I suppose, that's going to happen in this coming year.

Well, you can fish off of North Carolina, and you will have two weeks in a row that you can't find the depth that you need to fish that the current is going to be less than a knot, and so you're not going to be able to sample at all, and so how that rolls into useful data or something -- I think they need to look at utilizing the fishermen that are in that business and figure out how to take their data and standardize it, so that it's something useful.

I know some of these panel meetings that I've been to in the past, they have tried to describe to my pea brain how they will take the beginning number and massage that about four times and wind up with the ending number that is supposed to be the biomass that exists, but I don't know how in the world you do that. I just lose confidence when you say, okay, this change, we take 30 percent out. This change, we take 50 percent out, and so where did this number really wind up? Out in Never-Never Land, as far as I am concerned, but they need to sample the areas.

As you pointed out, there are so many places out there that they don't have a clue where it's at. Somebody used to ask me for numbers to go fish for snapper grouper, and I would say, hey, go out there in sixty to eighty fathoms, and go northeast or southwest, and you will find them. They're there, but you've got to get to the right depth range, and the sampling that has apparently occurred is not where the fish live. They are on the borderline, but not where you're going to find the main congregations, and so we need help.

DR. KELLISON: Just to follow up, Captain Robert, when I mentioned the thirty days, that is part of what I am ball-parking like between our groups, is about 125 days, on average, at sea a year that we put towards the trap video survey. None of that is targeted towards -- The MARMAP, and I'm not sure if some SEAMAP South Atlantic funding support, but, the ongoing long bottom longline survey targeting golden, that occurs out of South Carolina DNR, and there is also a short bottom longline that occurs, but that's not something that our group out of Beaufort is participating in right now, and so all of our efforts are focused on that trap video survey.

I think there is a recognized need from all of us, and I don't know if we mentioned it, but Wally and Marcel and I are coordinating. Thanks to Michelle Duval for helping to push this, but we're coordinating with people in the Mid-Atlantic to try to get straight what we're doing across both

our regions, so that we can have maybe some not only regional-scale efforts within our region, but efforts that would be across the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic, because some of these species, like blueline, are going across regions as well, and so we recognize that there is a need there that is not being met right now, or not being met fully. Thank you.

DR. ERRIGO: Just real quick, I got some information from Marcel. He just wanted to point out that the short bottom longline, they actually sample up to two-and-a-half knots, and so it is more flexible than just up to a knot, and so they can sample in higher currents. Also, he wanted to say that there was a gag juvenile survey that SEAMAP was running, but, unfortunately, due to funding restrictions, they had to cut it, I think starting this year, but, if that's something that we feel is a priority, we can put that in our research priorities. Hopefully, with some shuffling around, that could come back.

DR. DUVAL: I think what you all are hearing is it's not a lack of desire or a lack of will. It's a lack of resources. It's about money, and so the council has been trying to tackle this, and you guys are going to hear a little bit about this from Amber, probably tomorrow, I would guess, but about the Citizen Science Program, just because we have been so frustrated with the lack of resources through sort of traditional, I think, Science Center-coordinated surveys, because the Science Center doesn't have the resources that they need to be able to meet all of our data collection needs.

Just in regards to the deepwater survey, we have been consistently trying to point out the need for this, and I think if there is one good thing that has probably come out of the whole blueline tilefish issue that's been going on for a couple of years, it's that I think the east coast councils are fairly united in their support for the need for a deepwater species survey, just given the distribution of these species and how it can be -- They are up and down the coast, but it's also a little bit discontinuous and a little bit patchy.

Those habitats are not distributed evenly everywhere, and, last August, myself and the Chair of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council sent a letter to Dr. Ponwith, the Science Center Director down here, as well as Dr. Karp, who was the head of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, in August, noting that the agency had issued a number of policy directives and a report to Congress including their priorities for research items that included a national process to expand fishery-dependent and independent monitoring and expand surveys of stocks experiencing climate-related distributional shifts.

We tried to point out in this letter that there were multiple policy directives that have been issued that supported the need for moving forward with a region-wide deepwater survey for these species, and we cited the efforts that have been undertaken to address the data deficiencies, the collaborative deepwater design workshop that Todd spoke to yesterday that Captain Bobby and several other folks participated in.

The Mid-Atlantic Council has issued requests for proposals last year to try to develop some additional proof of concept methods within their region, and so they have tried to work with the South Atlantic Council and council staff down here to make sure that it's not a reinventing the wheel, but trying to add onto the body of knowledge that has already been developed, and so, unfortunately, we haven't gotten a response to that letter, but I do plan to bring it up again at the next council meeting.

There have been -- Dr. Karp, with the Northeast Center, unfortunately retired right around that time, and so I have a feeling, in the transition, that some things fell through the cracks, but this is getting to the critical point. As Scott has pointed out, we really need to address this, and it's not for a lack of will or a lack of support. It's how do we be more creative with these resources and bring some attention to some of our needs down here, and so thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

MR. FEX: Thank you, Michelle.

DR. ERRIGO: Actually, to what Michelle was saying, we have started to change the research priority document and incorporate comments and suggestions from staff and others, and there is actually now a Citizen Science Section, which I don't think that was in the version that you guys got.

That was added later, and they're all different research projects and priorities that can possibly be addressed by a Citizen Science Program, rather than funding from the Center, to do a survey or something like that, and so that is a big priority for the council, to try to get as much done through the Citizen Science Program as we can, because we know that resources are extremely limited, and so we're trying to utilize that program as much as we can.

MR. BUFF: Ben, the funding is so limited, and that means that the stuff is more important than ever that we get it correct, and some of the things that would be my point is -- What Robert was saying here about this longline, it ought to be mandatory that the people that are setting the longline have somebody on the vessel that is familiar with the area and familiar with the longline gear, so we're not getting a sample that is really worthless.

That is the kind of things that I am talking about that I'm sure that he would go in his area and -- If you get these people in these certain areas that do longline fishing, get somebody to go on the boat that actually knows what they're doing, so we don't have something that the gears are incorrect or it's set in the wrong places or you missed it by half-a-mile, so what we're putting in there is correct. This is the kind of stuff that I am talking about that is easily fixed, and it costs so much to do these assessments anyway, and why do we not want to make it correct? A lot of these people volunteer their time.

MR. FEX: I will note that I have known several people that have taken like a scientist out on their own vessel and laid gear for them, and so there have been some, but MARMAP runs most of it, and so I know what you're talking about.

MR. JOHNSON: Just to make the point again that, if you look at the specific monitoring priorities in this document, and it's all -- There is nothing there that has to do with cooperative monitoring or data collection. It just seems like everything has to do with -- You can do cooperative, and it can still be fisheries-independent, if you involve the Science Center and their biologists on your boat, which we have all done. It just doesn't seem like the decisions are being made to do that. It's just -- I know money is tight, and so it's that much more important that the leadership chooses the right things that we're going to get the most bang for our buck and that are going to be most useful for counting the fish, because we need to count the fish before we can make good decisions on anything.

I really believe that the cooperative way is the way to go with industry. We will be able to utilize industry vessels, and it will be more efficient, and we can bring in our expertise, which will address a lot of these other concerns. A lot of us also, Kenny, have given every single number that we have, years ago, to Todd and Nate, so that they could go set their chevron traps and set their cameras on all of these places, and so there is a lot, but it just doesn't seem like -- Kind of like what Ben said.

I mean, we've been trying and trying and trying, but it just doesn't seem like we're gaining any ground here, and so something -- It really needs to be looked at and brought to the table, because, as you say, we can sit here and try to make decisions, but on what? Unless we can count the fish first -- That should be the highest priority. Those are the decisions to be made. If I was running the show, that's what we would be doing. We would be counting the fish first, before we did a lot of other things, but thank you again, because you do an excellent job. There are some really good people, and Todd. They do an excellent job.

DR. KELLISON: Just one note of follow-up. Thanks, Captain Jimmy and Captain Rusty and Captain Robert and others who have provided it, and so that's one example that you indicated about giving us locations, and I think I could provide a graphic that would show how the sampling universe, like the points that potentially get sampled every year for that trap video survey, have changed over the last six or seven years.

You would see, I think, very positive developments on it, meaning that we're doing a better job of sampling, effectively sampling, the entire region, from north to south and across the shelf and shelf break, and so that's one small example of the broad diversity of data needs for all of our assessments, but it's greatly acknowledge and appreciated for that input.

I guess I would just say that, at least for the group that I work with, and absolutely for Wally and Marcel and the crew there, I think our intent is to do the best job we can. We want good data. We want to generate good data, and so our objective is not -- We don't want to go out and sample somewhere and not do a good job with it. In a lot of cases, I think probably the cooperative approach -- The workshop that we had in 2015, we identified the benefits of cooperative surveys, and so having people that know how to use those gears, fish those gears. Given the challenges, we're making progress where we can, and hopefully we'll be able to continue to do that. Thank you.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more ideas? Seeing none, thank you, Mike.

DR. ERRIGO: Like I said before, if anyone has anything else that they think of, let's say overnight or whatever, feel free to email me or Myra to send to me, and I will incorporate them into the document that we present to the council in June.

MR. FEX: All right. I think it's Julia Byrd. Thank you again, Mike.

MS. BYRD: Hi everyone. I am Julia Byrd, and I'm one of the SEDAR Coordinators. What I wanted to do was just to give a brief update on some of the assessments that are going on and then try to recruit some of you to participate in some upcoming SEDAR assessments. Before I get into that, just to follow up a little bit on some of the discussions you've had, I just want to emphasize again how critical it is to have fishermen participate in the assessment process.

What you guys see on the water really contributes a lot to the discussion, particularly of the data, and so I know that's something the council really values, too. I know that a day spent at a SEDAR workshop is a day spent where you are not working, and so I know that it's very difficult, perhaps, to participate in these workshops, but, again, I just want to note that having fishermen participate in the process, I think, helps improve the assessment and helps improve the data that goes into the assessment.

First, I just wanted to go through the two documents that were provided to you guys. The first is the overview, and, in the overview, this go-round, we actually provided a brief kind of paragraph on each of the ongoing assessments in the South Atlantic. We thought that may be helpful, so you guys can kind of see where things stand.

What I am planning to do is just update you guys on some new developments since this information was put together and then move on to talk about some of the assessments where we're trying to get volunteers. However, if you guys have questions about what is going on in any of the other assessments, in any of the kind of write-up involved in any of the other assessments, just let me know, and I will do my best to address all of your questions.

The first update that I wanted to provide was for SEDAR 48. This is a benchmark assessment of black grouper. Florida Fish and Wildlife are the lead assessment agency. It's a jointly-managed stock, and so both the Gulf Council and the South Atlantic Council made appointments and had folks participating in this process. The data workshop was held in March, and, due to a variety of data issues that came up at the data workshop, the recommendation from the State of Florida right now is to not continue with this assessment at this time, and that is going to be discussed at the upcoming SEDAR Steering Committee meeting.

The SEDAR Steering Committee basically provides oversight for the SEDAR program, and so, as of right now, the black grouper assessment is on hold, and it looks like it's not moving forward. Again, that will be discussed in greater detail at the upcoming SEDAR Steering Committee meeting. Does anyone have any questions on that?

MR. HERRERA: Julia, why has it stopped on the black grouper?

MS. BYRD: I think the primary issue, and Julie Neer, who is the other SEDAR Coordinator, this is her assessment, but, from my understanding, the issue was with the ratios that were used to divvy up the commercial landings between gag and black grouper. There is some misidentification issues, and I guess there is a lot of uncertainty in the ratios that were used to divide the commercial landings, and so they're trying to look into that more. I think the majority of the issues I think were in west Florida, and maybe Monroe County, with those ratios, the uncertainty in those ratios, and so that was the primary issue.

MR. HERRERA: Again, like I have mentioned before to you, I can put you guys on a couple of day boats, and not trip boats, that can show you very big aggregations of black groupers, and the anecdotal information just goes on and on and on and on. I don't necessarily do that day fishing, but there will be opportunities. Just let us know, again, and we can put you on the boat. I have been asked before to participate in some of the stock assessments, and I don't have time to take

more of my time and be out of the water, but we can definitely put you on the boats that can show you these things, and this goes directly to what Scott has been saying.

We are more than willing to help, but it's just that, again, like myself, to say that I have more time to give is always a challenge. I have been lucky enough, my brother and I, to take Crabtree and show him about the yellowtail, and we would be more than happy, and I can get you guys on boats. The timeframe is coming and going here, because those groupers are going to get ready to get blasted, and probably also move offshore, and so it's always about the right time and the right place and everything else to make these assessments. Come next year, come January or February or March or April, you will have another opportunity. Call me, and I will be more than happy to put some of your people on boats that can take you for the day, for free.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Manny. I guess are there any other questions on kind of black grouper and what's going on with that before I move on? Okay. The next assessment I wanted to briefly mention, and it inadvertently got left out of this list, is SEDAR 53, which is the South Atlantic red grouper assessment.

That was a standard assessment, and so what that means is the model from the last benchmark assessment for red grouper, which was SEDAR 19, was updated, and there were a few kind of changes made. They considered the use of the new SEFIS video data, or SERFS video data, and that data actually ended up being used in the assessment as a combined index with the SERFS trap data, and there are a few other kinds of model-related things that were considered, and so that SEDAR 53 assessment has been completed. Since it's a standard assessment, the review body is the SSC, and so the SSC will be reviewing the red grouper assessment next week and making recommendations and determining whether it's best available science. Again, sorry that inadvertently got left off the list, but that's kind of where things stand with SEDAR 53.

MR. ATACK: What is the preliminary assessment or summary?

MS. BYRD: Again, it's a little preliminary, since the SSC has not reviewed it yet, but red grouper is undergoing a rebuilding plan. The assessment finds that overfishing is occurring and that it is still overfished and that it's not rebuilding as folks had anticipated, and that seems to be perhaps related, at least in part, to recruitment, and so I think, based on some of the information that you all have shared at past AP meetings, I think that follows a little bit of what you all had been seeing on the water a little bit. Again, the South Atlantic SSC will review it next week, and then their recommendations will go on to the council. Are there other questions on that? Okay.

Again, those were the ones that I had updates or were either inadvertently left off the list, and so I wasn't planning to run through kind of details on SEDAR 56, with the South Atlantic black sea bass assessment. That is a standard assessment, and it's ongoing right now. There is also SEDAR 50, which is the blueline tilefish assessment. The data workshop happened in January, and the assessment workshop will be coming up here in May, and I know Rusty already mentioned that to the group.

The next thing I wanted to do was just quickly go over SEDAR 55, which is going to be a South Atlantic vermilion snapper standard assessment. Again, a standard assessment is going to be updating the latest assessment that was done for vermilion snapper, and that was an update assessment that was done in 2012.

The assessment is going to take place over a series of webinars. The schedule is going to be reviewed by the council at their June meeting, but the preliminary schedule has a series of five webinars that will be held this fall, starting in August or so, and then it will end around February of 2018, and so it will be five webinars. Webinars last two to three hours, spread out over that time period.

In June, the council is going to be making appointments to SEDAR 55, and so I was hoping to see if any of you guys might be interested and willing to participate in that assessment, and what will happen is, if you're interested, what I will do is provide your name to the council for their consideration during the appointment process. Jimmy Hull has already reached out to Paul Nelson and let me know that he is interested in participating, and so I appreciate that, Jimmy, very much, but I wanted to see if there is anyone else.

MS. MARHEFKA: I am not volunteering myself, but I will volunteer Mark.

MS. BYRD: Excellent.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just with the caveat that I don't know if he would be on land for all five, but we'll do everything we can in our power for him to be there for all five.

MS. BYRD: That would be great, and, again, I understand that you guys are working. If you can't attend all the webinars, that is fine. We normally put together webinar summaries, or, if they have specific questions about the fishery, we can make sure they get to the fishermen who participate, and so thanks, Kerry.

MR. JOHNSON: I was just going to mention that anyone can listen to these online.

MS. BYRD: Absolutely.

MR. JOHNSON: I just wanted everybody to be aware of that.

MS. BYRD: Yes, that is definitely true. All SEDAR meetings, whether they're in-person workshops or webinars, are open to the public. If you're interested in not participating kind of in an official capacity at the workshop, but want to be kept in the loop as to what's going on with the assessment, you can just send me an email, and I can put you on an email distribution list. Is there anybody else who may be interested or willing? Scott. Great. Okay. That is great. Any questions on that before I quickly move on?

Again, I am going to kind of jump down here to the scamp assessment. If you guys have any questions about kind of MRIP revisions or anything like that that's written up there, please let me know. We are in the very early planning stages for a scamp assessment, and it is going to be a Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic assessment. SEDAR is considering basically using a new approach called a research track and operational assessment, and scamp is one of the first that will kind of go through that process.

The kind of details on how the research track will work and schedule and terms of reference, which is basically the list of tasks that would be accomplished at this workshop, will be under

development in the next few months, but I think, right now, this assessment is scheduled to start in early 2018, and so I think the council may have to make appointments before you guys meet again as a group.

I just wanted to see if there is anyone who may be interested in participating in the scamp assessment. It will probably be more similar to kind of a benchmark process, where there is a data stage and an assessment stage and a review stage. Robert? Awesome. What will happen, for those who are interested, is, once we have a schedule in place, I will circle back and get in touch with you, to make sure that you are still available, and then we will provide names to the council, and so is there anybody else who may be interested in scamp? Wayne? Okay. Great. For the vermilion too? Great.

That is all I had to get through, but I did want to also point out to you guys, and I think it's Attachment 8 in your briefing materials, and this is just kind of a list of the South Atlantic SEDAR projects. Anything from kind of 2019 and beyond is tentative, but I just wanted to provide this to you guys so you can kind of see where the council's priorities are in the upcoming years for the assessments, and so I just wanted to make sure that you all were aware that that was included in the briefing materials.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Julia. Wreckfish is a special long-term assessment. It's actually all the way on the bottom of the list, in the long-term stuff in the SSC meeting next week, and what do we have to do to get that updated? I believe our terminal year for the projections is 2019.

MS. BYRD: I know that the wreckfish assessment was kind of a third-party assessment, and so what I would say is I know that there are a number of council members here. I would communicate that that's a priority to your council members, and I will make sure that they know that too, but, as of right now, these are kind of where their priorities are, and, again, wreckfish was kind of a special case, since a third-party assessment was brought to the SSC, and so I guess that's the best I can answer your question right now.

MR. HUDSON: Are you sort of saying that perhaps the industry should just go ahead and try to do another third-party assessment or it would be a council decision or something at some point?

MS. BYRD: There is a process set up for the South Atlantic SSC for third-party assessments to be kind of brought up and reviewed, and they put that kind of process together I think it was a few years ago, and I can't remember the exact year, and so third-party assessments can be brought to the SSC using that process kind of whenever.

MR. HUDSON: Well, that's what we did. We brought in Doug Butterworth and Rebeca Rademeyer, and we worked our way through that, across a couple of year period, with the SSC and the SEDAR-like protocol.

MS. BYRD: Right.

MR. HUDSON: That's what I am trying to say. There is a declining allocation each year, and then it planes out, and I think the last year is 2019, and so, if we want to get ahead of that and see where we're at for 2020 and on beyond, it almost sounds like, somehow, we've got to get something going, at least from an industry point of view, for that small group of people.

MS. BYRD: What I will say is I will kind of communicate that an AP member mentioned to me that wreckfish is a priority, and always know that if a third-party assessment -- A third-party assessment can be brought to the SSC at any time. Wreckfish isn't on the list of priorities right now, but I will communicate kind of your thoughts.

MR. HUDSON: Yes, because that would be good, because the protocol has been set, like you indicated, and then it's just a matter of we've got a lot more years of data, and I'm not sure what all would be needed, but it's just the type of thing that I just wanted to get clear in my mind, and a couple other folks that may want to have it clear in their minds as we think about that particular stock.

MS. BYRD: Okay.

MR. ATACK: I had one question about MRIP, and I'm not sure if it's the time to talk about it. We've been talking about data and how some of the data we think could be much better. When we look at the MRIP projections, I guess there has been some things that really have extrapolated numbers to large amounts, or I've been reading about some of the cobia stuff. Is there any plans to look at how MRIP calculates all of its landings and projections and maybe try and improve that and eliminate some of the things that are questionable with it?

MS. BYRD: I see that Mike is going to come up, and I know that they are planning to have a joint SSC meeting between the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and one of the issues that will be addressed are kind of some of the major MRIP issues, including kind of what to do about rare-event species and things like that, but, Mike, go ahead.

DR. ERRIGO: The SSC, next week, is going to talk about having a joint meeting with the Gulf SSC and the Science Center staff and MRIP people, to discuss things like what to do about rare-event species, maybe alternative methods for estimating the catch, to try to get more precise landings estimates, what to do if the PSEs are too high and we can't really get more precise estimates, multiple years or not reporting or not using those estimates, if they're just too uncertain and things like that. We are planning this workshop, which I think is going to happen sometime middle to end of this year, if we follow the timeline that we're thinking about, but, yes, it's been a big issue for the council for quite some time, and we are finally starting to make some headway there.

MR. J. FREEMAN: Just not to beat a dead horse here, but, with wreckfish, you just said third-party in 2019, and are you expecting the wreckfish people to put in and do a third-party assessment once again? We already did your job once, and it cost us \$150,000. What are you doing?

MS. BYRD: I guess all I can say is, right now, these are the priorities that have been laid out by the South Atlantic Council for assessment. I hear what you guys are saying about wreckfish, and I will make sure that it's communicated. We have a number of council members that are here, that are hearing what you guys are saying, and I will share that as a priority with you guys.

MR. J. FREEMAN: Just to reiterate that I had 400,000 pounds. I went to 40,000 with no assessment and no data. I took the reduction. I had to sue you guys, or present a lawsuit, and then hire our own scientists to do it. We presented it to you, and now here we go in 2019, and you're

telling me that it's possible that I've got to do this again? Something is not right here. Something is not right.

MS. BYRD: All I can say is I understand your frustration. I am obviously not in your shoes, and so I don't set the priorities for SEDAR. The council sets the priorities. Then the SEDAR Steering Committee puts together the final schedule, and so I can communicate what I am hearing to them, and that's the best I can do at this point, but I would encourage you also to talk to the council members too, because hearing from you will probably hold more weight than just hearing from me.

MR. HUDSON: One thing that occurred on the council level, and from the Snapper Grouper AP position, I would say that they need to take back the allocation to the recreational, because there has not been one animal landed, and that 5 percent of the grand total was way too much. I mean, you compared the golden tile or snowy or blueline tile, and, I mean, really -- It was the type of thing that the council should do something, on a management level, to give that back, at the minimum. Now, I don't know how to be able to come about another hundred-and-something-thousand dollars and another year's worth of work, but that's why I wanted to get it out on the table.

MR. JOHNSON: Was that allocation 10 percent? I can't remember. It was 5 percent? So it's 95/5? Okay.

MR. FEX: Rusty, you might want to bring that up under Other Business tomorrow, and that might be something to push forward. Any more questions for Julia? Thank you, Julia, and thank you, guys, for participating or wanting to participate in the SEDARs, because that's where the money is at. We can argue here all day long that I want more fish, but, until you get there with the scientists and everything, that's the only way we're going to get fish, and so just to give you a heads-up. We are done for the day, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your time. We will meet here at nine o'clock in the morning. Have a good evening.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on April 18, 2017.)

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APRIL 19, 2017

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened in the Crowne Plaza, North Charleston, South Carolina, April 19, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman Kenny Fex.

MR. FEX: Ladies and gentlemen, let's go ahead and get started. We are going to get started with John. He's going to give us a presentation on yellowtail snapper.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and good morning, everybody. I am John Hadley, council staff, and we'll start off this morning, as mentioned, just giving an update on Amendment 44, yellowtail snapper. If you remember this, you reviewed it during your meeting last fall, and so just to give an update on what took place between then and now and where we stand.

Just as a reminder, Amendment 44 was an amendment looking at quota sharing options for yellowtail snapper between the commercial and recreational sectors, and this amendment did move forward at the December meeting. The council provided input on it and also decided to add an action that would look at merging the ABCs and ACLs for the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions. There is a single ABC for yellowtail snapper and ACL, but there is an allocation, obviously, between the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.

The point of the suggestion was to look at a kind of merging of those two allocations into one, and so, additionally, in December, this amendment moved forward for public hearings, which were held in January and February of this year. Then the council reviewed the public comment received during the hearings at their March meeting and provided further input on the amendment.

In the end, the council decided to suspend further development of Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, due to two main concerns. One was a general concern over staff time to cover all of the amendments currently moving forward and being developed by the council. Two was due to upcoming MRIP revisions, and so the revisions to the recreational data that will make it fairly difficult to assess the impacts on the recreational sector.

Just a little bit of information on this is essentially MRIP is revising their methodology to move from a phone survey, on the effort side, from a phone survey to a mail survey, and, in doing so, there is going to be essentially a revision in the recreational numbers. This will be back-dated, to a certain extent. We are not sure exactly how far back it will go, but there will be, most likely, a substantial revision of recreational landings. Additionally, these are expected to be revised upwards, and so those were the two main concerns of the council and why, in March, although input was provided on the amendment, eventually there was a suspension of further work until revised MRIP data was available.

MR. FEX: Are there comments? That looks like an allocation shift more towards the recreational, I see, in the upcoming future.

MR. HERRERA: I don't quite understand the whole deal with MRIP and the data. I know Ira was mentioning it to me, and this is all new to me, and if you can further explain that just a little bit, John, I would --

MR. HADLEY: Certainly, and we have Mike E. coming up to answer that question.

DR. ERRIGO: I was on the transition team and have been very involved in the goings-on for the MRIP, for the different surveys and things like that. The effort survey is a switchover from the telephone to a mail survey. What's been going on is their participation rate in the telephone survey has dropped substantially. It was originally like a 30 to 35 percent participation rate, and it's dropped down to less than 10 percent of people actually responding on the phone. The preliminary results from the mail survey are showing a 30 to 35 percent participation rate.

There are other issues with the phone survey, such as, when you're putting someone on the spot, they may answer -- Their recall may not be that great, and so they may be answering incorrectly or be fuzzy on the details, whereas, when you mail it in, they may have time to look through a calendar, let's say, and say, oh yeah, I went fishing this many times and whatnot.

There are other effects, like if you don't get the fishermen. Let's say you get somebody else in the household, and they may not know the information, but they will answer as best they can, and so there are a lot of issues there, but the preliminary results show a much higher -- In the year that they did it side-by-side, there were much higher estimates of effort from the mail survey than the telephone survey in the areas where it was done.

Yes, there is a higher effort. There may be allocation shifts, towards the rec, let's say, but, if it's higher, there may also be changes to the catch limits. Of course, what's going to happen, we don't know. We think a lot of the falloff may be because of cellphone usage in recent years, and so the number of people that can be reached in coastal households has gone down. The demographic of people has gone down. A lot of younger people are just using cellphones, and so there is a demographic of people that is harder to reach, because it's only landlines that are in the coastal household telephone survey.

That is the concern with the telephone survey. A lot of people are only using cellphones right now, and so we don't know if the calibration is going to be consistent across the time period or if it's going to -- We think that, at some point, the telephone survey and the mail survey will come together and have similar estimates, at some point, because there was a very high participation rate or success rate of the telephone survey at some point back in time, and so they probably will become similar at some point.

That is the story with the effort surveys. How those will affect the assessments, we're not sure. The Science Centers are running studies and tests to see how these types of patterns may affect assessments, depending on what component of the catch is recreational and things like that.

MR. FEX: Did that answer your question, Manny?

MR. HERRERA: Mike, what I am looking for is -- What we're trying to get accomplished is combining the commercial South Atlantic ACL with the Gulf commercial ACL, and the South Atlantic yellowtail quota is never caught. It's actually like half-a-million pounds short of being caught most years, and so how the recreational has any bearing to do with what we're trying to accomplish here, it's just losing me, that's all. Why this whole amendment is -- It's slowing down the amendment, but the recreational ACL is never even close to being caught, and so I don't see how this has any bearing on any action moving forward, is what I am trying to get to.

MR. FEX: What I was looking at probably though -- Because it looked like their numbers of MRIP is going to go up, and so, as that goes, then your Boyles Law or whatever, the Bowtie Law -- Then the allocation goes up, because it's based on history. As MRIP goes up, their allocation is going to go up, because of their backlogging back to the history, to say, okay, we were wrong on the MRIP and it's actually higher. Based on how they allocate, that is what my point was. That's how I believe it's going to go up recreationally.

DR. ERRIGO: Also, yellowtail will probably be included as one of the stocks that gets an update, due to the MRIP data, and so the catch limits will change. We don't know how, but they will change when we run it back through the assessment, and so I think the council wanted to wait to see what happens. They may go up, or they may stay similar. The commercial catch limit may stay relatively similar, and then the rec side may just go up. It's very hard to say what will happen, and so that's why they wanted to wait and see what's going on.

MR. FEX: All right.

MR. HADLEY: If I could add one more thing to Manny's point. I guess one of the issues, when you tie in the commercial sector in the Gulf of Mexico, it's a stock ACL, and so they don't have an allocation, and so that's -- By tying in the commercial side of the Gulf, you are also bringing in the rec with it, just the way it's kind of dealt with in the Gulf.

MR. HERRERA: Yes, and the reason why there wasn't one is because it's remote. It's an area where there is not a whole lot of recreational fish being taken and so on and so forth, and so that needs to be realized when taking this into consideration. That's why there wasn't an allocation given. It's one stock. A little bit can be given to the recreational of that, and I'm sure there is something that will be worked out, but that's the reason why all the landings were from -- Not all the landings, but it's a landslide, and so little of recreational there, because it's remote. It's far. It's far where you've got to go to catch those.

MR. FEX: I took time out, and Manny wanted to bring up a couple of motions that I brought forth, because Richard Stiglitz is here, and he has to fly out of here, and so we're going to bring up something that he has brought forth to us.

MR. HERRERA: The first thing that we want to accomplish is to combine both commercial ACLs. Now I realize that, on the Gulf, there is just the one, but the South Atlantic and Gulf, for yellowtail snapper, and to be managed by the South Atlantic. Last year, we kind of worked it out where the Keys were not -- The Atlantic gave up some jurisdiction to the Gulf, and I am kind of asking the same, because the area that is fished in the Gulf is a small piece of territory in the Tortugas. It's not a very big chunk of real estate, and I will tell you more reasons why I want to do this after.

Number 2 is to keep the fishing year August 1 through July 31. Number 3 is make a day-trip limit between May 1 and July 31. The daily limit for day boats between May 1 and May 31 would be 500 pounds per day, and the trip limit for trip boats between May 1 and July 31 would be 3,500 pounds per trip per week, and so it's not like -- It would be for a week period that you're allowed to make a trip.

The issue here comes with enforceability. How do you enforce this? Well, the majority of the trip boats down there in Key West, we have a Gulf reef permit. My boat has a Gulf reef permit on it, and so I have a VMS. I am not a proponent of VMS, believe me. If there is a better way to enforce this, I am all for it, but, because we already have VMS in the boat, trip boats would have VMS, to make this enforceable by law. Law enforcement can distinguish between day boats and trip boats.

There are a few boats that fish in the South Atlantic that trip fish that don't have a VMS, but the government pays for the initial installment of a VMS, and so I know it's painful, but here is what I told Bill Kelly this morning, that I am fighting for those guys that are looking to get shut down

here in about a month, because our ACL in the South Atlantic is going to be met sooner than later. It was at 75 percent last week, and there is a lot of fish being caught, and so I am really doing this in an effort to keep people fishing.

I am not a control freak, because I am going to fish regardless in the Gulf, because I have a Gulf reef permit, and so I'm looking out for the interests of all the fishermen vested in the fishery and all the businesses that are vested in the fishery, because there is a lot of businesses that are put out of work if in fact there is a closure of two months coming up here. I am also trying to protect the resource in a socioeconomic way. I have another list of reasons, but that's it for what you wrote, right? Let me read some more reasons.

Again, these measures would protect from overfishing during spawning seasons. That's the first one that is a big concern. A lot of people, in fear of IFQs, go and put big landings in this time of year, because they want to pad up their numbers. If in fact there is IFQ, if it goes to IFQs, then they have good numbers. This is happening again. It's a time of the year when the market doesn't really need all these fish there.

A lot of these fish that get caught up in the Keys during the summer months are small fish that are very dumb. Richard is here to back me up on that. They are roed up, and they do spawn, and that gets hurt. The fish get hurt this time of year, and so I am trying to protect both, environmentally and socioeconomically. That's what I am trying to do.

The other thing that we learned, back in 2015, when there was a closure in November and December, is the fish that had learned all the tricks that they learned through the years, by not being fished for two months, and, when we came back in January, everybody, the high-liners, the mid-liners, everybody, they just caught yellowtails and yellowtails. The landings were astronomical in January, because the fish forgot all the tricks they had learned. They were hungry, and they had forgotten all these tricks.

There is a second side effect. There is always a side effect to everything that we do here, and, believe me, this is through years of -- This is the best that I have taken time and time and time and being out there fishing and thinking, well, what's the best way, Manny, that we can manage the fishery, and this is the product that I have to offer, and so let me see if there's anything else here that I am missing.

By doing this, we also ensure that we would -- We would likely ensure that we wouldn't have a closure. My other big fear is taking our product out of the menu item. When restaurants don't have yellowtail from the Keys, they have got to get yellowtail from the Honduras or Nicaragua, and I am trying to defend our U.S. product, our homemade product here. That is another big reason, and I spoke to a couple of guys last night about this is some of the issues they have with b-liners. When it's closed, those items get replaced, and so, when you come back to the market, we have this other fish, this inferior product, and so I am really, really fighting to keep from being a closure, so we have this product available to the restaurants and the businesses that rely on us to provide the product.

Last, but not least, I really think that this would assign sustainability by our fishery, by not overdoing it in the months where it's easy and the weather is good. We are protecting that resource. I know that this is South Atlantic, but the Keys don't have a barrier. The other issue that happens,

that is going to happen, is, when it closes -- When it closes now, I am going to go to the Tortugas, but so are thirty other boats, and we're going to fish a small territory of an eco-sensitive area, and we're going to pound that area, because that's where we're allowed to fish.

In essence, I am trying to do environmental-sensitive things on both ends, on the Atlantic side and on that small territory that is Gulf, and so I don't see why the Atlantic side wouldn't be able to manage that little territory in the Tortugas. At this point, if you guys have any questions, by all means, I am here to answer any questions or concerns that you may think come up with this.

MR. STIGLITZ: The question I've got, Manny, is how do you distinguish a trip boat from a day boat with VMS? Would you want everybody to have a VMS or just these trip boats? If it's just trip boats, how do you distinguish? How are you going to do that?

MR. HERRERA: If you have a VMS on your boat, you are allowed to do the trip limit. If you don't have a VMS on your boat, like my brother, who took his off, he is a day boat. That is as simple as it gets. Now, a boat with a VMS, such as myself, I can day fish and bring in 500 pounds, but, if not -- Here is the thing. When you go fishing with the VMS, you are supposed to declare that you are going fishing, and so, if you're going on a trip, you make that declaration and the M&M is going on a trip and he is allowed 3,500 pounds when he comes in for that week period, because you are declaring today, April 20 or whatever it may be.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't have a dog in this hunt, and I support what you're trying to do there, Manny, but I just wonder if you would be better off if you just said a thirty-five-pound trip limit, not to exceed 500 pounds per day, something to make it a little bit less -- Do you understand what I am saying? Because weather happens and some guy is not going to -- You want to make sure that he stays at 500 pounds per day is what you're trying to do. When I talked to you last night, you said the trip boats stay out for seven days, and so, in essence, it's just 500 pounds per day. If not, you're going to have guys that are going to maybe have to sit out in some bad weather. I know how fishing is. If you get on a bite and you catch 2,000 pounds in a day, are you going to sit there for four days to be legal? How is that going to work?

MR. HERRERA: That's why I put 3,500 pounds per trip per week. Once you declare you're going on a trip, you are allowed the 3,500 pounds. Remember, you have a day of travel. For the most part, most boats have a day of travel to the Tortugas or way down to the west, and you have a day of travel back. As long as the boat is not fishing for more than a week -- I believe that, once you do a trip, that you are allowed the 3,500 pounds.

It wouldn't make sense, you're right, to do what you're saying. Weather down there is definitely an issue, and so it would be per trip for the trip boats. It's not feasible, Robert. No one down there goes for two days and comes back in and runs back out, and that's why I'm saying per trip. Once you declare that you're going on a trip for that week, you are only allowed the 3,500 pounds. That is my way of making it be smart and safe, and you always have the travel time for the trip boats, unlike the day boats that they're out on the grounds for twenty or thirty minutes.

The boats that fish up and down the Keys, they are on their fishing grounds in thirty minutes. Guys that are going down to the west at eight or nine knots, a loaded boat, it's going to take you a minute to get down there, and it's going to take you a minute to get back up.

MR. JOHNSON: So a week is seven days? I guess what I'm trying to get at is 500 pounds per day, for the day boats, and I get that, but the 3,500 pounds for a trip boat, I am just trying to grasp the -- Is there going to be a limitation to the length of the trip? What decides it's a trip, other than VMS? Is it two days or three days? If I was a trip boat down there fishing, I would think, well, this is unfair. These guys are going out for three days and catching 3,500 pounds, and I can only have 1,500 in three days, and do you understand what I am saying?

MR. HERRERA: Do you mean if you were a day boat?

MR. JOHNSON: A day boat, yes. That's all I'm saying, is they might -- You might get pushback. Again, I don't have a dog in this hunt, but I'm just trying to figure if there is a way you could word it to accomplish what you're trying to do that would be cleaner.

MR. HERRERA: I can definitely work on cleaning that up, and I get your point, and that's why I wrote 3,500 pounds per trip within a week period, within seven days. Say I go out and I come in with -- I am not going to worry if I come in with exactly 3,500 pounds. If I come in with 2,800 pounds in three days, my boat is not allowed then to go back fishing until the following Monday. That's why I put per week on that.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. That's the clarification that I was looking for, because I am thinking, boy, if I was a day boat, I wouldn't like this.

MR. HERRERA: Here is the big difference. If you're a day-boat fisherman, and Richard can tell you, the hours that those day boats are fishing, they are not fishing long hours in these summer months. They are fishing three or four hours and they're coming back to the dock. Me on a trip, I am fishing light-thirty to dark-thirty, because I'm out in a boat, stuck in a boat, away from my family. If you put the hours, if you look at it, that is my easy argument to anyone that has a problem with that, is the hours that I fish are a lot longer.

I don't go back to the Marquesas or the Tortugas and sit there and drink beer. I stay out on the boat fishing to accomplish what we want to accomplish. How many times I might come in with 3,500 pounds in all the years that I've been fishing, between my hands and toes, you can probably count the trips that I have done more than 3,500, but, 2,000 or 2,500, that's normal. That is normal.

MR. FEX: That would be a question too though, is if you barely reach that as a trip limit, why would that be a trip limit? That would be a goal, in my mind, and so just devil's advocate.

MR. HERRERA: Right. One of the big issues why I am putting a limit, Kenny, is there will be boats that will go down to the Tortugas and sit there for ten or twelve or fifteen days and bring back 5,000 or 6,000 pounds of garbage fish. That really hurts our resource, and that's the other reason why I am putting a limit, to keep people from doing that, fresher fish, and the market doesn't need that, and the price goes down. Everybody says, okay, I will just catch more fish, and it's just contagious. I will bring more pounds, and it doesn't matter. They are getting paid \$1.50 or \$2.00 for their fish, and that's why.

MR. FEX: Yes, I understand, but I was just making that comment, because we all have trip limits. I have a thousand-pound trip limit, and that keeps me -- It wasn't like I couldn't catch it. It ain't like I never had 2,000 pounds of fish before. I mean, a thousand is less than I used to catch, and

so I am just saying, as we limit ourselves to extend the season, it should be a limit. That's what it's called and not a goal. If you didn't historically do that, that would be my argument from the other side, but, since you made that comment about the boats being bigger and having -- I understand that, because of the value of the fish, if you bring in old fish or whatever.

MR. HUDSON: Manny, do you have to do a hail-out and hail-in with your VMS? In other words, the day you depart, you would hail out with the people that monitor the VMS. That's what we have to do at HMS.

MR. HERRERA: Yes, you're supposed to hail out, and the hail-in because it's not a quota fish, is not as restrictive, but, if this is what we wind up going with and VMS is the only way to enforce it, I imagine that hailing-in is going to be more required, more enforced, and so on and so forth. I hail-out, and I go fish in the South Atlantic. I am not going to the Gulf, and I have to hail-out, but, most of the times, I really don't hail-in, because there is no quota fish. I'm not fishing in the Gulf, and so, in this case, yes, you would need to hail-in, and that's fine to enforce it.

MR. HUDSON: As a follow-up, Manny, I understand exactly what you are saying about going from Key West and seventy-something miles to the Tortugas. I did it a bunch back in the day, but what I am -- Automatically, you have lost the best part of two days, just traveling. That way, your 3,500 -- The only question I have about that would be is that a gutted weight or a whole weight, because you are monitored in whole weight.

MR. HERRERA: Down there, whether it's gutted for the boats that have to gut or whole for the boats that don't have to, but my opinion is -- I tell people that, more than three days, the fish have to be gutted, but there is no enforcement on that, and we'll leave that status quo, as it is, if --

MR. ATACK: I am like Robert. I don't have a dog in this fight, but I think somehow you need to clean it up a little bit, because then there's the definition of a week. What is a week? If it's cleaner -- It's easier if it's so much per day. If you're out five days, it's so many pounds, but when you start talking about does a week start on Monday to Monday or -- If I start on Saturday and I get back next Thursday, when can I go again? That's the issues that I see when you start talking about a week, because what's the definition of a week, and how does a week reset? If you go to so many pounds per day for multiple days, then it might be easier to regulate and enforce and monitor, and so that's just something to think about on how you word your thing.

MR. HERRERA: **Again, if you have to hail-out -- In this point that Rusty just made, if we're hailing-out -- If you hail-out on Monday, and say you hail-in on Friday, your week is back to -- A week is seven days, and so, if you hail out on Monday and you come in before Sunday, then you're not allowed to go back out until Monday. That would be the way to enforce that.**

MR. FEX: All right. We need to move on. What I would suggest is to make a motion to take this to the council to consider this. I can't make motions to bring that forth.

MR. HERERRA: **I propose a motion to take this to the council.**

MR. STIGLITZ: Second.

MR. FEX: It's seconded by Richard. Any more further discussion? **Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion at hand, please raise your hand. The motion passes unanimously.**

Thank you for making a motion on this. Last time, I took what Robert Johnson said to the council, and Anna called me out on it, because we actually didn't make motions on each thing, because Robert had brought something a couple of AP meetings ago. Thank you.

MR. HADLEY: All right. We will move on to the Outline for a Socioeconomic Profile of the Commercial Snapper Grouper Fishery in the South Atlantic. This is a little bit of background on this. As part of the visioning blueprint, what is now Regulatory Amendment 27, the public was asked to comment on management approaches that would meet the needs of traditional bandit boats.

There were several ideas submitted to consider, but what the exact definition is is something that we could certainly use some input on, and so there are two essentially main goals of this profile of the fishery. One is work towards trying to define a traditional bandit boat and the other is a socioeconomic characterization of the snapper grouper fishery to go along with Amendment 27, which, as we reviewed yesterday, there is several different changes to the commercial fishery, kind of overarching changes, and so this is to complement this Amendment 27. I will go through the outline, and the hope is to gather input from you on the overall structure. Then also there is some specific discussion questions and kind of decision points for how we will move forward.

Starting off, the first part of this profile will be a description of the fishing communities, and, as you can see, we were going to look at breaking down regions, or by state, essentially, with North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, north Florida, which would go from the Georgia state line to approximately Palm Beach Inlet, and then Palm Beach Inlet to Key West.

The communities that we profiled would be looking at regional quotients, and so looking at commercial snapper grouper landings by weight and ex-vessel value and also information on engagement and reliance on commercial fishing. That's how these communities would be identified, and, there again, broken down by those five different areas.

The first question for the AP is, is this geographic division of regions sufficient? Do you think there are some states or regions that should be consolidated? For example, and I'm just throwing this out there, but South Carolina and Georgia, would that be better? Should these regions be further divided?

MR. HUDSON: Number 4, where it ends at Palm Beach Inlet, the prohibition of bottom longline is from 27 degrees, 10 minutes North, and that's St. Lucie Inlet, and I would say the St. Lucie Inlet would be a better fit than Palm Beach Inlet.

MR. JOHNSON: I would agree with that totally. I mean, you're talking about Fort Pierce, basically, right?

MR. HUDSON: No, St. Lucie is just a little bit below.

MR. JOHNSON: Just a little bit below? Okay.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would be interested in your opinion on this, Kenny. I think that there is Murrells Inlet, Little River, and Southport have a lot more in common than say the places in the Outer Banks. I talked to Jeff Odom a lot about his fishing, and it's so different than what I hear from like Mark and his brother Mike and stuff, and so I don't know what you think, but the Outer Banks, to me, feels distinct.

MR. FEX: Yes, and I would have to agree on that. I think from probably Topsail or something, or Morehead, down to Charleston, or maybe even farther, is probably more equivalent, and Hatteras has got their own little type fishery.

MS. MARHEFKA: If we're talking snapper grouper, it would almost be all the way down to Charlie. That fishery, to me, operates more similarly than the guys do north of Topsail.

MR. FEX: I didn't know if Charlie still had boats. That's the only reason I didn't go that far.

MS. MARHEFKA: But isn't that part of what they should be looking at? Charlie did have boats, and so it would be worth looking at whatever is happening in Charlie's world.

MR. HADLEY: So you're suggesting maybe Murrells Inlet down through Georgia and that area?

MS. MARHEFKA: No, I would go with Kenny. I think Kenny said Topsail through Brunswick.

MR. HADLEY: I've got you. Thank you.

MR. FEX: Any other opinions on what is at hand? Seeing none, we will move on.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Moving on, the next section will include descriptive statistics of snapper grouper permit holders, and so this will look at the permit information, so the distribution of permit holders by region, the business structure, from what's available on the permit application, demographics of permit holders, there again what is available, and I will mention that SERO is in the midst of updating their permit application, and so they will probably -- It is expected that there is going to be more information on business structure and demographics moving forward from here, but we still certainly have some information on there as is. Then it's looking at permit portfolios, and so looking at what other South Atlantic and federal fishing permits that snapper grouper permit holders possess, and so the general permit portfolio.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just want to make a comment to, if you can, to be sure to look at corporate -- When you look at corporations, the holders of the corporations. For instance, our permit is in a corporation, but the corporation is Mark and I, which is different, to me, than something that is held with members outside of the family or whatever that distinction is, but, to the extent that you can look at that, I think it would be important.

MR. FEX: I would like to see how many vessels are leased. I know the permits ain't leased, but them vessels are.

MR. HADLEY: With that, that's a perfect segue, if we're okay with that Section B.

MR. HULL: Just one comment. On Item 4, with the portfolios, for most of us, having these several different permits in addition to our snapper grouper permits is vitally important for our businesses, and so I think it's important that we make that known, that there has been talk about trying to eliminate, for instance, mackerel permits, kingfish permits, from guys like me that may only use mine when the mackerel are off my coast and they're there. I'm in so many other things that I can't chase the fish around, and so I think it's important we can protect people's portfolios that use them, and they may not qualify for some upcoming qualifier to keep it.

MR. BUFF: I just want to reiterate what Jimmy just said. I was one of the lucky people that lost their sea bass traps, and, when it comes down to my king mackerel permits, it's not going to go over as easy as it did with my sea bass, and so we need these permits, and we need access to them when we can use them. Like, for us, it's not profitable for us just to shut the boat down for a week just to go king mackerel fishing for two weeks, and so all of that needs to be taken into consideration.

Also, too, I would like to make another comment about these permits. Just like right now, some of the guys are getting ready to do this top-water mahi fishing. For that boat to do that, I've got to take the king mackerel permit off of that vessel, for that boat to be able to do that, and it's a paperwork nightmare. Why could there not be something in there to where the boat couldn't sell the mackerel, instead of having to take the permits off the boat? For me, it's a month process to take it off and then put it back on, to where it could be that that boat couldn't sell the king mackerel while it's doing the mahi.

Just some things like that that, if we're going to continue to do what we're doing, we need every tool in the box. That was why I fought so hard to get my sea bass traps back. We need these permits, and we need all the options we can get to survive, and so I would just like to throw that out there.

MR. FEX: Could you clarify that? I have never heard of a permit having to be removed from a vessel because of operating in --

MR. BUFF: I called and asked. If you're going to do the top-water mahi longline in the months of -- I think it's May is the month it's open, and you cannot have a king mackerel permit on that vessel. I called Florida specifically and asked that question. It's got to come off the vessel. For me, I have got one boat that wants to participate, and so I've got to take that permit off of that vessel just for that guy to participate. I did call, and they put me through to some guy in management, and he said that was correct.

It just would be nice not for me to have to spend a month of paperwork to in and out permits just so that guy can go do this fishery for thirty days, to where there could be something in there to where you couldn't -- I think the whole goal is for them not to be able to sell the king mackerel that is caught. I think that's the whole goal, and I understand that, but it would be easier than having to take permits off of boats.

MR. FEX: Yes, I could see how that might be an issue, because then you might lay gear and then directly target king mackerel, and that would be an issue. Thank you for the clarification.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Moving on, this is what Kenny alluded to regarding permits and permit vessel characteristics. This will look at leased permits, latent permits, permit cost and availability, for what information is available, distribution of snapper grouper-permitted vessels by region, and so this will look at the hailing port city that is listed on the permit application, and then the vessel characteristics, and so there is several -- There again, from the permit application, there are several vessel characteristics available, including age, length, horsepower, crew size, holding capacity, hull material, fuel type, whether it's used in for-hire fishing as well, with a specific focus on vessels fishing bandit gear.

Here again, it's trying to get at that question of what is a traditional bandit boat and what could you use as a definition to differentiate vessels. There is four questions here, but the first main one being are there additional vessel characteristics or statistics that could be used to better define what a traditional bandit boat is that you can think of?

MR. ATACK: I've got a question. What is a traditional bandit boat? I mean, are we looking for traditional/historical or are we looking for a current definition of a bandit boat? What is really the goal for this? I am kind of, I guess, struggling with that.

MR. JOHNSON: To me, the definition of a traditional bandit boat is a boat that is probably less than ten knots in speed. I don't think size really has anything to do with it. I mean, there are some thirty-four-foot Crusaders that are slow, but those are boats that have to spend more than a day, like Manny was alluding to. You are traveling.

Where we fish, my boat is going fifty miles, and he is doing nine knots. Now, I have people that are just south of me that have boats that do twenty knots, and they do day trips, especially for amberjack, but, when I say a day trip, they usually spend the night, or they leave at two in the morning, and so it's a long day. It's not like it's a six-hour day, but a bandit boat usually is probably a three-day minimum. It's more about the length of the trip than it is anything else, and that equates usually to the boat's speed. At least that's my personal opinion.

MR. HULL: I agree with most of what Robert said there. To me, it's a bandit boat, and it's a trip boat, basically. I mean, they're making trips instead of a day boat, in opposition to a day boat, but you can go back and you can think about the old days in our inlet, and there used to be a dozen bandit boats tied up at the fish house in New Smyrna, and they all had bandit reels on them, and they had the traditional -- We are going to fish for a trip, and you still have that somewhat, but not in my inlet. Everybody there has adapted to day fishing, because of the management, the rules and regulations. I would agree with that, that it has more to do with the length, like Manny's proposal. You have trips and then you have day boats. To me, a bandit boat is a trip boat.

MR. STIGLITZ: What constitutes a latent permit? Is it not being used for ten years or not being used for one year or not being used for six months? Is it 500 pounds for six months or 500 pounds for a year or 10,000 pounds? What constitutes a latent permit?

MR. JOHNSON: I think that's an excellent question, Richard. I would like to see some clarification on that. Is it zero pounds in the last ten years or the last five years? What make it latent? Item C, Number 1, we all know that you can't lease permits. You can only lease boats, and so that's -- I have a lot of friends that do that, and I understand, and some of us have to lease permits from ourselves, because of paperwork, and so that's a really complicated thing.

I think the intent, the original intent, was really, really good. The main problem I have with this is we have people that no longer fish that have a couple of single South Atlantic permits and lease both of them, and it really made the two-for-one obsolete. It stopped it. When that started -- When people caught on, and fishermen are pretty smart, other than the fact that they are fishermen, but, when that caught on, people quit selling permits. Why would you sell it? You could lease it for six-grand a year, but I have to lease a permit from myself to my corporation, simply for the paperwork part of it. It is my permit. I own it. I own the corporation, and so there's a lot of things.

You have to be real careful when we say that we want to do away with leasing permits, because I am not leasing a permit. Actually, I am leasing a boat. Excuse me. Really, this is a job for an attorney, to maybe clean this up a little bit and sort of tighten it up so that it's not being abused, and the abuse is people that no longer fish are just taking a single South Atlantic and leasing it, and I know an individual that has two of them, and he leases both of them. He doesn't fish himself, and he gets \$12,000 a year income off of two permits that he hasn't fished personally in years, and so I think that's -- I don't think that was the intent when they first brought this forward.

MR. FEX: I don't know if you guys get these in the mail, and so I just made that clarification. They always send it to me of will you lease your permit, and it's actually out of Texas. That would be a concern, to me. I don't know why he's trying to do that. I would almost think that he's going to get in a contract with these people and end up with their permits one day or another, but I just figured I would put that on the record.

Back to the original question about traditional bandit boats. I know, in southern Florida, a lot of the boats have shifted to the center consoles, day boats. I've heard a lot of times because it's the boat slip rent costs so much, and so a lot of them have shifted to that. That way, they can trailer them. The concern with the trip boats, the day boats, is a traditional boat, commercial boat, would go out and catch about anything, grunts, jolthead, triggerfish, everything.

A day boat is going to be a directed fishery, directed straight towards grouper or directed straight towards vermilion, and so they're not going to keep getting them other little fish that is only worth a dollar or two-dollars a pound, and so, if we all shifted to day boats, that would be a concern, because, all of a sudden, we're just going to direct the fishery to them high-dollar fishes, and so that would be a concern I would see.

MR. BUFF: I want to make a couple of comments on several things, and we'll start with the leased permits. You guys need to really be careful how you address this, and all you're going to do is put another step of paperwork for somebody that is going to do it that is going to have to do it, and so I don't know how you're going to correct that.

Me and Charlie and Jack was talking about the three-for-one instead of two-for-one, because, evidently, it would be nice to reduce the number of permits, and Charlie came up with that, and I think it was Charlie, but it could have been Jack, but, if we went back to the one-for-one, that would eliminate this lease problem. You're going to be able to sell that permit instead of having to lease it to somebody, and so that's just a thought. That's just a comment. I am just kind of making a point there, and I can't remember why.

Also, I want to go back to the traditional bandit boats, and you guys have got to remember too that all of this stuff is evolving, and the people are trying to find ways to survive. What works for me and Kenny might not work for Jimmy, or what works for Jimmy might not work for Wayne or Robert.

No matter what we do at this table, there is going to be winners and losers. Somehow or other, we've got to figure out how to make that as least as possible. Just because Jimmy wants day boats, it don't mean that me and Kenny can't have a traditional bandit boat, and so, somehow or another, all of that has got to fit in. Also, to the -- Me and Manny was talking yesterday about these dock spaces and stuff, and I think this is one thing that is pushing this, and this is something that nobody thinks about.

In the last ten years, we have lost probably 75 or 80 percent of our fish houses and dock space, and this is going to be the elephant in the room, five years down the road, because, just like my landlord, she knows what the property is worth. Where Manny is at right now, they are fixing to lose their place because of development. When you've got a landlord that has 500 foot of property that they're getting \$2,000 or \$3,000 a month, and they've got a million-dollar piece of dirt right there on the water, what are you going to do? If it was mine, I would sell it too, and so you can't say nothing about that.

Somehow or another, we've got to protect it. Are we all going to unload boats out of the back of a truck and take them to the market, or are we going to have docks to put our boats at? I think that is kind of what -- I don't know Jimmy's business, but I think that's kind of what everybody is getting at, is we don't have -- We are running out of places to dock, and, unless we have something -- Even like where we're at, and Kenny can attest to this, I can't go to a marina and rent a slip to put my boats in, because they don't want us over there. That is the bottom line.

It's something that we need to kind of think about. If we don't protect our way of business, we're not going to have nowhere to unload these boats or sell these fish, and so we just kind of need to keep that mind, and my landlord wants rent twelve months and not six.

MR. THOMPSON: I just want to make a comment back to the lease problem. Through government regulations, you have made the permit a commodity. If somebody has a commodity, they need to maximize it. If leasing it is the best thing for them, that's what they need to do, if they don't want to fish, and I just don't see how you can change that now. We have gone down the road too far.

MS. MARHEFKA: Scott, I agree with everything you said. Definitely the issue of what I call working waterfront is the top priority in my life right now, because none of this matters if we lose our dock space, and we probably will shortly, but I think that that's why -- I don't think anything that they're talking about putting in this is necessarily saying that we are trying to change anything. We're just trying to get a picture.

All this is, it's to let's understand what this fishery looks like. In no way -- I don't think this is meant to look at what is wrong with the short trips versus the long trips or anything like that. Let's just understand who we're all talking about and how people are affected. Then we can manage it better, because, as I've said before, the number is set. That's out of our control. The number of fish we have is out of our control.

The part of managing it, the people part, the money part, that is what we are here to do, and we can do it so much better if we have a picture. I don't think any of this is -- I don't think they're doing this to say what's wrong with leasing permits or what is wrong with small boats. It's let's just see who is doing what, so we can make them the most profitable they can be.

DR. DUVAL: That's exactly the point, so that we have a better picture of what the fishery looks like and why people are making the business decisions that they're making, and this gets back to some of the conversations that you all were having yesterday, and Ben alluded to some of those in some of his comments, with regard to looking at split seasons for deepwater species and why there are some of the vessels that sort of pioneered some of those deepwater commercial fisheries that, due to regulatory issues, are no longer even able to participate in those fisheries and why vessels in other parts of the range have increased reliance on some of those species, you know why landings of certain species have jumped an order of magnitude in certain areas, based on regulatory changes that have taken place. This is all about trying to understand that. It's not necessarily about we're doing this to take action right now. It's to better understand what you all have to deal with and why those decisions are being made. Thank you.

MR. HULL: I agree with Kerry. I agree with what everybody has said here, and, just to add a comment to this particular work that's being done, it's real important, because you may be able to use it to influence protection for working waterfronts. This type of developing this work with the agency is something that could be used in a political way, or with grant funding or something, if it's developed to the importance to the citizens of having these working waterfronts protected for continuation, to provide access to the resource, to the consumers. It's really important, and, to me, I like trip boats. I like bandit boats. Don't get me wrong there, but I am just telling you what has happened in my region, but this is important work, and it needs to continue on, for a lot of reasons.

MR. FEX: One point I wanted to say on the lease issue is the reason I had an issue is we don't know how effort gets shifted, because we don't know who is leasing now and who was leasing before. As we try to manage numbers and we project towards -- Leased permits might come in the action of effort, and so that's the only reason I have with that.

MR. BUFF: Jimmy, we did look at the grant program, and there is nothing in there to protect the waterfront, and so just to kind of throw this out there for the council members that know somebody that might could put this -- These properties are very expensive, and you go to the bank and tell them that you've got some fishing boats and you want to get a loan, they are pretty much laughing in your face, but this is something that is going to happen down the road, and there should be a grant program.

For us, I am not asking for a handout and not to pay it back, but I would just like to have a program to be able to get that money to be able to keep my waterfront, and this is going to be a huge issue. Go right around Southport, or any town where they had them before, and they are gone. The reason they're gone is they are getting two and three-million dollars for this dirt, and you can't blame them. I just think there ought to be somebody looking at some avenues to be able to offer something to the property owner or the fish houses to be able to stay in business and get some sort of grant program.

MR. FEX: I will say the State of North Carolina had the working waterfront thing a couple of years ago, and so that was a good thing from North Carolina.

MR. ATACK: Just a couple of things. I think you also should be looking at are the boats trailered or are they at a dock front? Are they at a private dock? When you're getting all this information, I think you want to try to get as much as you can, so that you don't miss something, so that, when you're trying to analyze everything, that you have the data there to troll from.

Latent permits, one option to look at on that is what about income qualifier. How many of these permits would have met the income qualifier that they have for some of the permits, like spiny lobster requires an income qualifier? If you don't meet that income qualifier, maybe that would be what a latent permit might be, and that's just something to think about. I think that's what I had.

MR. HERRERA: Going back to the working waterfront, quite a few faces were down in Key West, around the room, and I got to show them where I worked out of, and I am being asked to leave because that marina, as Scott mentioned, is being extremely overdeveloped. They are using every square inch. Not every square foot, but every square inch for development, and that is what is going on down there in Key West. You can imagine that Key West is a household name around the country, and everybody wants to go there and stuff, and so it's very, very important to continue to make places where they're meant to be working waterfronts.

Just like Scott, I am -- If the government buys up land, I would like to pay my share of it, but it has to be something where it's government made, because the bank isn't going to give me seven-and-a-half-million dollars to buy the fish house that is available in Key West. Some people were saying that, oh, Manny, is going to take that over, and I said, I wish. I wish I had seven-and-a-half-million dollars or that the bank would loan it to me. That's very, very important. That's very important, because we're losing our ability to work because of our territory where we can fish out of.

MS. MARHEFKA: For you guys, the latent permit, I think Jim was kind of getting at what I was thinking, too. If there is a way to separate out permits that aren't -- Where that permit holder doesn't get any income from fishing themselves, versus they have a permit they are holding, but they are using other permits, not necessarily the snapper grouper one, and that would be a distinction for me, which is similar to I think what he is saying with the qualifier. Just figure out if anyone is holding permits that really has no interest in fishing, and not because I want to do anything with it, but just because I am curious if they're out there.

MR. ATACK: My other thing was we're looking at a traditional bandit boat, and how many types of boats do we have, category-wise? It would be good to have that when you do the survey, is traditional bandit boat, a day boat that is in and out that day, or maybe there is -- Let's see what falls out of it. I don't know how many categories there would be, but, when you do this profile, it would be good to just kind of see that types of boats and how they're being used and how it's evolving, because things are changing based on the way the fishery is and what you can do in the fishery.

MR. HUDSON: A couple of examples I would like to make. Like Cape Canaveral, we have a couple of fish houses there that are very involved in the South Atlantic Council stocks, as well as

the highly migratory. They can only lease. They can't own the waterfront. As you know, there is a lot of cruise ships there. Up in the backyard, Ponce Inlet and stuff, where I am from, some of my family's property and some of the other property has all been virtualized privatized. Once it became privatized, you didn't have, like Scott said, places for these boats to go anymore.

We have minimized our shrimp boats down to almost nothing, one or two boats, in Volusia County, and we have minimized our snapper grouper commercial boats, our bandit boats. I mean, the list goes on. Then, when you look, you see private boats and you see condos, and that is exactly what is being said here. It's just the change. There is no protection for any of our domestic food sector. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Just back to the definition of a traditional boat, I think bandit is a big thing right there. A lot of these day boats, these guys are using Electramates. They're not using bandits. I mean, a bandit requires a mount and wiring or hydraulics or whatever. It's different, and it usually isn't something that's taken on and off. A lot of these day boats, they're in multiple fisheries. They charter, and then they run a commercial trip, and it's just different. I think the bandit -- That right there pretty well tells you what you need to know. If it's got a bandit reel on it, that's a traditional bandit boat.

MR. FEX: Good point.

MR. STIGLITZ: I want to reiterate back on the latent permits. The majority of us are more than single species. The majority of us hold more than one permit. If you hold more than one permit, most of us have permits that are neglected. We don't use them a whole bunch, but that's our portfolio, and that's what -- God forbid you get shut off on one thing. You need to have something else to be able to support our families. Latent permits, just because it's not being used, it does not need to be taken away from people.

MR. HERRERA: Ditto to what Richard just said. For instance, for myself, I have had king mackerel forever, and I used to use it more. I don't use it as much, and that helps the king fishermen around the state that I don't use it, but, when I need to use it or I need to catch a few fish that are bothering my yellowtail, I need that permit, and so my permit is not going to have huge landings, but that is something that needs to be with me in my boat as a tool. The year where yellowtail closed, I was the first boat to catch a limit down there in Key West, and I caught three, and I was able to hit the market well a couple of times, and so that gave me income that I wouldn't have had, because we needed it.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I appreciate the input. Just to follow up a little bit more on some of the latent effort, what we're -- Obviously, here, it's just looking at permits that are not necessarily used, and so we've talked about the income qualifier, but do you have any feel for how many years, or should there be a limit on how many years we look at? Also, should there be a differentiation between unlimited permits and the 225 permits, as far as what is considered latent?

MR. JOHNSON: Definitely on the 225 and the unlimited, because those are two separate things. The 225 were supposedly non-transferable. When the permit holder leaves a fishery, that permit is done. As far as the qualifiers, what makes a permit latent, I think it would just be nice to know if there is one out there in North Dakota that hasn't been used in -- That would be interesting to know. I am not saying what to do with it, but it would be interesting to know.

MR. R. FREEMAN: I would be opposed to putting regulations on these latent permits. I ran a charter boat for thirty-three years and commercial fished part of that time with other people myself, and I always carried snapper grouper, the pelagics, tuna, king mackerel, whatever, because you've got a party out there and the guy catches a king mackerel and you don't have the permit and you've got to throw him back. We never target kings, because most people don't want to eat them that went fishing with me, and so just the fact that the guy has the permit should not be a disqualifier on him keeping it if he has not been reporting some landings.

MS. MARHEFKA: Again, no one here is suggesting that anything should happen with latent permits. We are just literally trying to see what is out there. As far as the years, I would suggest Amendment 8 or 9 -- Was 8 the two-for-one? I think it was 8. From Amendment 8 forward is what I would suggest.

Then, to the extent practicable, if you all can find a way to identify people-specific changes in their fishing behavior with that permit over time, I would be very interested. In other words, Amendment 8 years, Mark would make eight or nine-day trips. Now, he is on the same boat, fishing the same permit, but only making two-day trips. I don't know if you all can identify that, but the changes in behavior that we've talked about I think would be really interesting to see.

MR. STIGLITZ: The difference between an unlimited permit and the 225, I would think, if a fishery goes into a step-down, that the 225 permits ought to be shut off. They didn't qualify in the first place to be in the fishery, and most people I know that got the 225, they got it just because they were raising Cain about it.

If we've got guys that are, like in our yellowtail fishery, that are fishing yellowtail year-round, unlimited, and it comes the first of May and it goes to 500 pounds, I don't want that guy out there with a 225-pound limit. He didn't qualify in the very first place to ever get an unlimited permit. It was the 225 was handed out just to make people be quiet. They didn't qualify for anything, and, if I'm in a fishery that, once it gets to be restricted, I don't think he ought to be in the fishery.

MR. JOHNSON: I am going to be the devil's advocate here, Richard. My understanding is the 225 came about to address latent permits. It was what they gave somebody that had a snapper grouper permit that didn't have any landings. There will be some people that will use the argument that you used. I've got this permit, and I was going to use it. Just because I didn't use it for this many years, but you took away my unlimited and you gave me a 225.

I am not saying that I am disagreeing with you, but I think we have to really be careful. The council, in my understanding, established that just because they felt like, well, it's not fair just to take it completely from this guy. He had a permit, and he was keeping it up to date, but he just wasn't really using it. We don't know why.

Some of those people, they may have had legitimate reasons that they didn't use it, just like you have a legitimate reason you're not using a permit. It's part of your portfolio, and so I would -- I mean, I understand what you're saying. Most likely, he is not a full-time commercial fisherman. Obviously, if he's got a 225, he can't catch enough to support, but he may be a full-time mackerel fisherman, and he may use that 225 to supplement the income if mackerel are closed down, and so I don't think I could support anything like that. I just think that the intent was -- Again, I know

we're not talking about that. I know we're just trying to get a picture of what's going on, but I think we have to be very careful.

DR. MACLAUHLIN: I think, with this conversation, it's a really good conversation, and it goes into the whole permit portfolio section of this that we'll be doing. Instead of looking at just how many permits have no or low landings, looking at all of those and then looking at what are the categories of those. Is it because they are participating in other fisheries and they're keeping it in their portfolio? Is it because they took a year off for a personal reason? Is it because they are owning it and leasing it out and live somewhere else or something like that? I think that is what we will focus on a little more. It will be a little more helpful if ever there comes up a conversation about permits with no or low landings, because we can say we know that these people have landings in other fisheries and this is part of their permit portfolio.

MR. JOHNSON: To that point, Kari, it would be informative to know how many of those 225 permits have any landings, if there is a lot of them that are still not using them, or if some of them have -- That would be something I would be just interested to know, because I have a feeling that -- I have talked to several people that have those permits, and they do use them, and so it would just be informative to know that.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Moving on -- Thank you for the input on that. We will move on down to -- The next section we'll look at participant information, and so kind of similar, but looking at catch portfolio, and so species composition of landings for the snapper grouper fishery participants, by pounds and value. Then trying to tie in what dealer information is available, and so geographic distribution of dealers, business structure, involvement in other fisheries, such as Atlantic shark or domestic swordfish, and whatever other information we can pull based on the dealer database that we have.

Then, moving on to profile of snapper grouper landings, this will kind of be a very high-level view of the snapper grouper fishery, and so landings by ex-vessel value and weight for each species in the snapper grouper complex by species complex, and so looking at groupers, snappers, jacks, porgies, grunts, tilefish, and other, and other being wreckfish, gray triggerfish, hogfish, and spadefish.

Regional seasonality and distribution of landings by species complex and landings, and so just look at ex-vessel value and weight by gear and total economic impacts of the snapper grouper fishery, sales impacts, income generated, job estimates, and then finally a growth potential analysis. This was first done, I believe, in 2005 and 2006. I know Brian updated it, I believe, at the start of the commercial visioning process, and so this will be reexamined. It's certainly worthwhile. Just looking at the permit data, there has been considerable consolidation, and so we'll work to update the growth potential analysis.

Very quickly, if I could, I will just show -- This table is not in your document. This is what we have just put together as an example for the kind of overarching view of the landings and how the fishery breaks down by species complex, both by weight and ex-vessel value.

MS. MARHEFKA: Back up to the dealers, some of the things that I think you all need to try to tease out, and maybe you're intending to and I am just not reading it there, but how many fishermen are acting as their own dealers. I think it's probably not confidential information for you guys to

look at SAFIS and see which dealers fishermen are selling to. In other words, are there a group of fishermen who are spreading out their catch over multiple dealers? How many of them are like us, where we act as our own dealer?

That really talks about, to me, how much -- I know we have had to adapt to the fishery and the regulations, and so I am very curious, because I think that also speaks to the point of all the fish houses. We have much, much fewer fish houses, and it has changed how we've all had to act, and so I would like to see that sort of shift represented in what everyone is doing now without that many fish houses.

Also, I think it's really important, and I didn't see it above, that the captain -- Like the captain versus owner onboard situation, and get demographic information about the captains as well, and I say that not because I think it's a bad thing, because I think one of our problems we're going to be facing in this fishery is -- Sorry you all, but you all aren't the youngest people in the world, and I don't see a lot of people coming in behind.

I can't find someone that wants to be a captain on my boat. They're hard to find, and I think that age and economic barriers to the fishery are something really important to look at, and so I think it would be important to see if you're getting young blood and young captains that are working their way into owning their own boats.

MR. BUFF: I would just like to reiterate what Kerry just said. There is no young guys that are filling these old guys' shoes. Unfortunately, I hate to say it, but I think that our average might be in the upper forties, or maybe close to fifty-ish, for the boats that we operate, and there is nobody there to take those guys' place. Some of the younger guys, they feel like there is no future in it, and I am getting ready to lose one of my best ones. He is going back to school. There is no enticement for these guys to take this avenue, and this is going to be the next thing that we're all going to deal with, and so that's just food for thought there.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, but this is just something that I'm super passionate about. I think that it's important information, because we might be able to manage the fishery different for what the future looks like. I could find someone to run my boat if I had a go-fast boat and they could come home every night. These guys, what they don't want to do is they don't want to stay out there on an old bandit boat for that many days. Maybe that is the picture we get, and maybe that's how the council then can manage the fishery for the future, and so that's why I think it's important, is to get that perspective from people.

MR. BUFF: Another thing too, and you think about this, is if you get a manager at Wal-Mart, or you get a guy at McDonalds or somebody at Shoe Show or the garage mechanic, and you try to find somebody to run a bandit boat. That guy has got to have pretty much grew up in the fishing industry, or he's got to want it really bad to teach his own self, and we have some of those guys too, but, man, it's really, really hard to find these guys.

Everybody wants to, I guess, be a fisherman, but nobody can actually produce. There is a fine line there between being profitable and tearing your nets up and not making no money, and everybody sitting here knows what I am talking about, and so we just -- As it evolves, we need to figure out how to get some young people in to fill these peoples' shoes.

MR. ATACK: I don't know if you can figure this out when you do your survey and collect all the data, but part of the, I think, issue is the price of the unlimited snapper grouper permit for these younger people. They can't cough up forty-grand or whatever it is and do the boat and do this and try to get into that fishery and be an owner and captain of a boat in that fishery. That might be good, to try to understand that when you go through this, just how big of a barrier that is to younger fishermen coming in.

MR. BUFF: Back to this leasing thing too, to make Jim's point here, is go to the bank one day and just tell them that you want to buy a snapper grouper permit and you need \$65,000 and see what the bank tells you. You can't get the money for the permit, and I think that's a lot of the reason that there is a lot of uncertainty in our industry and the permits have got outrageous.

When you tie a boat and a permit together and you try to finance that, unless you've got a lot of money to put into it, which most of the time they don't, that is one reason why we have a lot of these leased permits. Us, as all of the users, have run these permit prices up, and it's one thing that I don't understand. You can go to the Gulf and buy a Gulf reef permit for \$15,000, and we can fish twelve months. Yes, we've got to buy quota, but we're going to fish all twelve months, and we know what we're doing and what we're making, and it's pretty damned good.

Then you come over here and you pay an astronomical amount of money for a permit that you can't catch nothing and you can't fish all year, and so that is just something to think about when we're talking about these leased permits. The guys can't buy them. They can't get the money, in most cases, even to buy the permit, and so that cuts the young guy out too from even trying to make an effort.

MR. FEX: All right. I've been informed that we need to move on.

MR. HADLEY: All right. That is largely the outline. Here is another table that kind of shows kind of a -- This will be updated, but a teaser, as far as what kind of information will be in there. You will be looking at kind of trips over time, days fished over time. You can look at prices in the fishery, a comparison of the snapper grouper fishery to essentially all commercial landings in the South Atlantic.

Then you can look at permitted vessels over time. Like I said, you will see a fairly large consolidation there, and we're able to also look at the number of vessels by different bins of landings, and so you can say zero to 100, 100 to 1,000, and that sort of thing. With that, in the interest of time, I very much appreciate your input, and I think we have a lot to go with from there, and so thank you.

MR. FEX: Thank you, John.

MS. BROUWER: The next item on the agenda is something that we kind of started doing a few years go, or we had the intention of getting off the ground, and we had a meeting where, if you remember, we had several questions that were meant to facilitate a discussion to get information from fishermen on specific species to inform management decisions and to inform discussions about stock status through the SSC and that sort of thing.

We're going to try this again. There is a link in your overview that takes you to what the Mid-Atlantic Council uses as fishery performance reports. These are reports that are put together annually by their respective advisory panels, and it's really interesting, if you haven't taken the time to look through one. Basically, it's just a narrative, based on fishermen's information and input at meetings like this one, that kind of just paint a picture about a particular fishery.

Then their SSC uses these reports often to inform their discussion, and so we prepared -- Kari and John and myself put together sort of a template for what one of these might look like, or at least to get us started having these discussions, and this will be a work in progress. Of course, we encourage you to give us as much input as possible, and so we're going to just hopefully have a fairly short, unfortunately, discussion about red grouper this morning and then go from there.

Whatever comes out of this meeting, we will transform into kind of a draft fishery performance report that will then be presented to the Socioeconomic Panel of the SSC next week, and we will get their input. We will ask them if this information is useful and how do you envision using it for your discussions and what could we do differently.

First, we have a fishery overview, and this is based on data through 2008, which is what was included in SEDAR 19, which is the last stock assessment that was done for red grouper. As you know, there is another one that the SSC will be discussing next week, and so it gives you a little bit of a -- I tried to not make it too technical. It's basically just a big-picture overview of where we are in the fishery, what the assessment results were, and then basically just a list of topics, which is what we intend to obtain information from you all today.

Trends in catch levels and any recent changes that you can think of, talking about markets and economic information, and so price per pound. Have you seen any changes in the past few years, and what do you attribute those changes to, in your opinion and your experience? Appropriateness of existing management measures, we're going to touch on that a little bit, but certainly that is something that -- Those are discussions are going to be taken in much more detail when we go to develop an amendment, once we have the results of an assessment, when we know what kind of management measures need to be considered for managing a particular fishery.

Any observations on environmental and ecological conditions, and have you see any changes on the water? Are you noticing an abundance of a certain sized fish or poor recruitment or fish spawning when they didn't used to before, any kind of observations like that could be useful to inform science, and then any other observations that you might have.

Over here, you will see some of the same figures that we already discussed when we were talking about the visioning amendments, and so, again, we have red grouper landings prior to the shallow-water grouper closure. This is 2004 through 2009, and then we have 2010 through 2015. This is something you have already seen, and this is for the commercial sector.

Then the annual landings, and this one is price per pound, in non-adjusted U.S. dollars, by state, for the commercial red grouper harvest and average price, which is the black line, and the adjusted average price, which is the gray dotted line, and Georgia was not included, to maintain confidentiality, in this figure.

For the recreational sector, again, this is based on MRIP, and so this does not include headboat information. It's the same figures that we've already looked at, pre and post-shallow-water grouper closure, annual landings, and then here are the questions that hopefully will generate some discussion.

Again, catch level, over the past five years for the commercial sector, how has the price and demand for red grouper changed? How has the demand for the charter and headboat trips targeting red grouper changed, if at all? When and where are the fish available, of course, by region, and has this changed? Has the size of the fish that you are seeing changed? Have there been any effort shifts to or from red grouper? This is just a handful of questions for you to get started, and then I would suggest that we take one of these items at a time and then just have a little chat.

MR. FEX: I would like to make a comment. I am looking over here at Julia Byrd, and this almost looks like a working paper, a questionnaire working paper, and am I correct? That is great. I like to see this. The only reason I say that is because people, when they want to get involved with stock assessments, they really don't know what they are asked to do.

Not so much you would have to get involved with a stock assessment. You could hand out this kind of questionnaire to a fisherman that's in that region to make that working paper. You could have a standardized almost working paper, which is that, almost it looks like.

That way, instead of exactly having to get somebody to get involved with a stock assessment, you could say, you know what, you're a black grouper fisherman. Here is a working paper and answer these questions and this can go to the stock assessment. I have filled out working papers, and this is pretty much like what it is, and that's what I was actually kind of looking forward to try to do, because a lot of people can't get invested, and they kind of think it's too much to get involved.

MS. BYRD: I think the council is really interested in getting this input from you guys, but this also could be used as a working paper, or it could -- If you guys put these together as an AP panel, it could be provided as a reference document, of sorts, to the stock assessment, because these are a lot of the sorts of questions that a lot of the scientists want you guys -- They want to get information from you guys on kind of during the process, and so I think that's why the council is asking you guys to help put one of these together, and those could definitely be provided as resources for upcoming assessments or along those lines. Does that answer your question?

MR. FEX: Yes, exactly. I just wanted to make -- That would be easier. That way, a person wouldn't have to be so much involved with a stock assessment, going to the webinars, but he will be able to give his professional opinion, and so it's more like asking the scientists what do you want us to give you for information. If you had a questionnaire working paper for a species or a direct -- Any species. Then you could say, okay, here is a red grouper one. Here you go, Kenny. Answer these questions. Then that would be almost like a working paper. Yes, that's all I wanted. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Myra, do you want us to go down this list, or is this just to show us something?

MS. BROUWER: No, I want you to answer these questions.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. That's what I was trying to get at. This is a very regional fishery, mostly based in North Carolina. For me, it's real easy. I don't sell enough red grouper to even remember what the price is. They're not a high-priced grouper, because the yield is really bad. They've got big old heads and not a whole lot of meat.

I don't think I have ever had anyone get on one of my charter boats and -- Plenty of people want to go catch grouper, but I don't think I can remember somebody saying, hey, Captain, I really want to go catch some red grouper. I would say as a targeted species, in my area, for red grouper, probably none, but the average -- The fish available, they're still available in the deeper depths. We catch them out near the shelf edge, in 140 to 180 feet, and we catch the nice ones, and the size really hasn't changed. It's been pretty consistent through time.

As far as effort shifts to or from red grouper, they are part of a trip. That's what red grouper are for us. They're a fish that, if it's available and somebody catches one, cool. Nice red grouper, and we throw him in the fish box, and that's it. I just gave you a brief summary of northeast Florida red grouper fishing.

MR. HERRERA: Now we go to the Keys. We have plenty of red grouper down there, and, for us, we see a lot of them. I see a lot of them in the shallow end of the reef. Not so much on the outer edge of it, but, then again, I don't go fish on the very outer, outer edges of the reef, where some guys do catch some of those bigger fish.

I don't believe that we have an issue with the amount of red grouper down there, at least in the lower Keys. I can't speak for the upper Keys, and they would be worth a lot of money if we could keep them, especially now that Mexico has a grouper closure too, and the price of grouper -- I was able to get some, as a dealer, get some of the quota for grouper from a friend of mine that goes out there, and he doesn't have a lot of quota, but, to a fish market in February and March, a few fish markets that I sell to, that was like -- Even though the price was \$6.00 to them, \$5.75 or \$6.00 to them, there was no grouper, and so they could market it up to \$10.00, or \$10.99, and sell them.

Again, during the time that we have them down there abundantly, when the water is a little cooler, they are closed, and so now they're going to start heading off, and they're going to get banged up come May. We are going to catch a few of them, and then they're going to push off and go deeper. Luckily, down there, I am starting to make adjustments to get some of this quota of fish to be able to provide to the fish markets up the east coast that need the fish.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just want to say, from a market perspective, that my chefs don't like red grouper. That doesn't mean that Mark won't try to -- If he catches them, they're part of a trip, but they're the hardest grouper for me to move, and the very last thing they will go to, from a taste perspective.

MS. JEFFCOAT: Our situation is exactly like Robert's. It's an incidental catch, and it's very few and far between for us.

MR. SNYDER: I will agree with Kerry. Most restaurants fear the red grouper. They perceive it as an inferior grouper, and it's hard for us to sell.

MR. HULL: I agree with Kerry and Robert's description of off of northeast Florida and her area up there. I would also say that, in my entire life, the amount of red grouper that we encounter hasn't changed. It has pretty much stayed the same over that period of time. Back in the day of trip boats, I can remember, if you spent several days or a trip out there, you could maybe catch a couple of boxes, occasionally, but, in general, it's just real incidental, an occasional catch for us, and just part of the catch.

MR. LORENZ: Would a casual recreational observation be of any value to you? Maybe speaking of ten trips, five to six trips, a year of private anglers in North Carolina, we're getting them pretty much where Robert would target them, pretty much where Robert mentioned. They will be in basically about 140 to 180 feet, max. That's the only part they're actually fun. After 180, it's kind of tough to bring them up.

In the past two years, I have caught none and witnessed none being caught. However, back in about 2011 or 2012, there seemed to be a really great bite, but the fish were not, I don't think, particularly large. I think, when they're legal, they're about four-and-a-half to five pounds. They would be five to twelve pounds, and I don't remember the measurements, was what we were getting back then.

As recreational fishermen, we like them, because they're out there and they're about forty to forty-two miles off of southeastern North Carolina, and I enjoy fishing for them. They're kind of the thing that we get a little excited for, but we do like to eat them, but we would much rather prefer the real prizes, the scamp that will often be mixed in. When we get those, we like those the most.

MR. BROWN: It's a similar fishery off of Charleston. I think I'm hearing a lot of similar things, and what Manny said too also kind of stuck with me, because, a lot of times, the red grouper are on like low-relief bottom, like what Robert just said is porgy bottom. The fishery was strong in North Carolina, and I guess they had a really compacted amount of fish in one little area, and they caught a lot of fish for a fairly good amount of time, and now it's really gone away.

I kind of wonder too about the impact of the roller net boats, what they had on the low-relief bottom, as far as the red grouper goes, up and down the areas that we fish. That could have had some impact there, but, since I've been here, since the middle 1980s, it's just been a bycatch. We never saw really a whole lot of them.

Also, I want to make mention about one thing. This is a good practice right here, what you're doing, and I was at the blueline tilefish assessment just recently, and, because there was such a lack of information up in the Northeast, as far as landings and stuff, they went to a method, in order to get some information on numbers and stuff, and it was called the Delphi method.

This was so that they could bring in information from the fishermen, in order to get some sort of a general idea of what the catch history was and different things that could help them with moving along with this assessment, where they didn't have any information. I think this is really a good stepping-stone here, for the AP to be able to weigh in on more of these assessments and be able to move along in a positive direction.

MR. MOSS: Again, from the rec perspective in south Florida, it's much shallower than what you're dealing with, Robert. We get them in sixty feet, and even shallower. Again, it's not a

targeted species. It's something you will get when bottom fishing for other stuff, and it's kind of a nice bonus. People don't hoot and holler about them, but you get them and it's nice, and you throw them in the box. One thing is it's starting to be a bit more targeted for spearfishing down by us too, especially with the regs now coming with hogfish. They are not the most wily of creatures, and so they're a little bit easier to shoot for a lot of these guys that are spearfishing.

MR. ATTACK: Over the years I've been diving, thirty years, my landings show like, after 2008 or 2009, I don't think I've seen a red grouper. We used to land a few of them up north of the tower, and you see one here and there south of the tower, but I haven't seen a fish in probably eight years south of the tower that's a red grouper. From my perspective, the stock has changed. We have seen less and less red grouper, and it kind of mimics the landings. What we're seeing mimics the landings for the red grouper for the last few years. Our depths are probably eighty to 110 is where we used to see them.

MR. HUDSON: When I was involved with SEDAR 19 for the black grouper and red grouper, at that point, I had never gathered up all the quarter century of historical pictures from 1950 to 1975 from my family. Most of the boats during that time period generally fish between sixty and 120 foot of water. The red grouper was never one that you could target off of Daytona. You would incidentally catch one or two or maybe three. What we targeted was king mackerel, red snapper, gag grouper, amberjack, stuff like that, for these for-hire trips.

My granddad, the old man of the sea, historically, if we caught a red grouper when we were commercial fishing, he said it was time to move and go find some gag. The best I could say is we would catch them anywhere from the inshore reefs all the way off into the big ledge and stuff. Generally, I didn't see those small ones, like you see in the east Gulf, and they have a huge fishery over there, and I think a lot of spillover goes into the straits down there, and Ben has mentioned a few times how they see a few right off of his house. Then, the next thing you know, they're gone, a couple of days later, or at least I figured that was possibly where some of that stuff in North Carolina was showing up, because there was quite a big catch there for a little while.

Generally, most of our red grouper would range anywhere from probably seven pounds on up to forty pounds. In fact, when NMFS was first starting to red grouper, they said the biggest we've got is twenty-eight. I said, excuse me, but I had some forty-two, and so they had to learn a little bit from the fishing industry, and so the pictures are still available, but nobody has ever wanted to spend the money or the time to analyze this quarter-century of pictures. Thank you.

MR. R. FREEMAN: My experience with them, we have never caught many of them. Last year, we caught none. The year before, probably three. They're in 140 to 180 feet, is the range that we've seen them in the past, but, to go target them, that would be a very, very slow day, and where we've caught them has been mixed in on the edges of the triggerfish, some of the spots off of Morehead City.

Apparently, somebody is catching them, because there is magazine called *Fishermen's Post* that comes out of Wilmington or something, and you keep seeing a few pictures there that they're displaying the red grouper, but they always overestimate the size of them, it seems like, but they are catching a few.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more comments on it? We got a good bunch of them.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Just moving on real quickly, the next set of questions that we had for you pertain to management measures. In your opinion, is the twenty-inch minimum size limit for both of the sectors appropriate at this time? Are there new measures that the council should consider? Are there other existing measures, such as the four-month closure, that should be changed?

Again, I don't want to spend a lot of time here, because, like I said, it's not going to be until after the results of the stock assessment that the council is really going to consider management changes, but it would be useful to get your opinion as to how the management is doing and where they should be headed.

MR. JOHNSON: Just real quickly, looking where most of the fish are caught in the region, and the exception being south Florida, we are talking about fish that are encountered in 140 to 180 feet of water, and so I am not really sure that a minimum size limit is -- Twenty inches is fine, but I am not sure what kind of effect that's really even having, because fish discarded in those depths typically are going to have more issues with barotrauma. Now, if we go to requirement of the Seaqualizer on every boat, that might change, but, as of right now, I would think that that discard mortality is fairly high on any fish discarded in those depths.

MR. HERRERA: For us down there, we are right at the border. We are in between the two. In the Gulf, they're allowed eighteen inches, but I am okay with a twenty-inch red grouper. I don't think there's anything wrong with it, and our fish don't suffer the barotrauma, and red groupers are very hearty, hearty, hearty fish. Those fish get released and all make it back, and so twenty inches is just fine for me.

MR. MOSS: Robert, this again kind of speaks to the regionality of it, but we get a lot of smaller fish down there, even sub-twenty, and, again, in shallower water, in fact even sometimes fishing for yellowtail, but, yes, we get a lot of the smaller fish that are in shallower water, and I think we should probably keep the twenty, from our perspective.

MR. FEX: I know I shouldn't express my opinion, but I think the size limit is fine on it. The four-month closure has been pretty much spot on. I know it seems like people are not seeing the fish, but I still can catch them, and I catch them from eighty to two-something, and then some, but that's just me.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to the next item, are there any environmental or ecological factors that you have observed that could potentially be having an effect, positive or negative, on red grouper in your area?

MR. ATTACK: We certainly see a lot of lionfish in North Carolina, and they're big lionfish, two or three-pounders, eighteen-inchers. I don't know if -- That has changed, probably, since the 2006 year or whatever, between 2000 and 2010. There has been a big increase since then, and so that could be impacting recruitment or the smaller ones. It's just hard to say. You can't really quantify that.

MR. BUFF: I would just like to kind say the same thing that Jim just said. The year that we had the really cold water temperature, and Kenny might remember what year this was, and I don't

remember, but they were dip-netting these lionfish out of the water, a lot of them, and so that seems to be a continuous problem with I think the fishery as a whole, and so I would just throw that out.

MR. HERRERA: I have said it, and I continue to say it again. The giant fish traps that we have out there, the living giant fish traps that we have out there, those goliath groupers, are responsible for eating a lot of those red groupers too, and so it's time to take some action on those goliath groupers. We keep slowing that down and slowing that down, and they eat a lot of red grouper. That is probably their favorite fish to eat.

MR. FEX: That is very true. Predation from the species, that is a sad subject. I will tell you what, but I don't think you'll ever get one of them to the dock again.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Just a question. We are kind of jumping into causes, and so can I read into this that you guys do believe that there has been reduced abundance of red grouper over the last few years, because that is what the assessment is showing. If you support that, then obviously that's going to be useful to the SSC.

MR. FEX: Yes, there has been a reduction, by all means, and I think it was right before the spawning closure got put into effect. We actually thought we were going to do the spawning closure, and it didn't pass. Then, that following winter, they went out there. Everybody and their brother was up there off of the Cape Fear area, and so hit them. I had one trip. I went out three days and I had 900 pounds of them, and so I am part of the problem. Sorry.

MR. JOHNSON: John, I think, if you ask Manny that question, he would have a different answer than Kenny, and I think that really speaks to that south Florida regional difference. If you would ask me, I would say it's been pretty consistent. I mean, we haven't had a huge change. I just think, in North Carolina, which was the driver of the landings, it looks like, that's where there has been a huge decline in those landings.

I am not sure that I am just saying that they've been depleted is the correct answer, but I just think there are some regional differences, especially when I hear guys from the Keys talk about there are lots of red groupers, that they're all over the shallow-water reefs and things like that, and all different sizes down there, the juveniles up to legal adults.

MR. HULL: John, I would have to agree with what Robert said. As I stated, off of our area, it's the same as we've seen my entire life, the amount of catch, and so it's pretty regional, and those fish are somehow -- Wherever recruitment is coming from, it's going by us, and we're just getting just a little bit of it somehow.

MR. MOSS: Going back up, Myra, to some of the reasons, I guess, one paragraph, again, this is kind of anecdotal, just from what I've seen, but more and more people are getting them spearfishing, especially with them being in shallower water down by my way. I am seeing more and more of those posted, if you will, with pictures than even the hogfish lately.

MR. JOHNSON: I know there is probably no way to even get an estimate of this, but I do know, twenty-five years ago, there just weren't that many people that were diving in the oceans, and now that's a really, really common thing for recreational people, not just in the Keys, but even up our way.

I mean, there's a ton of people that go diving. That's how they fish now, and I just wonder if there's any way that you could get some numbers on that, I guess not without a reef fish permit and that basic information that we like to get from that, but that's just another reason to have that program in place, where people could check off a box of do you spearfish, because I know there has been a huge effort shift in the recreational sector towards diving.

MR. FEX: Richard is leaving. I would like you guys all to say good-bye to him. This is his last meeting. Thank you for your devotion and time involvement.

MR. STIGLITZ: It's my last meeting, and it's been a pleasure.

MR. BUFF: I know that everybody is tired of hearing this, but I would just kind of like to go along with what Robert is saying. When you get your fishing license, and I think it's the same in each state, there is some boxes on there that you click of what you do, and it's not my expertise, but it seems that it would be really, really simple to have a couple of boxes on each state that would identify what you're doing. Are you bass fishing or are you saltwater fishing or are you fishing within ten miles of the beach? That would be some really, really good information, and it would really be very easy to get. I don't understand why we can't get that done.

MR. HUDSON: Two things I would like to talk about. The red grouper that we see are fairly sparse, historically, across the many decades, both my family and myself have seen, like Jimmy was trying to indicate, but they're usually a pretty nice size. They're not like those little dinky ones that I see over in the east Gulf that was being longlined until they pushed the longliners further off.

Now, the other thing that is different from the history from the late 1940s on into probably the early 1980s, the late 1970s, is we used to carry dive clubs out on our headboats back in the 1960s and 1970s and the early 1980s and stuff. Then you saw this manifestation of a lot of folks that had their own boats and dive flags everywhere, and it started proliferating.

It would be a good thing, just like dealing with recreational fishing groups and all that type of stuff, to engage them for what they see and then be able to put some kind of spot history together. The other item from the 1940s to the present, like my uncle, who is still fishing, could tell you is, when he first started fishing for big red snappers with hand-lines, it was warsaw groupers that were dominant on our sixty to 120-foot reefs off of Daytona. Now it's goliath groupers. Now, that's a big difference.

Everybody refers to that warsaw as only in deep water. We had a lot of the juveniles that would be near-shore, and that was a thing that a lot of the folks up and down, from Augustine down to the Cape, would see. Then there was a falloff on some of that. Basically, it's changed. The environment has changed, and is a variety of things that caused that. Of course, when you get into that time when folks have a little time on their hands, and it would be like May and June, you get some of this cold-water intrusion. Sometimes it only lasts a short period of time, and sometimes it's prolonged.

I call it, jokingly, lockjaw current, because nothing would bite a hook. It was a great thing for divers with serious wetsuits on and stuff. They could easily just swim right up to the fish, but,

again, those were things that went on in the 1970s and 1980s and on and on, but things have changed. I mean, once we stabilized inlets, like Ponce, between 1968 and 1972, and the proliferation of private boats began and the proliferation of headboats and charter boats really took root, the commercial guys started disappearing.

The bandit boats were a phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s or 1960s or whatever, but you just don't see that kind of stuff as much anymore, and so, ultimately, it's a different world now. As to where it's going to go, I believe that you've got to engage this anecdotal information from the true professionals, the folks that have the eyes on the water and in the water, and so that's the thing that sometimes scientists were involved with, at the data workshops and stuff. They, in the past, had to make assumptions about what we caught, and then that became the history, even though it may not be a real history. Now it gets a little troublesome when we get into some animals that are so thick now that we never saw them like that, and I just wanted to stick all of that out there.

MR. LORENZ: I wasn't going to state this, but since Rusty did, as I spoke earlier, it's seeming like the recreational had a really wonderful red grouper season time in 2011 and 2012, and, anecdotally, I can offer that I did meet a fisherman, an older commercial fisherman, significantly older than myself, and his claim, when I said the red grouper have vanished, he told me, almost matter of factly, that they run in cycles of seven to nine years. We have them and they kind of get cleaned out, and they take -- This is off of North Carolina, southeast North Carolina. They take seven to nine years. I don't know if that means anything, but, again, if you're looking at the history, if there's any of the fellows that are around to talk to, but it was interesting to me to know if grouper populations in my region are cyclical, have a normal cyclical basis.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Kenny, what you mentioned about things changing in this fishery, at least off of North Carolina, when the regs when in, is supported in the assessment, and it's one of the challenges, because it seems that the drop in recruitment starts to take hold about the same time as the regulatory change takes place.

It makes it hard to understand how effective those regulations have been, because you have this decline in abundance coming on at the same time, and so they're really confounded, and it's certainly one of those situations that, if not for the surveys that are also showing the reduced abundance of the fish, you might have to question how much of this is just being reflected by the regulatory change and people aren't catching as many because of the rules, but the abundance indices that we have certainly show a big drop, and it does seem to be related to recruitment.

One of the questions is what are you guys seeing right now, in terms of recruitment, on the water today? Where do you see the young fish, because this is one of those that we -- Like so many of our stocks, we don't have a good recruitment index, but, if someone were to try and do that, where do you see the young fish? Rusty mentioned seeing the smaller fish in the Gulf and not seeing them off of Florida and off of his area, but how about folks in other areas? Where do you see the juvenile red grouper?

MR. FEX: I personally will catch undersized grouper out there eighty or ninety or maybe a hundred foot of water. In my area, I think the concern, like Jim might say, is the divers have encroached on that inshore bottom, and they've been hitting it hard, and so I would hate to think that that is part of how we're not seeing the older ones, because they're getting whacked off as soon as they hit twenty inches up in the shallows, but we have a lot of ledges inshore, and I am

curious to see how much juveniles are and where they are in my area, and I'm going to try to do some kind of study this year, with some kind of little trap and camera type of thing, but that's on another subject.

MR. HERRERA: Down in Key West, and I'm not talking for the whole Keys, but, down in Key West, close to shore, in the bay, out in the Gulf, the shallow Gulf, shallow reefs in the South Atlantic, you find that fish up and down.

MR. JOHNSON: I catch a couple of year in the estuary, believe it or not, on live shrimp, and I'm talking about little guys, five-inchers or six-inchers, and so there is obviously some juveniles around, but, how many, I have no idea.

MR. MOSS: Again, the smaller ones, less than twenty inches, we'll get on the patches, in shallower. Just, at the risk of beating a dead horse, to go back to what Robert said about not only the stamp, but the spear fishermen, and I think, even by me, and granted it's state waters, but I go like to a commercial pier on a Saturday, and I just look at the beach.

There will be no less than twenty people walking into the water from the beach with spear guns, some with tanks and some without, just right there, and so it's definitely something that has grown in leaps and bounds in I would say even maybe the last five or ten years. Of course, when these guys start shooting stuff, it's 100 percent mortality. It ain't shooting something and then letting it go, and so I'm sure that that's what happened to the hogfish stock, when we saw that tank.

MS. BROUWER: We have gotten to the last of it, and I just -- Are there any suggestions for research priorities for red grouper or anything else that you want the council to be aware of, or the SSC or the SEP, as far as additional information?

MR. ATACK: I guess one thing there is no information on is where are the juveniles and how abundant are they, and so, if there's any way to do research on that, then -- The same thing with gag and scamp. There is no state research in state waters, where say a lot of the juveniles might be, as to how that abundance has changed over the years.

MR. MERSHON: I would like to know if -- Like one of the bigger places that I personally, and a lot of the other fishermen, caught quite a few red grouper is the tropical bottom that is now the Northern MPA off of South Carolina. Is there any research being done there to see the abundance of red grouper in that area? We used to whack them pretty good right through there, but they were always a larger fish also.

MR. FEX: I think they're starting to monitor the MPAs, to try to get a grasp on what's going on. I think that's part of their thing. Go ahead.

MR. BELL: We have an inshore juvenile abundance thing that we've been doing for years. I am not sure about reds in it, but I know we did gags. It's kind of an egress thing, and so we have data, within the context of MARMAP actually, that deals with the presence of offshore species on, oddly enough, things like gag growing up on oyster reefs inside, and so some of that does exist, data-wise.

MR. FEX: That would be good if North Carolina could do that, because there's an abundant amount of red grouper up that way. Any more questions or comments?

MS. BROUWER: Okay. That was really productive, and so thank you all for indulging us, and we will --

MR. FEX: Chip is going to come up and say something, please.

DR. COLLIER: I did want to point out that there is research going on in the MPAs looking at some of the hard bottom, doing ROV studies, and there is also some of the SEFIS -- Do you guys trap in the areas as well that would be useful for documenting catches inside and outside?

DR. KELLISON: Yes, there are some of the MPAs that we have sites in our trap video survey that lie in them. I would say that the sampling in and around them, just based on the trap surveys, is not designed to focus on those MPAs, and so it might provide some information, but it's not well designed to, for example, look at red grouper responses in or out of them.

Then there have been -- I am not sure when it started, but, over the last five to ten years, annually, Andy David and Stacy Harter from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center Panama City Lab have been doing ROV surveys and mapping focused on the MPAs, and I believe that work has been funded by the council. In my opinion, that effort would need to be -- It's limited. They have a limited number of days at sea, and a lot of ground to cover, and so they might tend to get a couple of ROV surveys in each of the MPAs over time, and the issue is, like with red grouper, where we're talking about maybe abundances being down, the frequency of occurrence of these species is pretty low. It's true for all groupers in those ROV surveys.

The frequency of occurrence is pretty low, and so you just don't see them very often in the surveys, and so you would need to really have really high sample sizes to start being able to detect a difference, for example, within versus outside of the MPAs. It would be helpful -- While some work is going on both from the trap and video work and ROV surveys, it would certainly be helpful for us to be able to ramp up those efforts. Thank you.

MR. FEX: Thank you for that information. Sorry for keeping you longer, but we just have a deadline to get out of here by twelve o'clock. Next is Citizen Science, if you guys don't have any input on this.

MS. VON HARTEN: Just a quick update. As you all know, the council went ahead with a recommendation to dedicate some full-time staff to the program, and so I took on that role back in January. If you haven't met Cameron Rhodes, she is over there on the side, and she is our new Outreach Specialist, and so she will be filling that role. She is doing a great job so far. She has upped our game on the social media, and we're getting lots of traction with that, and so make sure you meet Cameron before you go, and she will be in touch with you guys, I'm sure, over the coming months.

The next steps for the program, as I mentioned earlier in the week, is the council also recommended that we form a Citizen Science Advisory Panel, and I want to make sure that everybody understands what the advisory panel's function is and how it will operate. This is just the initial advisory panel, to help build the program, and so the function of this advisory panel, like I

mentioned earlier, is going to be more of a pool, and so a pool of individuals that will be on the advisory panel, similar to the SEDAR Pool.

Just like with the SEDAR Pool, people can be selected to serve on different SEDAR stock assessments, and that's how the Citizen Science Advisory Panel Pool would work as well. We will have a pool of individuals that then could be selected to serve on different action teams that will help develop five different components of the program, and that is volunteers, data management, project and topics management, communication and outreach and education, and then finance. Those are kind of the five areas of the program that we're going to be working on developing in the coming year.

If you have an interest or experience in any of those areas and you want to apply, please do. Like I said earlier, all of you are kind of already considered members of the pool, just like you are for the SEDAR Pool as well, but we really need for you to fill out the application, so that we know which areas you might be interested in working on, and so I know some of you all have done that, and so thank you, but the time commitment is just a couple of webinars a month.

You won't have to meet in person. We want to be as cost-effective as possible, and so we will be meeting in between council meetings via webinar. Then the recommendations the teams make will then be presented to the Citizen Science Committee at each council meeting for them to review, and so that's kind of the time commitment. We want a whole host of different types of people involved, fishermen and scientists and managers and researchers and state marine resource agency folks, all the people that we invited to the workshop as well, all those different types of people to be involved to help build the program.

Then the other thing that we're working on is also trying to find some support for a pilot project, to get kind of like our kickstarter project, to kind of test out how a citizen science approach would work for a fishery citizen science project, and so we're going to be working on that over the next couple of months and hopefully get something going here sometime this summer, and so you will hear more about that very soon. I see Ben at the table. Did you want to say something?

MR. HARTIG: Yesterday, Amber, I got on my soapbox about data, and I neglected to connect the dots about -- I said I failed miserably, but we do have a plan. I mean, the plan, going forward, is you all will be involved in collecting the data. That's how the council sees it in the future. There is not going to be any more money, and I've been told that for twenty-five years. There is not going to be any more money to do science, and so partnering with commercial and recreational anglers is the way the South Atlantic sees to get at their data shortcomings in the future.

Many of those research questions that you saw yesterday can be answered with cooperative research, citizen science research, with commercial and recreational fishermen, and so we see this, in the future, as filling the major gaps that we have in our data collection, and it's extremely important.

I mean, it's been really tough, trying to get the funding moving forward, because citizen science still has kind of a stigma. It's not really science, and then the other question is, in citizen science, this is very different from a lot of what citizen is, because actually the people who are being regulated are giving you the information to make the recommendations on further regulations, actually, and so that's not really been done in citizen science before, and so that question is still

out there. Can it be done, and can we get fishermen to give us good information to manage our fisheries in the future?

That question, for me, especially in the last ten or fifteen years, has been answered. I don't have any doubt that fishermen now -- The fishermen that I talk to now, compared to who I talked to twenty-five years ago, it's like night and day. They want the information. The information will make fisheries better in the future, whether it goes up or down. It will make the fishery better, and so citizen science is going to be a critical component, and I'm thankful to have Amber to take over this position, and hopefully some of you all can get on the AP so we can move this forward. For me, it's the only way that the South Atlantic is going to further their data and information.

MR. FEX: Thank you, Ben, and that does make a good point, because we always complain that they don't know what's going on, and so, just like several have said as the day has gone on, we could take them out there and show them, and so, yes, and thank you. Hopefully you guys will get involved with it.

MS. VON HARTEN: To Ben's point about we're filling data gaps, that's what the program is really intending to do, because we have existing data collection programs, and there is lots of other agencies and organizations that are doing cooperative research with a lot of you already, and we don't want to compete with that. We are just trying to identify some of the highest priority needs and the gaps that we have, so that that information can be filled. Then hopefully these data and the projects can be designed in a way that it's robust enough that they can be used in stock assessments, that they can be used to help guide the council in different management actions, and so really filling those data gaps is kind of what the goal is.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would just like to encourage everyone here to go out and find the person that is most pissed-off about what is happening and complains the most about the council and encourage them to be a part of this, because that is really -- As you guys know, the more you're at the table, the more you have an understanding, and the less you can complain if you're not -- If you're not doing anything, you can't complain, but I mean that. Find the most angry person you know and tell them to be involved in this or shut up.

MR. FEX: Thank you, Kerry and Amber. I think John is coming up next.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I do agree with Kerry. There is nothing like coming here around the table to change your perspective. The next item was Amendment 45, and so this is to deal with golden tilefish and the ABC control rule, as it stands now. As you're aware, golden tilefish has been determined to be overfishing. The council got a notification of that in December, and so they have until December of 2018 to put in their actions that will address the overfishing situation in golden tilefish.

The council is also interested in a number of changes to the ABC control rule. The latest revision on the National Standards have made it clear that the council can have some more flexibility in applying control rules. They can do things like phase-in fishery reductions over time. They can carry over unused quota from one year to the next, and the council is also interested in having more direct control themselves over the risk components of the ABC control rule.

The ABC control rule now really incorporates two things. One part is the assessment uncertainty, how certain the SSC feels the assessment has done at providing the estimates, but it also addresses the risk tolerance of the council, and the control rule that we have now has been in place for a number of years. It actually combines those two into one overall scoring approach, and the council would like to take more control itself over the aspects related to its risk tolerance and be able to change its risk tolerance based on feedback from folks like you and what is being seen more real-time and what's going on and what its feeling is about a particular fishery and its management program and how the two relate.

The council is interested in doing a number of those things on the control rule. However, they are also looking at some control rule changes, and in some cases similar ones, in dolphin wahoo, and so there is a chance that the council may end up doing a comprehensive ABC control rule amendment that might combine these control rule things into one package, particularly since we are looking at a little bit more of an extended window to take action on tilefish.

At the SSC meeting next week, the council is asking the SSC to look at some alternative approaches for setting the ABC, comment on these control rule things, and consider an interim ABC based on 75 percent of FMSY that they would try to do quickly, and they would try to reduce the catch limit through an interim rule immediately, because, if we are overfishing, and the estimates say that we are, we know that we need to bring those limits down sooner, because, the more you go on overfishing, the damage you risk doing to the stock.

The council is aware of the big reductions that are necessary under tilefish now and understands that, to some extent, it appears the last assessment was a bit overly optimistic with regard to recruitment again, and so we have another stock where the core issue seems to be recruitment and our ability to estimate and project recruitment in the future. Some of the SSC members are already well aware of that and have raised some questions about that as well, and so we will talk about the ABC control rule stuff and the catch limits of tilefish.

The council has also asked, as mentioned earlier, that tilefish have an assessment done sooner rather than later, to try and get a handle on some of these things, and the Steering Committee will be talking about that the week after next, and so, over the next few weeks, hopefully we will have some more light on what tilefish will be looking like and what we'll be doing in the specifics for tilefish over the next year.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, John. We will be there at the meeting next week, but one of the questions I have is about the carryover. I know Roy, for the longest time, said we can't do that because we will bump into some other issues. In some cases, the unused quota carryover was not always 100 percent. Do you have any insight on what it could be and avoid whatever Roy was worrying about, or does this SSC thing with the ABC changes solve that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: The Guidelines say that you can carry over an amount up to -- You still can't result in overfishing occurring, and so you know we have the catch limit, which is below the overfishing limit. What the carryover could do would be to make use of that buffer in there. If you didn't catch all of your fish this year, then, next year, you could increase it, perhaps, by however much you didn't use, up to whatever the overall overfishing level is.

Then, to be precautionary, they may want to do things like, well, we'll only go to say 95 percent of the OFL, or maybe 99 percent. I think we know, with our fisheries, that you have the percentages, but then you have the absolute poundages. If I have a fishery like tilefish, with very high landings, then I may be able to push that number up a little higher, in terms of the amount of OFL, because that small percentage is still a reasonable pounds of fish, in terms of our abilities to measure fish and what catches -- How fast they come in and things of that nature.

I don't know that it's going to work out well with hard-and-fast rules, but we do know the limit will be the OFL level, and so they can't go above that, and I think that resolves Roy's concerns of overfishing occurring in one year.

MR. HUDSON: The reason I bring it up is I believe today's Federal Register Notice from the Secretary of Commerce about the overfishing and, of course, red snapper is thrown in there, but I see Roy's letter saying that he feels that, with all the changes we've made, that overfishing has ceased.

With golden tile, that little bit of overfishing, but it's not overfished, then how do we get rid of the overfishing, and I guess that's what the interim rule is supposed to do, even though we don't like the idea of being crunched down significantly, and is there a phase-in that you can do, with the new National Standard 1, that doesn't make you impact them so hard next year? I think, if we're doing this standard, and with the new 2016 stuff being added into it for the golden tile, we might actually come up with a different picture, having got rid of the multinomial and go with the more robust stuff, if all that makes sense.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It does to me, but a lot of these guys are probably having trouble following you, but, yes, it does. The phase-in that's allowed under the National Standard, again, would be limited to going to the overfishing level. Say you have an example where you need a 40 percent cut to end overfishing. Maybe there is only a 30 percent cut required to reach the OFL level, and so, under the phase-in, the council would be allowed to first at least go to the 30 percent cut and then work their way down to the 40 percent cut.

It's even a little bit more complicated, because, as I mentioned, the timeline. The council can take an interim rule that addresses overfishing, and it doesn't necessarily have to go all the way to end it. In that case, they could maybe take an interim rule that did a 20 percent cut. Then, at their two-year window, have to go to at least a 30 percent cut that ends the overfishing. Then they could have a little more time. If you apply this in that sort of manner, you could have a little bit longer window, maybe an additional year, by which you are able to soften the blow to the fishery and give the fishermen more time to adjust to the changes.

MR. HUDSON: That's what I was looking for, because, if we do this standard, and I am not saying if, but when we do this standard, then we're looking at a potential of having that document in front of the SSC in the spring of 2018. Then the management always takes a little while. I don't know how fast they can move this Amendment 45. It's being put on the back burner for the interim rule, correct?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Amendment 45 needs to address tilefish overfishing and have things go into place by December of 2018, and so the council would need to be approving something to address the tilefish situation by June or September of 2018.

MR. BUFF: I've got a two-part. Number one, how bad was the assessment? That would be something I would like to know. Number two, just for the council, just kind of keep in mind that we have basically made a market for this fish in our location that we have never had, and this has turned into about a year-round market, to be able to put these fish on the plate.

When you take this stuff out of the marketplace, you just don't open it back up and have that market available to put these fish out, and so kind of keep that in mind, and I don't know how you would do this, but, when the imports open too, that kind of messes up your salability of your product, too. If some of those things could be accounted for when you're opening and closing the stuff, but just kind of keep that in mind, that we can go catch them tomorrow and we've got a market for them. We can get rid of some of them, but the market that we had is gone, and so we're having to do elsewhere with the other half of what we've got.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think the marketing and the realities of that is something you guys should respond to the council on, particularly when you're looking at individual FMPs or looking at closures and seasons and things of that nature, because that is really getting at the socioeconomic effects of these regulations, and, as far as how bad the assessment was, that is really kind of a question that is really probably impossible to answer in any clear way, because it's just not that simple.

The challenge that we faced was, in the previous assessment of tilefish, there was a year in there where it estimated extremely high recruitment, and it got a lot of attention through the assessment phase, at the SSC, at the peer review, and it seemed that, no matter how they configured that model, it wanted to put a year of very high recruitment in there, and that tended to drive up the overall recruitment estimates going forward.

Now, in hindsight, getting more years of data into that model and looking back, that signal that came in there that said, hey, really high recruitment has kind of washed out, and it isn't coming up in that particular cohort as such a high-recruitment event. The overall average recruitment has gone back to kind of what it was before that assessment, and so that has brought down the overall productivity of the population as well.

Again, like I said, it gets at this idea of how we estimate recruitment and the difficulty. Tilefish, in particular, for you guys that have heard some of the discussions about that, is extremely challenging, because we don't have a juvenile index, and these fish really don't recruit to the fishery until they're about age-six. We actually, if we do an assessment in say -- This one was done in like 2016, with 2015 data, and you're really looking like six years ago before you actually have an actual estimate of recruitment that has a lot of catch data to support it.

That means we are sort of using an average, or a projected, or predicted, amount of recruits, based on how many fish we think are out there, for a number of more years into the future than really is ideal. Having some information on those younger fish, younger than age-six, would really help that situation a lot.

MR. FEX: I have a question. Age-six, how big is that? Age-six sounds like an old fish, for me, but I don't know. That's just for my clarification.

MR. CARMICHAEL: That's kind of the average size that they catch in the fishery, and so however big, weight or pounds, they're getting them in.

MR. FEX: Okay. I just wondered, for me to know.

MR. J. FREEMAN: We had one trip this year, and our average size was thirty-two pounds, and so someone needs to -- That's for the trip, and that was 1,800 pounds for the trip, and that's what we averaged. It depends, and this is what we tried to say the whole time. We don't target the small fish. We try not to. They are less money. That's the upcoming stock, and they tend to stay in shallower water. We fish out in the deeper water, going after the larger fish. That's how we do the fishery.

With this, I would urge the council to -- If we have until December of 2018, let's not rush and whack the quota down if we have an assessment that's on the plate for the end of this year. I mean, let's try to get this worked back up and have it done using the new model and see how this turns out before we hit it with it and now we roll into the beginning of 2018 with possibly half our quota gone, and that's what I would hope for.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I will say the council certainly is by no means rushing into this. This assessment was given to the SSC a year ago, and the council came back with some questions and has some more scenarios done. They had additional runs done, and so, basically, the council received this in June, and, as I said, they didn't get the letter from the agency on the status until December, and so it's actually been quite a bit of time that has gone on.

As for the assessment, we don't know whether or not we will get the assessment or not. There is some uncertainty as to whether or not what we will get, in terms of being able to get a new assessment, but, as I said, at the Steering Committee on May 5, we're going to have a discussion about that, and we will know better then, and that will certainly, I think, affect how the council then perceives its timeline and what it needs to do to deal with this. They certainly have asked for the assessment, and so they would like to have some updated information before they go in and cut this quota.

MR. HULL: Mr. Carmichael, wouldn't it be a way to obtain some of this data on recruitment that you're lacking, not only just for golden tilefish, but for all the other stocks, is to tie into what we're trying to go through now with citizen science to help provide this data, to do cooperative sampling with industry, because we have talked about this, as far as tilefish.

These guys could set inshore, where these recruits live, and provide the data. You could do it cooperatively with industry and get some of this data that you need, not only for tile, but for other animals, and so that's what I would say, is to the direction that the council is trying to go, the citizen science, and also cooperative research and data collection. Those are the decisions that I think that should be made to help fill in this data. It could be done economically, and you could involve the industry, and you get buy-in from everybody.

You could answer some of these questions, and we could have more accurate science that we can make better management decisions on, rather than the estimates and assumptions of recruitment that came out of this, where you had this giant spike and knee-jerk reactions to do this and that and the other, but I think the future is definitely with cooperative research and data collection.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We certainly agree with that, yes. It seems like one of the challenges is getting the people who are out there and able to encounter these fish tied up with the scientists and the researchers and the university folks or whatever who can put together a cooperative research project, because, as you know from the citizen science, we're hoping to start bringing people together in a way and really get more out of programs like that by trying to make the connections with folks. That is the long-term plan.

DR. KELLISON: Just on this particular issue, I had a number of very detailed conversations with Captain Joshua McCoy. He feels very strongly about the assessment, and he would be very interested in being involved in cooperative research, and I think the same -- I know Captain Jim, beside me, has been involved. He worked on the longline S-K project last year, and I'm sure would be enthusiastic about participating in that.

I haven't been involved in the golden assessment, but, after some conversations with Captain Joshua, I went and talked with Genny Nesslage, who led the assessment, just to try to get a better idea of data needs, and her assessment was really that the biggest bang for the buck would have been additional commercial sampling, and so it wasn't something necessarily that a research project would pursue, but I guess my comment is that some of those communications haven't been happening, like between the scientists and the fishers, and I guess I will take it upon myself to follow back up with some of the assessment people and see if there is some other things that we could tackle, because I agree that it would be ripe for some research projects, for some directed sampling in shallow versus deeper waters, getting the full range of the ages and that kind of thing, and so we will continue to have those conversations. Thank you.

MR. BUFF: If we knew what you guys wanted, as a fish house, I would cut every ear bone out of every fish we've got if I had somebody to show us how to do it and where you wanted it sent, if it would help get that stuff to you guys and it would make a difference, but, just like this tilefish. As this stuff has evolved, this a huge driver in our business now.

It's a big deal, and, on Sunday, I sit and load a lot of this stuff in the computer for the trip tickets, and, on the golden tile, most of that stuff is large and jumbo size that goes into the computer, and so I don't know where we get the six pounds at, but I am kind of like with Jimmy here. They're bigger fish, or what we're catching is anyway. If we knew what we needed to get you guys, I would make that happen, but I don't know. I can't do what I don't know, and so, if there's stuff that we could do as a fish house, I would be more than glad.

MR. FEX: I want to make a comment on that. There is a NOAA official, and I think his name is Scott, that comes around and does his TIP sampling, and that is one thing that was concerning me, because that was a big fishery up our way, was golden tile, and now it's mainly prosecuted in Florida.

That is said, because the scientists don't see all them TIP samples from Cape Fear all the way down, and so I think they are missing -- It's no offense to them, because we weren't targeting that fish for a while. Now, as you see, as he has just spoken on, they are targeting them, and we do have a big fishery up there. When I was in high school, when I graduated, I did longline out there, and we caught a hundred boxes of fish, and I didn't like doing that job. The fishery was there. We

eliminated it for a long, long time, and I think the samples need to be checked in the state of North Carolina and South Carolina, to really get a true grasp of the stock across the whole region.

MR. BUFF: Kind of like what Jimmy said, I would just like for them to make a real true -- We need to know 100 percent on what we're doing before we just jerk this fish out of the marketplace, because it's hard, as we evolve and try to keep our doors open, that you take that quota, and there is another 50,000 or 75,000 pounds that we're not getting, and I don't know what these guys are doing, Kerry or Jimmy, what you guys are doing at your place, but we've actually had to start packing shrimp boats this year just to be able to pay our bills.

As it evolves, we have to do what we have to do to be able to pay the rent, and I just wish that, and this is back to the data collection. If we can play any part in that, I am 100 percent for it, and I can make it happen at my place, but, if we don't know, we can't get that, and before we just go slashing stuff just because of one little spot that's in that that we don't know why it's there -- If we don't know why it's there, why are we cutting the quota in half, just because it was there? That's kind of the part that I am getting at.

It's not that you guys are doing a bad job. I think what I said yesterday was took out of context. I think that the data that you're given sometimes is misleading, and you only have what you've got to put in there, and so that's what you've got, but I think we could do a better job, as a whole, collecting this data, and everybody putting the effort in for it. At my place, and I'm sure Jimmy or these guys would do the same thing, but, if we knew what to collect and where you wanted it sent and how you wanted it got, we can make that happen, on a weekly basis.

MR. FEX: Back again to your point. I would call that observer. You've got Anne, and you've got Scott, and he's a NOAA official, but, when those golden tile come in, you ought to call them and say, hey, come sample them. That's how you're going to get them samples into the --

MR. BUFF: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. FEX: I understand that's what is happening. I used to invite them all the time. I would call them whenever, and so don't ignore them. Invite them.

DR. DUVAL: You can also call our staff, because we do sampling of the snapper grouper boats as well, and I know you know that, and so don't hesitate to call Anne Markwith or McClain Seward to come down and get those samples. I totally agree with if you guys knew in advance what some of those data gaps were that you could help fill them in, in terms of different size classes of fish. I think that is a little bit of the challenge that we face with the SEDAR assessment schedule, because it seems like there is always something in triage that needs to be shifted around here or there.

The more we shift that schedule around, the more that squeezes the ability of the folks like at the Beaufort Lab who are doing all the ageing of those fish to actually get that done, and so, when we -- If we can keep an assessment schedule, and this is something that I have talked to some of the scientists about, in terms of those data needs, and I have mentioned at the SSC level that, if we can have a sense of where some of those gaps are -- Do we need small fish or do we need gutted versus ungutted weight conversions?

If we can put that word out there a couple of years ahead of time, that's something that you guys can do, in terms of bringing in -- Please collect ten fish from every trip that are representative of a full size range, so that we can get gutted to ungutted weight conversions and we can survey those small fish. I know that Josh is well able to go out and target small fish, shallower inshore, but that's not what the market needs.

The other point that I was just going to make is that the council doesn't just whack an ACL because we want to whack an ACL. At some point, if we get a letter that says overfishing is occurring and that, as John has explained, we have to end overfishing and we have to reduce an annual catch limit to get at least to that overfishing level, if not below, our hands are pretty much tied, and, believe me, we are very sensitive to what that does to the markets, but the more information that you can give us on exactly what those economic impacts are going to be, the better we're going to be able to account for that. That could potentially help soften the blow, but we're not sitting around just whacking ACLs because we want to. It's because we are in a situation where the law requires it.

MR. BUFF: I don't think that you guys just sit around and want to whack the ACLs, and so I don't know where that came from, and I with you. I understand the whole process, but my point was that you're not 100 percent confident of why that was there and what is driving it, and so we can't be 100 percent confident that there's an issue. That was kind of my point.

On the information, if we had something that you wanted, like length and size and how many of them, just something simple that the guys could do while they're unloading the boats, I am all for it. We've got a few people there that can provide this stuff, and we can do it on every boat. If we don't know, we can't help. That's kind of my point, and I understand the guys that do the ear bones. I understand all of that, but, a lot of times, they can't come, because they're obligated to be somewhere else. I was just making a comment that, if we knew what we could supply, even something as simple as size and weight and length, we are here to do it, but, if we don't have no guidance, we don't know what to do.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It is fisheries, and so we'll never be 100 percent sure of everything, but we do try to take the totality of the information and try to figure out what the real facts are and how well we know it, and that's the uncertainty issues within the control rule. I think what you're seeing here is a lot of things talked about this week are coming together, and you are seeing how the rubber hits the road in all of these different issues.

Rusty mentioned about challenges in the region for many years of getting adequate sampling and monitoring and everything, and we see it. They're saying we could have used more commercial samples or we could have used more otoliths or we could just a juvenile survey, and that's a common thread in all of our assessments, for the most part.

Ben mentioned the difficulties in getting a handle on how much sampling is going on and what really is needed in real time, and he has mentioned the citizen science. We see the citizen science as a way of getting you guys more involved in doing this kind of stuff, and that's also going to involve some training.

If people just start randomly collecting data, or collecting data without proper training, then you're going to get into an issue that maybe those data aren't going to be able to be used in assessments,

because they weren't collected properly, or maybe a guy in Florida collected his data differently than a guy in North Carolina. If those go into a stock assessment and that stock assessment leads to reductions, then every piece of that assessment is going to be scrutinized and gone through with a fine-tooth comb. When you start finding sampling differences, suddenly that will be pointed to as the reasons, perhaps, of why this is causing a reduction in the fishery.

Those standards apply, whether it's scientists collecting the data or it's going to be fishermen collecting the data. There is extremely high standards to make sure that the data are fair and objective and unbiased, and one of the main things of our Citizen Science Program is trying to take advantage of fishermen being able to collect the data, but making sure that you're aware of those standards and you understand their importance and you will go through the training and whatnot that's necessary to collect the data so that we can use data, whether it comes from the Florida Keys or a fish house in Cape Hatteras, that we can use that data and the analysts can use that with confidence, and it will stand up to the scrutiny that's inevitable when there is a fishery reduction.

I just feel like this has really brought together things that you guys have been talking about here this whole time, and you can see how all these things are kind of really related, and they really converge when you have a situation like this, where the council is forced with making an adjustment in the quota that is not in the direction that everybody would like it to go.

MR. BUFF: This is kind of my point. Until somebody shows us and trains us what they want, we just kick the can again, and that's kind of what I'm getting at. If somebody would spend the time to show us what they want and train us in how to collect it, there is plenty of people here that would do that. Until we start that process, we're just kicking the can again until the next meeting, and that is kind of -- I think the can has been kicked long enough.

MR. FEX: Yes, but you personally can't collect data and give it to them, but you can invite them in and say here is my fish and weed through them and pick out the right ones. That's how they have to do it. It's a random sample.

DR. COLLIER: If you want to get the whole sample, I don't see why 100 percent coverage wouldn't be great, and talk to McClain or Anne, and they can train you how to take otoliths out of golden tilefish. It's very easy. All you need is a chisel and some time. They are big otoliths, and so they would be happy to train you.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more questions? All right. Thank you, John. Next is Mike Errigo, I believe.

MS. BROUWER: We only have fifteen minutes.

MR. FEX: Do you want to do it?

MS. BROUWER: I don't know. That's up to you. We can skip this item or --

MR. FEX: All right. We've only got fifteen more minutes, and we've got skip this item. Sorry, Mike. We've got to elect somebody else, and so let's go ahead and elect some vice chairs and chairs. Let's get that done, so we're not having to be forced out of here because of that, and so I apologize.

DR. ERRIGO: If anybody is interested in seeing the reporting app or anything like that, you can just come and talk to me after you guys break. I have it on my tablet here, and I can show it to you, what it looks like and the kind of information that is being collected.

MR. FEX: All right. I was going to say, is there any other business? If there is anybody trying to send motions up at the end -- If not, we can knock the election out and then go right to Mike, so we can get this done. Go ahead, Robert.

MR. JOHNSON: I just wanted to nominate somebody.

MR. FEX: Go right ahead.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. **I think it's appropriate that David Moss would move up to the chairmanship. Then I would like to nominate Jimmy Hull as the Vice Chair.**

MR. HUDSON: I would like to second that.

MR. FEX: Second by Rusty. **Seeing that, all those in favor, please raise your hand. It's a unanimous decision.**

MR. SNYDER: I think real winner in this meeting, the last day-and-a-half, that I haven't seen earlier was the consumer, the end consumer. I think specifically Kerry and Scott and Manny had some great ideas that I think nearly everybody, in every decision, supported, and that's getting fish on the plate, hopefully more availability year-round.

I know that you guys are going to gain loyalty from restaurants, from grocery stores, from retailers, when that fish is there more often. You will get a better price, because you will have that loyalty. You will certainly give restaurants and grocery stores a competitive advantage when they have local fish more often, and so when the council follows you all's ideas, I think the consumers are going to win.

MR. HUDSON: We're on Other Business, right? Okay. Yesterday, I brought up about the 5 percent allocation of the wreckfish to the recreational. I would like a review of the landings stream from the recreational with regards to wreckfish and then have that available to the council for the June meeting, so the council can make a decision as to adjusting that to something realistic, as opposed to what is being unused. Thank you.

MR. FEX: Could you consolidate that request a little bit for Myra? That might be easier. She was trying to keep up, and I know I couldn't.

MR. HUDSON: The 5 percent of the ACL, the overall ACL, that was allocated to the recreational, I personally don't believe there has been many, or any, wreckfish landed since that decision was made, and I believe that it should be not 5 percent. It should be something lower, until what time they're going to be willing to fish in 2,000, the water on the bottom, as a recreational.

MR. FEX: All right. Thank you. Is that a motion?

MS. BROUWER: It's a request.

MR. FEX: All right. We're just going to send that forward as a request. All right. Any more other business? Go ahead, Jim.

MR. J. FREEMAN: Going back to yesterday, as far as the wreckfish, there are some things that are taking place with this council that I don't have a whole lot of confidence in. At the last meeting, on a Friday afternoon, and I have the minutes here, and there was a conversation that was taking place from Chris Conklin to Gregg Waugh about the -- I will read it, if you don't mind. It's very short.

Chris Conklin said, when are we looking at revisiting the wreckfish ITQ program? We were talking about this earlier, and is that not coming up soon? Then Mr. Waugh said this is an item that is on a work plan, is to evaluate the program. We will have to take a look at the scheduling and bring it back to you in June, to see if we'll be circling back to that, but there will be some staff discussions between our staff and the Regional Office staff about who can do what and to begin the work of looking at that program.

Then Mr. Conklin said, to that point, what I get out of the white paper that Jessica is working on is a way to eliminate ownership slowly or actually quickly too, ways to do that and ways to -- I could see some merit in the South Atlantic. If we're going to revisit wreckfish ITQ, which I think is owned by two or three people, and they're not willing to share or lease some fish back to the table for other fishermen to use, it would certainly be a good idea. This is not a Gulf idea, but this is an agency idea that could be applied to any type of fishery, and so, coming from a commercial fishing standpoint, we could get wreckfish leased back out or redistributed somehow. It would certainly benefit a lot of the stakeholders that have concerns.

I have an issue with this. I don't have enough quota to fish for the year. I lease all of Scott's quota, and John Paulson, Kings Seafood, leases 90 percent of Pete Boehm's quota. Paul Reese still has some quota, and he is charging twice as much as everybody else, and so we try not to go that avenue.

You took 90 percent from me to begin with. We paid for an assessment, and now it looks like -- Because my confidence level isn't really there in this possible assessment here in 2019, if it could get to it, and it looks like I'm going to be paying for another one. I've got some problems. I have really, really got some problems.

We were told in the beginning, when all this started, that this is yours. This is your family's, and this is your children's, and your children's children. This is yours from now on. You have already eliminated -- I would have to pull the paperwork of how many people were eliminated out of it. Then we went to a use-it-or-lose-it, and then you took 90 percent, and now, because somebody may not have gotten into it -- We've been into it since the 1980s. Somebody maybe didn't get into it in time. I missed out on the sea bass pots, and Robert missed out on the sea bass pots. If you want to get in on sea bass pots and you missed it, buy in. It's not too expensive. It's \$400,000 or \$500,000 should get you into it. I've got issues with this. Just because somebody didn't get into it and somebody missed it, don't start whining and crying to me. I paid the way for all of this, and so thank you for your time.

MR. FEX: Was there -- Did you want to make a motion? I didn't understand. Do you not want to eliminate the ITQ on the wreckfish? There was a point to what you were trying to say, and I want to make sure it's caught on the record. That way, if I have to make a motion or bring it to the council, at least I know what you wanted me to say.

MR. J. FREEMAN: It's not necessarily making a motion, but I wanted to bring it to the attention of the AP that there are council members that are wanting to step in place, because they don't have a share in it, and they are wanting something handed to them for free and reallocated to them.

MR. FEX: I understand, but, if you make it in a motion, it will probably have a lot more teeth, and so I would ask you.

MR. J. FREEMAN: **I would like to make a motion to bring to the AP or the council's awareness about this reallocation possibility. I am not for reallocating any of this. I am totally, 100 percent, against it.**

MR. BOWEN: I just wanted to kind of rebuttal that a little bit. I would urge you and encourage you to call Chris. It is of my belief that Chris does not want any of your allocation. Chris is a strong and huge supporter of IFQ programs. I think what you read there -- Yes, it was the minutes, but I think you failed to read what led up to that conversation. There was some debate/discussion at that Friday afternoon of that council meeting, and I was involved in it, but I would encourage you to talk to Chris and work it out, because I can tell you that, at no time, do I think that Chris wants any of your wreckfish allocation. To my knowledge, and the Chair and Vice Chair are both here, and maybe they can touch on this as well, but I have heard no discussion, at the table or away from the table, of reallocation of your wreckfish.

MR. J. FREEMAN: Also, to that, in those minutes, he stated that Florida does not want to lease or is not willing to -- He stated that there was only three, and there are six people involved in it. For him to make a statement that Florida people don't want to lease anything, maybe he should contact us. My phone has never rang one time about asking about my lease. John Paulson's phone has never rang one time asking about leasing his permits or ITQ, and so, if he wants to start talking that, maybe he should come talk to us first.

MR. BOWEN: Again, I would just encourage you to call Chris and talk to him. He's easy to talk to. Really, discuss it with him, and I will mention it to him this afternoon. He's coming in for the meeting later, but I will mention it to him, and maybe he will reach out to you. I will encourage that to him as well.

DR. DUVAL: Just to make this brief, Jim, the review of the wreckfish ITQ program, and I know I've had some email conversation back and forth with your son about this, but it is a statutorily-mandated thing that every LAPP program has to undergo a review, and so there is the review itself. Your concerns are certainly heard, by me and others here, in terms of reallocation of that resource, but the review does have to happen, and it has to happen within a certain timeframe.

We do have concerns about potential impacts of that review to the program, I think specifically with cost recovery and things like that. We have -- I think the council was just as frustrated by the changes in the 2006 reauthorization that caused such disruption to that program as the fishermen were, and we are just as frustrated by how the requirement to have an ACL for every managed

stock impacted the wreckfish ITQ program, and I think went back to the SSC multiple times asking for is there not some other, better, more informative means that could be used to establish an ACL.

I am sorry that you guys had to spend the money that you did for a third-party assessment, and so I just want to assure you that I am aware. I think other council members are aware of the disruption to that program because of the reauthorization. We hear your concerns about the review of the program and the potential impacts there.

I think the other thing I would say, in terms of an assessment, is that the ACLs that are currently in place will remain in place after 2019, and so it's not that things are going to go back down to the 225,000-pound level or whatever it was before then, and so I know that doesn't solve your problem, but I just wanted to make you aware of that and let you know that your concerns are heard. Thanks.

MR. FEX: I think you made a point that one guy was trying to lease the shares for way too much and nobody wanted to lease them, and that might have been the cause of the problem, looking for allocation because they're not using it because of that problem that the ITQ problem is. There is no lease cap value.

MR. JOHNSON: Do we need a second on this motion?

MR. FEX: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: I will second it.

MR. FEX: All right. Is there further discussion on the motion?

MS. MARHEFKA: Just a quick thing. I don't know if you want this, but one of the things that may be worth considering is there was a time that the council had a separate Wreckfish Advisory Panel, and I know that it's been necessary and not necessary at certain times, but I hate that this topic gets relegated to the final couple of minutes of a meeting. It's really important.

The fishery, as a dealer, has become important to me, and so there are more people involved than back in the day, when it was like Paul and Sammy and you, and so maybe something that we may ask, along with this motion, if you want it, would be to have the council sort of reinstate or do an Ad Hoc Wreckfish Advisory Panel, so you all can really talk about it, but you may not want that. It's much more up to you than it would be to me.

MR. J. FREEMAN: We would be willing to do that, anything we can do to try to help this process out, and that's how we've always been, from the whole standpoint, and it just seems like -- I would be willing to do that, yes.

MR. FEX: All right. Any more discussion? **All those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand. The motion passes unanimously with one abstention. There was two abstentions.**

All right. Is there any more other business to come before the AP? Seeing none, I think we will finish up. Thank you for your time.

MR. MOSS: Just real quick, I am sure that a lot of you know that Kenny is actually terming out as well, and so I wanted to publicly say thank you for your service and your term here, and I'm sure that we all appreciate it. (Applause)

MR. FEX: Thank you, all.

DR. DUVAL: If I could thank you all for all of your work, hard work, this past week. Kenny, amazing job as Chair this week. You guys had a lot of stuff on your plate, and a lot of difficult issues, and you handled those really well. You have left some big shoes for your upcoming Chairman to fill, but I'm sure he is more than up to the task, and I just want you guys to know how much we value your participation in the process, and I know there is always a bit of tension between the council and the advisory panel, and sometimes that's a good thing. When we all think alike, nobody thinks, right? I think it's a valuable exchange of information, and so I just wanted to express my appreciation and gratitude on behalf of the council. Thank you. Back to you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks.

MS. BROUWER: Just one more thing. Just a heads-up to save the date for October 11 through 13 for our fall meeting.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned on April 19, 2017.)

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

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