

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL

**Crowne Plaza Hotel
North Charleston, SC**

November 8-9, 2017

Summary Minutes

Snapper Grouper AP Members

David Moss
Jim Attack
Dick Brame
Jack Cox
Richard Gomez
Deidra Jeffcoat
Robert Lorenz
Jim Moring
Kerry O'Malley-Marhefka
David Snyder

Jimmy Hull
Vincent Bonura
Scott Buff
Robert Freeman
Rusty Hudson
Robert Johnson
Gary Manigault Sr.
Red Munden
Andy Piland
Dr. Todd Kellison

Council Members

Charlie Phillips
Dr. Michelle Duval

Mark Brown
Jessica McCawley

Council Staff

Gregg Waugh
Myra Brouwer
Dr. Chip Collier
Kathleen Howington
Cameron Rhodes
Christina Wiegand

Dr. Brian Cheuvront
Kimberly Cole
John Hadley
Kim Iverson
Amber Von Harten
Julia Byrd

Observers/Participants

Walter Bubley

Dean Foster

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Crowne Plaza, North Charleston, South Carolina, November 8, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman David Moss.

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

MR. HULL: Jimmy Hull, Hull Seafood, Ormond Beach, Florida.

MR. GOMEZ: Richard Gomez, charter boat owner, Key West, Florida.

MR. BONURA: Vincent Bonura, Goin' Off Enterprises, Inc.

MR. ATACK: Jim Atack, Oak Island, North Carolina, charter and scuba diver.

MR. MUNDEN: Red Munden, Morehead City, North Carolina, retired North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, marine biologist.

MR. COX: Jack Cox, commercial, Morehead City, North Carolina, Blue Ocean Market.

MR. SNYDER: Dave Snyder, St. Simons Island, Georgia, restaurant owner.

DR. KELLISON: Todd Kellison, NOAA Fisheries, and I'm up at the Beaufort, North Carolina Lab, and a reminder that I'm a non-voting member of the panel.

MS. MARHEFKA: Kerry Marhefka, seafood dealer, Charleston, South Carolina.

MR. PILAND: Andy Piland, charter, Hatteras, North Carolina.

MR. MOSS: Okay. The next thing we would like to do is the Approval of the Agenda, and we have a change. We're just going to move -- I know the Outreach Director needs to go today. She's not going to be able to be here tomorrow, and so we're going to move things around and try to fit that after probably Item 3, I think, and so, if you're following along at home. That will be the Outreach Update. She was going to do it tomorrow, but we'll squeeze it in today. If nobody else has any comment there, we'll go ahead and approve the agenda. Then the next move is to approve the minutes from the last meeting.

MS. MARHEFKA: I will make a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Kerry. I don't think we need a motion, if we're good and nobody has changes.

MR. MOSS: Okay. Then the minutes from the last meeting are approved. The next order of business is we were asked if we could open the floor real quick for any kind of public comment that wanted to be added to the agenda from anybody that is out here, and so we'll just give a minute or two for anybody in the audience that wanted to put anything out here. Seeing none, we'll just move on. Then we'll go right into Item Number 1.

MS. BROUWER: Good morning, everybody, and welcome. As David said, we've got a few new AP members. Unfortunately, one of them looks like he's not here yet, but we had five new AP members this go-round, and so I will try to give you all a little bit of an orientation, or at least slow down when you're confused and not use too many acronyms, if I can help it, but certainly if the new AP members have questions, and for everybody, just feel free to stop me as I go along.

The first thing that I wanted to do is to just give you a status of where we are with some of these amendments that have been recently submitted. I like to do that at the beginning of every AP meeting, so that everybody remembers where we are.

Recall Amendment 41, and that's the one that deals with mutton snapper. We worked on that, and you guys saw that last year, and it was submitted to the Secretary back in February, but, because of all the changes up in Washington, it's kind of been a little bit slow, and so the proposed rule for that amendment just published, and the comment period goes through the end of this month, and so the regulations that -- This is the amendment that's going to change the trip limit for mutton snapper, and it's going to revise the annual catch limit and revise the minimum size limit, and so those changes are likely going to happen in 2018. By the time this thing gets implemented, it will be next year.

For golden tilefish, I wanted to give you an update on that. This is an amendment that was put together at the request of the council. They made the request in June of last year, and they submitted a request to National Marine Fisheries Service to implement an annual catch limit for golden tilefish to reduce overfishing.

The council received a letter from the agency stating that golden tilefish, according to the latest assessment, is undergoing overfishing. When that happens, the council needs to take action to reduce overfishing until they can come up with a more permanent approach, and so that's what happened with golden tile.

The council requested that the ACL, the annual catch limit, for 2018 be set at 323,000 pounds, and so, in your overview, it gives you a little bit more of a background of why that is, but that emergency or interim rule, I guess, is in the process of being implemented, and so that new catch limit is going to be in place at the start of the fishing season in 2018, and so those folks that have the longline endorsements are going to see a reduced catch level. The council hasn't yet said whether they're considering any other changes to management measures. They are going to talk about this when they meet in December. Any questions so far? Okay.

Red snapper, as we all know, that emergency rule has been implemented. There was a mini-season that happened this past weekend, and there's going to be another one for the recreational sector happening this coming weekend. The commercial sector is currently open, and Amendment 43 is the amendment that would implement the ACL for 2018, and that one is undergoing final review internally, and it's going to be submitted sometime before the December meeting.

That's where we are on things that the council has done recently on snapper grouper, and they're also going to be talking about red grouper in December, and we'll talk a little bit more about that when we get to the updates portion. We're going to get an update on all the stock assessments that are underway and the ones that have been recently completed and the ones that are coming up next year towards the end of the meeting. Any questions? Okay.

If the Chair is okay, we will proceed on to Item 2, which is going to be Attachment 1 in your briefing book. This is an amendment that the council has been working on for quite some time. Some of you recall the council went through a visioning process that started back in 2015, I believe, and we had a series of workshops where we obtained stakeholder input to get a little bit more direction.

The council wanted to know, from stakeholders, how do you want the fishery to be managed, how do you envision things changing, and so that gave birth to these two amendments, the Vision Blueprint Snapper Grouper Amendments 26 and 27. This one, 26, is for the recreational sector, and 27 has management measures that would affect the commercial sector.

The attachment in your briefing book is different than what I'm going to show you, and it's been really challenging, because, as you know, the council meeting in September had to be postponed because of the hurricane, which shortened the time that we had to make changes that the council directed us to make and then consult with our partners in the region and have these documents prepared for this meeting and for the council meeting, and so, because of that, the document that you have in your briefing book is a little bit different than this one, because this one contains some changes that are being recommended by the team, the interdisciplinary planning team, or IPT for short, which is the team of council staff and NMFS staff that get together and help the council put these documents together.

What I am going to show you today is a little bit different, and I will try to point out the differences, but it mainly is just wording things. Sometimes we have to be very careful about the language that we use in the various alternatives and all that sort of thing.

In June, the amendment contained the actions that you see here on your screen. The council is looking at modifying the composition of the recreational aggregates and then tweaking the bag limits for those aggregates, and they also wanted to address bycatch mortality of deepwater species by specifying some gear restrictions, possibly requiring just single-hook rigs for those species, and looking at having recreational seasons.

They talked about modifying the prohibition on shallow-water groupers, and that's been in place since 2009 for the recreational sector, and taking away the minimum size limits that are still in place for some deepwater species, and the rationale there is there is very high release mortality for these species, and so you don't really need to have a minimum size limit. There is only three of them that still have it.

They looked at potentially reducing the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass and then doing the same thing for gray triggerfish, and I will give you a little bit more background on that, and then they also added an action, back in June, to remove the prohibition on the use of powerheads in the EEZ off of South Carolina.

In September, we presented to the council a different kind of an approach for how to structure the amendment, to try to provide a little bit more clarity to their vision, and so we took those actions and kind of rearranged them in a way that made a little bit more sense from the standpoint of how the fishery is current prosecuted, how it actually happens, and so this is what we proposed. We said, okay, let's first modify the composition of these recreational aggregates, with the idea of

ending up with three groupings, one for deepwater species, one for shallow-water groupers, and then another aggregate for the other shallow-water species.

Then you would have an action to address management measures for each of those groupings, and so, if you want to put in a season for deepwater species or a bag limit or remove size limits and then do your gear restrictions under that action, and we provided some information, like you see here, of the total ACL for our species that are considered deepwater is about 150,000 pounds, more or less. There are some species where the ACL, annual catch limit, is specified in numbers of fish, and so it was just basically to give the council an idea of this is what you have to work with.

We did the same thing for the shallow-water groupers. We noted that the total annual catch limit for that grouping is just a little over a million pounds, and so this is what we're talking about trying to manage. Then, for the other shallow-water species, this is where we can be a little bit more liberal, in terms of the bag limits. You're looking at a little over seven-million pounds that are available for the recreational sector for that grouping.

Then, of course, we had this kind of outlier of an action to remove the prohibition on powerheads. We said to consider this approach, and this is going to sort of build on kind of game management concepts that were popular among stakeholders when we were out there sort of explaining to them and getting input from them as far as the vision for the fishery, and, like I said earlier, it would reflect how the fishery currently operates, and it would simplify things a little bit and reduce the number of actions in the amendment.

The council said okay, and they approved us going forward with this alternative approach, and they told us let's modify the amendment accordingly, and so what I am going to present to you is a result of the discussions that the council had in September and the guidance that came out of that. We also told them, if we go ahead and change things that way, then this is going to push the timeline for developing this amendment, and they said okay, and so then they approved a modified timeline, and so we're looking at spending most of next year putting this together, with the intent to submit it for formal review in September.

We always have a purpose and need statement for completion, and I am showing you here the motion that the council approved, and this one is a little tricky, because they want to include a lot of things that came out of the visioning process. They want to talk about predictability of seasons and stabilizing recreational access and simplifying regulations, and so they gave us like all these different components that they wanted to include in the purpose and need, and so we're going to be talking about that with them in December. We put together a draft purpose and need for them to consider.

Another thing that happened in September is we pointed out to them that one of the species that is currently in the deepwater complex, sand tilefish, is in fact a shallow-water species. They're not caught in deep water. It is a tilefish, but it is a shallow-water fish, and they said, okay, then let's include an action in this amendment to officially remove sand tilefish from the complex that it's in and put it somewhere else, and so we said, okay, if we do that, then it's going to change things a little bit, because we're going to have to adjust the annual catch limit for that complex, and so it's not that easy as to just pluck it out of there and put it somewhere else. You're going to have to adjust the ACL, which there may be some allocation adjustments that need to happen and so on and so forth.

We are going to bring this back to them in December, and this is the action to remove sand tilefish from the deepwater complex and then revise all the different limits. However, here is the numbers. The ACL for the deepwater complex is around 130,000 pounds. Then you have your recreational ACL, your commercial ACL, which is -- They are very small numbers. Your recreational ACL for this one, for sand tilefish, is just over 6,000 pounds.

The team, the IPT, is going to recommend to the council that they consider possibly putting this action elsewhere, because it doesn't really quite meet their stated purpose and need, and it is going to complicate things, and not just for this amendment, but, if you take a species out of a complex and you adjust the annual catch limit, you have to do the same thing for the other sector, and so then we would have to go to the commercial amendment and include an action in there to take sand tilefish out and adjust the commercial ACL. Again, this is mainly just to keep you guys informed of where we are.

As I go through this document, I have a little placeholder there in case AP members have any kind of comments or recommendations that you would like to pass along to the council. I should say that, since you've seen this amendment and since we've sort of taken another fresh look at how this is going to proceed, there is going to be a better opportunity in April, when you guys get back together, to give the council recommendations, once I can show you some analysis.

Right now, I don't have a lot in the way of numbers that you guys can use to give the council more informed recommendations, and so that's where we are. On the commercial side, I'm going to have a little bit more to show you, but, on this one, I'm thinking, unless you have some very strong wishes to pass along to the council, there's probably not going to be a whole lot of room for you to recommend, because I don't have a lot of background information for you.

MR. HULL: The IPT input says this action does not meet the purpose and need of the amendment and the objectives of the vision blueprint and it entails revising the ACLs for two complexes, as you stated, and you were talking about 6,000 pounds, and so it's kind of like they're saying is it worth doing this, for all the effort and changes, or that's what I got out of it anyway.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, Jimmy, and there has been, among council members, some discussion about wanting to revise some of the other complexes. The jacks complex comes to mind, and there's been talks about dis-aggregating that complex, to try to have annual catch limits and more targeted management measures for some of the species within the complex.

The problem is, when you start doing that, it's got repercussions, like I said, not only for commercial, but for recreational, and so where we're coming from is saying, okay, if you're going to do those revisions, let's take a comprehensive sort of a look and do all of these tweaks all at once and not just do it one species at a time, and so it's not that we're discouraging the council from taking action to do this, because clearly it's necessary, because it's not correct the way it is now, but it's just the vehicle right now. It just doesn't seem like this is the best spot for them to take that action.

MR. JOHNSON: I just had a quick question, Myra. In South Carolina, they were recommending removing the prohibition of powerheads, and it said for the recreational sector. Is that for the

recreational sector only? Does that mean the commercial sector would still be prohibited? I just need clarification.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you for that, Robert. It would be for both, but, since we have two different amendments, it would be an action that would be included in both, but, since then, they have directed us to remove that action from these two amendments and put it in Amendment 46, which we're going to talk about later in the meeting, and so that's where we are with that.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to Action 2, this is where it gets a little complicated. I put the motions that the council approved in September, to make sure that you had that in front of you to see what their rationale was and what they were thinking when they gave us this direction. There was a lot of talk about possibly creating an aggregate that would maintain all the existing bag limits, but it would put like a twenty-fish aggregate on all snapper grouper species, while retaining individual bag limits within that.

That was one of the motions that was approved, and so, the way that we ended up having to structure this, you will see it deviates a little bit from the approach that we presented to the council in September, because they were interested in seeing how this would look, and so what we did here is -- Here is what is currently in place. We have our snapper aggregate bag limit, with all the snapper species, and that includes some deepwater. These three, queen snapper, blackfin, and silk snapper, are actually deepwater species.

The grouper aggregate, which, as you know, includes all the shallow-water groupers, tilefish, snowy, misty, yellowedge, blueline, and golden, and there is specific bag limits within those. Then we have the aggregate that is for species without bag limits, which includes all the porgies, the jacks, spadefish, gray triggerfish, and so on. The species that we have outside out of the aggregates are your sea bass, b-liners, greater amberjack, red porgy, hogfish, wreckfish, and red snapper. This is what we're going to try to rearrange here.

We created these tables. This is what is not in your current document, and so we figured that we're going to color-code it, and we're going to do whatever we can to try to make this a little bit easier to understand, and so this is what is currently in place that I just showed you. We have an alternative for them to consider that would just remove all the groupings that are in place in the South Atlantic, because that is a reasonable thing to consider if they are looking at making changes to how the aggregates are.

Then we have Alternative 3, which would modify the aggregates to establish these three groupings that we've already talked about, the deepwater species aggregate, the shallow-water grouper aggregate, and the other shallow-water species aggregate, and so we would put some of the snappers over here in the deepwater, and we would take the snowy, or your deepwater groupers, your blueline, golden, and wreckfish, and put them all in an aggregate. It would leave all the shallow-water groupers together in an aggregate, and then everybody else gets put in this other shallow-water species aggregate. That would look like this.

This is what we had in sort of taking their guidance and structuring this alternative approach that we talked about in September, and so the rest of the amendment is sort of structured under the

assumption that this is how they would like to structure these aggregates, but, in order to have a little bit more to analyze, so that they can see other options, we have included other alternatives where you can rearrange things a little bit differently.

In this alternative, you would have some of the snappers here in the shallow-water species aggregate, and you would take some of the deepwater snappers out, and you would leave those outside of the deepwater species aggregate, and this, like I said, is for analysis purposes, and so that's what this one would look like. You are still keeping species that are associated with a certain depth together, but it's just arranged a little bit differently, but, under this alternative, you would still have these deepwater snapper species over here.

Then we have this alternative that would basically just do a deepwater species aggregate and then everybody else, which is another thing the council said they wanted to see, and so this answers to one of their requests, and so we would analyze that for them as well. Then Alternative 6 is the one that responds to the idea of, okay, let's consider just grouping everything together and retaining existing bag limits within it, and so, basically, this would have all the snapper grouper species together in one aggregate.

The reason you see red snapper highlighted through all of these is because we need to get clarification from the council of how they want to approach that. They were not clear whether red snapper would be included or excluded. As you know, it's special, and so we need to figure out what they want to do with that, and another one that you will see highlighted throughout is tomtate, and that is because that is included in the species without a bag limit aggregate, but it doesn't have a bag limit, and so there is no limit on tomtate, and so we need to get clarification of whether what they intend to do is actually specify a bag limit for that species. I am going to pause here and see if there's any questions.

MR. LORENZ: Myra, there was one question that I had when I went through that, and, when I saw the tomtate, I kind of giggled to myself that is that a species really that needs to be managed? I mean, they're so tiny. They're usually just cut up for bait, aren't they?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and that was -- I went back to early in the FMP, and it was included in the aggregate because it is an important species, but the council felt that, because it is mostly used for bait, they didn't need to worry about specifying catch limits for that species, but it's still included in there, and so, if they wanted to make any changes, then they would have to either chuck it out of the management unit or classify it as an ecosystem component species and then provide rationale why that would be.

MR. JOHNSON: Is the purpose of this simplification? I am just trying to wrap my head around why we're doing this, because, I mean, a poor fisherman, he's got bag limits that he's got to keep track of, and then, on top of all that, we're going to throw in an aggregate limit, and then he's going to think, okay, how many of these did I catch and -- I just need somebody to explain to me what the real purpose is here.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, the idea is to simplify, and that is why some council members said let's just -- Instead of retooling all the aggregates and moving things around, let's just put a bag limit on all snapper grouper species and keep what's in place, and that will be a lot simpler than doing all of this reorganizing. Some of the feedback we got back from stakeholders during the visioning

project is that the regulations were too complicated already, and so this is the council's attempt at responding to some of the things that were suggested during the visioning project.

MR. JOHNSON: Right, but it's still not going to do away with the fact that each of these species are going to have individual bag limits. I am just trying to wrap my head around it.

MR. ATTACK: It's kind of hard to wrap your head around this, because it's really not in the briefing book. We can look at just one little table at a time, and it would be nice to have the information, to where you could look at it and compare it side-by-side to really weigh-in on this. Yes, some of these things don't have bag limits at all, and so that's why you've got to have the aggregate. It kind of makes sense, but it would be nice to see it, you could really analyze it, to weigh-in on which is probably the best.

MR. JOHNSON: Was there any suggestions about maybe, for species that do not have bag limits, setting some kind of bag limit for them, say ten or whatever for tomtate, or something along those lines? Was that made?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and I will get to that in the next action. This first action basically was what is in these aggregates, and let's first figure out how we're going to reorganize the aggregates before we start dealing with the actual limits on each of those aggregates, and just to clarify to Jim that this information is in the briefing book. What I did here is just simply add these color-coded tables, but the same information is in the document that was in your briefing book. Like I explained earlier, unfortunately, we just don't have analysis yet, because this directive was given to us about a month ago, or maybe less than that, and so the idea is to have a lot more information for the council to really dig into this at the March meeting.

MR. HULL: Reading here, there's -- Under Action 2, motion to direct staff to add an action to establish a twenty-fish maximum daily recreational bag limit that would maintain all existing individual and aggregate bag limits. On that motion, the only thing that would change is you would establish a twenty-fish maximum for everything, and so, on a private recreational or on a for-hire, no matter what species it is, all mixed up, you're going to have twenty animals and that's it and they're done, and is that correct?

This would establish, under Action 2, one of the motions says to establish a twenty-fish maximum, total maximum, per recreational angler, and so everything would remain the same, except you would have twenty fish out of that mix.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and that was the original suggestion from the council, and that is specified, I believe, under Action 6, because what happened was they approved this particular approach for how we were going to structure the amendment, and then we didn't know how to capture that particular motion that you just talked about, the twenty fish for everything, and so it is included in here, and we'll get to it, but it kind of hard to sort of take a holistic view of what this all would look like going one at a time.

MR. HULL: I agree. My eyes are wide open, and I'm trying to make sure I see it, but it's like -- Just to take an example of a charter boat, a six-passenger charter boat, and so there would be -- They're going to have 120 animals for that paying six passengers, plus the captain and mate, if they can retain their twenty-fish maximum, and so, if you went back -- Like you said, you don't

have any analysis, but, if you went back and took a charter fishing trip off of Ponce Inlet and they're bottom fishing, and so they're going to get their vermilions, and they're going to get -- If you looked at the trip limit for each species that they're going to target, it might come up to look like something like that.

Some charter boat people would have to speak up on that, but, if you got your bass and your vermilion and your triggerfish and your one snapper, it might be about twenty fish when they were done, and then they would have to go trolling or do something different. I don't know, but there's a lot to look at. You don't really want to make it too restrictive, so that your people don't want to go fishing, because, in their minds, they can't catch enough fish to make it worthwhile, which we're already seeing some of that, and so it's just a lot to look at, and that's why the council needs to really take a really hard look at this.

MR. FREEMAN: I see this as another way to reduce the incentive to drive far and pay big money to go fishing. Just last Wednesday, we went out with a party, and they wanted to primarily target triggers. In four hours, we limited out. We moved back inshore, to catch some sea bass and some b-liners, and we met up with more triggerfish, and so you're throwing triggers back, but you're still trying to get some sea bass and stuff, and so that would be a dramatic change in what you're allowed to bring to the dock on a day that they are really biting. Some days, you go out and get twenty triggerfish apiece and you would be tickled to death, but, like I say, in four hours, we had limited out, and we need an alternative species that we could take home, and so I'm very much not in favor of what I hear this developing into.

MR. LORENZ: One thing that would be interesting for me, because I hear what Captain Bobby said, is four fishermen that are out on these partyboats and charter boats, the recreational fishermen, I would love to have a handle on how many do they actually think they really need, and, from personal experience, I had a trip at the end of June with four anglers. We went out, and we caught that buffet of fish, a vermilion here and a pink porgy, and we limited out on sea bass and a bunch of white grunts, and two of us cleaned them for the four guys, and I was sick of doing it by the end of the time. I honestly thought about twenty fish was -- That's about what we got per man, and it was enough for me, and so I just wonder how other people feel, but that's just personal.

MR. MOSS: I actually kind of agree with you, Bob. From a south Florida perspective, especially if you're keeping the individual bag limits on all of these fish, which, for the most part, it appears that we're going to do, if you go out and you get five mutton and then you top that off with five yellowtail and a couple of grouper, to Jimmy's point, times six people, that's a lot of fish.

As much as I hate to put more and more restrictions on it, if you're keeping with the individual bag limits again, at least from a south Florida perspective, you're probably not going to get to your twenty-fish limit anyway, unless you're keeping what we deem as some of the throwback species down by us, which would be little triggers and sand tile and things like that, which most people don't keep, but, for us, if you're keeping individual bag limits of snapper grouper species in south Florida, you're probably not going to reach that twenty-fish limit anyway.

MR. JOHNSON: I have mixed feelings about this, because I do live in an area that has great fishing, and, on any given trip, we're going to catch our limit of vermilion and our limit of red porgies and five mangrove snapper, and I started adding this stuff up, and, before long, we're going to be busting that aggregate bag limit.

We sell an experience, a fishing experience, as a charter boat, but that includes potential. Potentially, the people can catch all these things. Potentially, they can catch a limit of gag grouper. They don't very often, but they come on that boat and they book that trip thinking that, and you're going to take that away with this, in a way, and, I mean, if there's a need -- If everybody is going out there and just loading the boat down and that's why we need this, then I would support it, but am not even sure there's really a need. I don't know how often it comes into play, but anyway.

MS. MARHEFKA: Myra, I assume that what you were telling us earlier is that, after this meeting, you will have time to look at sort of really what the trip level impacts will be, and, in April, we will have answers to a lot of these questions.

MS. BROUWER: Exactly, and what I was going to offer to do, if it's okay with Dave, is to show you guys really quick the presentation that we put together for the council, which has some of this information that you all are wondering about. We did a quick calculation of, if anglers were to go out and catch every single bag limit they can, what does that look like, and so let me -- I am trying to bring that up, and, if it's okay with you, I will quickly run through that.

MR. MOSS: Robert, to your point too, I think that the need isn't so much to put more restrictive bag limits, but I think the need, as I understand it anyway, is to lessen some of the confusion as far as what's in an aggregate and what is not. I am not in favor of any of these particular actions, necessarily, but I think that that's the need, is to, again, from a south Florida perspective, remember what is -- Are yellowtail included in the aggregate, and are mutttons not included in the aggregate, and, again, from a recreational perspective, just to eliminate some of that, if there is confusion, and that's where I see the need. Again, it's not necessarily to put more restrictions on there, but just to say this is the bottom line and that's it.

MR. MANIGAULT: Geographics play a major part within a lot of the aggregates that you're talking about, because, down our way, in the Charleston area, off of our coast, we don't have a lot of certain species available, your mutton snappers and things of that nature, and so I think that twenty fish is sufficient, because we will have to focus more on your black sea bass and your triggerfish and whatever else is available in our particular area. I mean, I'm new at this, but, from the fishing standpoint, I'm not new, and I know what's available in our area within a certain amount of nautical miles up the coast, and I guess you could say eastward, and I think that the twenty that you're talking about is probably appropriate.

MR. ATACK: I agree with the twenty fish is probably appropriate, but I would also like to recommend to not exclude like tomtates and red snapper. If we're trying to simplify this, it's a great time to just leave all them in there. I mean, people aren't going to bust their bag limit with tomtates being in there, but why put an exclusion? If we're rerouting this whole thing and saying, okay, this is what your aggregates are going to be, don't put an exclusion on there. You're kind of propagating what we've already got if we do that.

MR. BROWN: Robert, I actually made this recommendation, and the reason I did is because I was looking at some of the species that were closing early, like when the porgies and the jacks complex recreationally closed in August, and some of these other species that were closing that we don't have assessments on, and I was thinking, well, if we let this keep happening, then that's hurting us too, and so I would rather see the fishery stay open longer, maybe, if we just capitalized

on a twenty-fish bag limit, and, that way, hopefully it would control some of that and allow the season to stay open longer.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mark. To that point though, like the porgy complex, there is not even -- What is the bag limit on jolthead porgies or chocolate porgies or whitebone porgies? There is none. Well, it's twenty fish total. I mean, we're going to live with whatever, but I'm thinking, if we're going to simplify it, then let's do what Jim says. Let's just say twenty fish total, period, because there is no African pompano in this, and there's no cobia in this, and all these other species are not included in this, and so you're still -- Fishermen are still going to have to know what they're catching. Down in our area, we catch a lot of different species of fish, maybe more than other areas.

MR. BROWN: The catch limits are still going to be in place for everything that we have, but it's just that the total amount will be twenty fish per person, so that any of the other fisheries that don't have that catch limit will be included. It will be just twenty fish, but you will still have the one gag or five vermilions or five sea bass or whatever, seven sea bass, and so what I'm saying is it's just twenty. That way, it kind of controls those ones that don't have the bag limit that are closing early.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that, Mark, but, for me, when I look at it, if the only thing that's biting is it's a triggerfish and a sea bass kind of day, and then you're limited to that individual, he's going to have five of this and five of that, and there is nothing else right there biting, and then he's going to either just keep discarding, trying to catch something else or -- I see the positives and the negatives, and that's a big negative for me, is when you see -- You already have a pretty restrictive trip limit, and then you're -- That's assuming that they could hit that whole menu of all different species to arrive to twenty total, but then you may be limiting yourself down to, okay, you're only going to get five of this and five of that, because that's the only thing that's here biting at that time, and so I see that as a problem with this.

MR. BROWN: The way that I'm looking at it too is we're not managing just one area. We're managing four different areas, four different states, and it's like Gary said. The fishery is different in different regions, and so some places you may -- Like Robert said, you're going to catch a lot of triggerfish on one stop or something, but other areas are not going to have that. It's just going to be different, and so I'm trying to figure out a way to manage this across the board for everybody in the four different states.

MR. HUDSON: For a point of clarification, this is a snapper grouper effort, and so anything like cobia is part of the coastal pelagics and dolphin wahoo and any unmanaged stuff, like blackfin tuna or king mackerel or whatever, they don't count in this twenty aggregate, and so thank you.

MS. BROUWER: What I have up on the screen is the presentation that I gave to the council in September showing this alternative approach, and so I will go through this quickly. It does have some information, like I said, on potential amounts of what folks can catch, in terms of poundage, and so here is what I have already explained.

There would be actions for each of the three groupings, with sub-actions for a season, a bag limit, a size limit, if they're interested, and gear restrictions, if they're interested, and so that's how we propose that we structure the approach, and then, as I mentioned already, we explained to them

why we thought this was a good idea. It's a better reflection of how the fishery currently operates, and it builds on a concept that kept coming up during the visioning process.

Again, here is an action that would result in these three groupings that we've already talked about, and then here is where we had these numbers to get them to sort of give them perspective of what amount of fish are we talking about. This is how much you have to divvy out, and so, again, here is how we would structure it with the removal of the size limits for those deepwater species, putting in a single-hook gear requirement, perhaps, for the deepwater species, and the same thing for the shallow-water grouper aggregate. There is currently the season that is May through December, and there would be options for other ones that they could consider for that grouping.

We said, okay, well, given that you do have over a million pounds, but some of these species are not as abundant, and, as you know, we've talked about red grouper, and we've talked about gag, and how the ACLs are nowhere near being met, and so they might want to be conservative in their approach, as far as bag limits, and so we suggested that maybe you would want to look at one or two fish per person.

Then, for the other shallow-water species aggregate, it's a much higher amount, over seven-million pounds, and so here is where you might want to -- You have an option to have a higher bag limit and to not have a season, and so, under the current regulations, the commercial sector, we have the existing trip limits, and then we have the trip-limited commercial permit that allows a vessel to keep 225 pounds. For the recreational, let's say there's an average of six fishermen for the average charter vessel, and so possibly you could have 756 pounds per trip that is possible. For the private recreational, let's say we took an average of four-and-a-half people, and so you're looking at 567 pounds per trip that are possible under the current regulations.

Here is sort of an overview of what it would look like, and then this is where we said that we need to address timing, and then here are just the tables that break down the ACLs and where those numbers are coming from for each of the species. This is what we presented to them, and, like Mark explained, then they started saying, well, there's got to be a better way or a simpler way to approach this, and that's how it all came around, but I put this up there to sort of make sure that you are seeing what they saw when they had these discussions, to sort of put things in perspective, and, again, the discussion document that we're talking about, they have not yet seen this approach.

They have not said that, yes, we like it and let's move on with it, and so I'm simply presenting it to you so that you are aware of where we are in this process and to give you the opportunity to pass on any recommendations that you may have when they get back together in December to hash this out in a bit more detail. I don't know if that helped.

DR. DUVAL: I guess one of the things that makes this a little bit complicated and hard to wrap your head around is that we have species complexes for tracking of annual catch limits, where we have a jacks complex and we have a porgies complex and we have a deepwater complex, and so all the individual ACLs for the species contained in those complexes are just lumped together, and, when that total complex ACL is met, then fishing for all those species is shut down, regardless of how many pounds of each of those individual species is caught.

For the jacks complex, it could be all almaco that shuts it down, and then we also have these aggregate bag limits, which are not at all tied to those species complexes, and so your grouper

aggregate includes all the shallow-water groupers, deepwater groupers, the tilefish, and then there's a bunch of exceptions to all of those things, and so you have a three-grouper aggregate, but, oh, by the way, exceptions a through f to those aggregates, and so, as Myra said, one of the things we heard from visioning is that a lot of this is really complicated for people to wrap their heads around, and so we were trying to think of a way to modify those aggregates and lump them into aggregates that make sense, shallow-water and deepwater and then everything else.

There is a few other options here that Myra has noted for you, but, that way, in setting say bag limits or seasons, we would have as few exceptions as possible with those limits, and then, as Mark has described, for folks who feel like they have wrapped their heads around all of the existing limits, you would just put a cap at twenty fish.

We are somewhat early in this process, but the council did vote to move forward with trying to rearrange things, and so this is the intent. It is really to try to simplify things, but I just wanted to make sure, when you saw that table of the species complexes, those complexes are for tracking of ACLs, different from the aggregates, and so thank you.

MR. GOMEZ: It's an honor to be here, and I'm so happy to have this privilege, but when we're looking at the average on charter boats, the average amount of people, us in the Lower Keys, I would have to say that number would be four and not six, for whatever that's worth.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Richard. Yes, that was just sort of a very rough calculation, to give council members an idea, more or less, of what could be caught, potentially, and not that people are catching that amount of fish. Far from it, but potentially, and how that compares to what the commercial is allowed.

MR. MANIGAULT: I think that's pretty accurate, because, when you look at the licensing that it takes, your charter captains have to have at least a six-pack in order to take at least six people, and so that's a pretty good number across the board to actually look at. To me, it's realistic, and so I just wanted to pass that on, what it might have been based upon.

MR. COX: I was just going to say, on commercial and recreational, any guidance that we can give to the council to make some of these changes as simple as possible is helpful, because I know everywhere, in all the things that we're trying to do, it's just getting so complicated for fishermen to keep up with what's going on, and so, if you guys can think of anything at all -- I am thinking more in terms of commercial, but for the recreational. This looks good though, when you have the shallow-water and deepwater complexes, to help simplify it.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Jack, and this is probably more focused at -- I had to step out, but I think, again, it's important to remember that the individual bag limits for all these fish are going to remain the same. From a south Florida perspective, you've got your now five muttons or your five mangrove snapper and then your couple of grouper that you can add to it.

For us, we don't have the porgy fishery, and we don't have the triggerfish fishery, like they do up north, and so it doesn't affect us nearly as much, but I still think that twenty fish is -- It's a pretty good amount of fish, and, as you said, that doesn't mean that you can't fish anymore. You have kept twenty fish, and now you can go off and you can go get your cobia, and you can go -- Depending on the time of year, if dolphin are out there, or whatever you want to do, but, again,

not lose focus on the fact that the individual bag limits are going to stay the same, and this is to try to make it as uncomplicated as possible.

MR. BROWN: This is not a negative aspect here, and it's actually positive, because I carry twenty people out fishing, and we do a lot of half days, and we get around to August and then we get these different species close, and we're restricted down to catching sea bass or something that we're throwing a lot of them back and we can't keep anything, and it ends up being a negative, leaving it open the way it is. Really, this is a positive way to do it, and it will help for the long term.

MR. ATACK: I would like to ask the council if this is the time to like add, I guess, African pompano or the jack species? Is it a time to add them into the listing? Because I know there's a lot of concern up our way with the landings, and there is no regulations, and there is no minimum size, and there is no bag limits. It's targeted commercially and recreationally, and it would be good to have some management measures in place for this species.

I remember the day when there were no African pompano in our waters. We dove for ten years and never saw an African pompano, and so the fish has come back. It's a targeted species, and it's a very valuable species, and so, if we could just add this to the aggregates, while we're talking about aggregates, add it to the complex, I think it would be a good move to make for the sustainability of that fishery down the road.

MS. BROUWER: I am going to remind you that the AP has made a motion in the past to include African pompano in the management unit. It is not an easy process. You have to demonstrate why the species is in need of management. There is a whole bunch of criteria that need to be met. You can go ahead and recommend that again to the council, but I doubt that they would be able to add that as an action to this amendment, but they may consider it elsewhere.

MR. MOSS: I've got a quick question about tomtate, and I know, Jim, you said something about possibly removing them out. Down by us, as Bob said, it's a baitfish at best, and does anybody else northern -- I mean, is that a keepable species, if that's a word? I'm just curious.

MS. JEFFCOAT: No, all the tomtates that we catch are strictly bait, and some people do know what they are and have talked about south Florida, back in the day, eating grits and grunts, but nobody keeps them anymore.

MR. MOSS: Like I said, I was just curious, and so I think it's kind of a non-issue to remove them or not remove them. I don't think anybody is keeping them anyway.

AP MEMBER: I will just note that I had a delicious tomtate meal with David Nelson in Florida a couple of years ago.

MR. ATACK: Could we make a motion now, or should we do it later, about the African pompano? **I guess I would like to make a motion that the council look at adding the African pompano to the management.**

MR. MOSS: It's been seconded, and so I guess we'll open it up for any discussion on the issue.

MR. ATACK: I guess one other comment on that. I think Florida does manage them. They do have bag limits and size limits, and so one state already is, and it would be good to make it across the South Atlantic.

MR. JOHNSON: There is no commercial size limit or bag limit though in the State of Florida. Just recreational.

MR. FREEMAN: I appreciate the intent to simplify things, but the geographics of fishing from say North Carolina, Hatteras or Atlantic Beach, where I'm at, all the way to Key West, there is such a dramatic difference in the cross-hatch of your parties. I have fished out of Florida, and, when I go, living in North Carolina, I didn't go down to catch fish to fill my freezer.

A high percentage of the trips around my area is a guy coming from New Jersey or New York or wherever to catch fish and fill his freezer the best he can within the limits and all this kind of stuff, and anything we do to reduce the potential that an optimistic guy is going to say, hey, I can have thirty-two fish, with the triggers, b-liners, and bass, and that will allow me to put something in the freezer, but, when you start reducing the limit to the extent that that optimistic fisherman says, hey, if I caught everything that I'm allowed to keep, it is not worth my money to do that.

The party we had on the boat last Wednesday drive 680 miles, and I know this because the guy was complaining because, the time it took to get his fish cleaned, and he's got to drive all night to get back so his son can work the next day and that sort of thing, and so, if you increase the penalties on the parties, they're going to disappear, and so the recreational charter boats are out of business, and Atlantic Beach is a small fishing community.

A high percentage of the money that comes in there is fishermen and recreational families and that sort of thing, and so what makes sense for Key West does not make sense for Atlantic Beach. A lot of the species that were included in the aggregate, yellowtail and some of the various groupers, I have fished out there for probably 40,000 hours, thousands of trips, and I have caught zero of those fish, because it is geographically a different situation.

MR. HULL: I appreciate that comment you made, because I see your point of view, but I also see the point of view of what council member Mark Brown said, that he's trying to keep these fisheries open when they start to shut down, and so, looking at it both ways, it's a tough one. It's a tough issue, and I think it needs an awful lot of thought, because you don't want to put people out of business, and you don't want to lessen the access to the citizens to go on a vessel and fill their freezer, but, if you look at it from the council member's point of view, and he's saying, well, at least if we can keep it open, because, if it's closed, you're limiting their access to it, too. You're not going to get a trip if it's closed because they caught the ACL too fast.

They're talking about maybe slowing it down to try to keep it open longer, and so it looks like it's a real tug both ways. I see both sides, and it's still something that needs an awful lot of thought and conversation and research and looking at the numbers, because, one way, you're limiting people wanting to go because they can't catch enough. Then, the other way, you're limiting them, because, if they catch enough, the season closes and they can't fish later on, and so it's those two things that are kind of at odds and what you've got to figure out to do.

MR. MANIGAULT: I know I'm the new guy on the block, and I don't proclaim to be the brightest bulb on the Christmas tree, and I'm definitely not that well-endowed on Roberts Rules of Order, but I thought we were discussing the African pompano.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Gary. I was actually going to bring it back to that. We had a couple of people who, I think, still had comments on the previous, but let's finish up the African pompano. Then, if we wanted to roll back to talking about the aggregate bag limits, we can, and so any further discussion on the African pompano motion?

MR. GOMEZ: For us in the Lower Keys, the African pompano is really a non-issue, and I'm just curious where you're fishing and why it's an issue, as far as bringing it up for consideration and bringing it into this motion.

MR. ATACK: I have been fishing the waters and diving the waters for thirty years. The first fifteen years, there were no African pompano, and management changes or whatnot, or maybe it's the bag limits in Florida, helped them come back into our waters, and so we see instances where people will go out and target and catch twenty of them on a trip, or, if they're on a wreck and they hear about them, they catch them until they're all gone.

It would be good to just be proactive and help sustain this fishery, is my goal, and a reasonable bag limit or reasonable management measures, I think, is a good thing. We're not trying to cut anybody out of the fishery or reduce access, but it's just we would like to see it sustained.

MR. GOMEZ: Could you remind me where you're fishing out of?

MR. ATACK: North Carolina, the Southport area.

MR. JOHNSON: I can speak on African pompano, because I have probably caught I don't know how many thousands. We have a lot of them in St. Augustine, and my question has always been, and I've asked this of the State of Florida, is what reasoning was used to implement a one-fish per person, two-fish per boat maximum limit, on African pompano?

I don't have a problem with it. Don't misunderstand, but, if we're going to have that for Florida fishermen, why is the commercial sector still open and no bag limit and no trip limit and no nothing, and why is the other states no limits at all, and so I sort of felt like Florida was -- I don't know if they were being proactive, but I never really got a good answer as to why those limits were put into place. If there's a need, then that need should be regionally, and it should be for the other states. If there's not a need, then why is Florida doing it?

MS. MARHEFKA: Just to understand your motion, are you suggesting that it's added -- I feel like we're off track a little, because, if I'm not misunderstanding, if this falls under what we're discussing now, the regulatory amendment, I don't believe that it can continue to be a regulatory amendment, and so should we finish the regulatory amendment and then talk about something separate for African pompano? I don't believe you can add a species to a management unit through a regulatory amendment.

MR. ATACK: Yes, and, I mean, I'm asking the council to put it on the to-do list to then add it in as a management unit. It won't be part of this amendment.

MR. COX: Just real quick, to his point, to Jim's point, what we're seeing is -- I offload a lot of commercial fish, and we don't see very many commercial-caught pompano, and he's right. These things have come back the last ten years, and now it's kind of -- We've seen a little slack in the fish showing up, but the ones that we do see and the ones that we do buy come from the recreational guys that will go diving or -- Free diving has really picked up, and it's become a hot fishery in North Carolina. It's the recreational folks that can go twenty or thirty feet under the boat and shoot them, and so I think he's just saying, hey, we might not be able to add it in any time soon, but it's certainly something to bring up that, at some point, we need to start talking about.

MR. LORENZ: I'm from North Carolina, and so I do endorse what Jim said, and, thinking about this for up in our waters up there, this African pompano is kind of going the way of the hogfish up there. It's kind of a neat fish. It's beautiful. People love it, and it's kind of exotic, and people are learning how to catch them, and the recreational fishermen are going for them, and the divers are going for them, and so, rather than have it someday be a problem species, why not get our hands around starting to manage it now?

MR. MOSS: If there is no further discussion on this particular one, we can go ahead and put it to a vote. **All those in favor. It passes unanimous.**

MS. BROUWER: I am going to keep moving along, and I guess I would suggest that we don't get too caught up, like I said, in the wording of these things or how it's structured, but just think of it conceptually, and, if you have any recommendations that you want to pass along to the council, we can do that.

Here is Action 3. This would apply just to the deepwater species aggregate. It's split up into three sub-actions. The first one deals with the season, the second one deals with the bag limit, and the third one deals with the gear requirements, and so the season then would be a short -- You would be allowed to catch them during a short season. Currently, for blueline tilefish, for example, you can catch them from May through August. Wreckfish, I believe, is July and August, and so the idea is to streamline and have maybe a season where you can catch all the deepwater species.

We have here sub-alternatives that would look at fishing would be allowed May through June, May through August, July through August, or July through October. The idea is to minimize discarding outside of the allowable fishing season. Then, moving on to Sub-Action 3.2, this is where we would specify the bag limit for this group of species, and, as Michelle said earlier, there's all these different exceptions. You have your three-fish aggregate, but you can only have a gag or a black, and you can only have a snowy per vessel per day, one golden tile per person, and one per vessel for wreckfish.

We are following the council's guidance, and there is several sub-alternatives that would look at anywhere from one to three per person per day, keeping the existing restrictions that are in place on snowy grouper and on wreckfish, and so that's what we're going to bring back to the council for the bag limits.

Then this captures the desire to remove the size limit on those three deepwater snapper species that I mentioned earlier. There is currently a twelve-inch total length recreational minimum size limit for those, and so we would just have an alternative to remove it, and then they would have another

sub-action to specify any gear requirements, and, currently, they have indicated that they want to consider requiring single-hook rigs when targeting deepwater species, and so that would be what we would bring back to them for Action 3.

Then a similar thing would then be put together for the shallow-water grouper aggregate, where you would have an action, a sub-action, to specify the season. Right now, there is a prohibition for the shallow-water groupers from January through April, and so there are several alternatives here under Alternative 3 that would modify that seasonal prohibition, and then they would like to consider different lengths of seasonal prohibition on different species, and so Alternative 3 looks at keeping everything as it is north of 28 degrees for the shallow-water groupers, but then, south of 28 degrees, which is approximately off of Palm Bay in Florida, you would have different options for a different length for the period of time when you can't catch them.

Then there was some interest among council members to look at a different season for black grouper, and so Alternative 4 captures that. Again, that would be only south of 28 degrees, and so just Florida, and so we have several sub-alternatives, and we're suggesting that they consider also having a sub-alternative for April, just because that captures the entire range of the possible months that you can analyze under the current situation.

Then, finally, Alternative 5 addresses just red grouper. During the stakeholder meetings that we had for the visioning, a lot of folks up in North Carolina mentioned that red grouper were in spawning condition when the season opened up in May, and they felt that there should be an adjustment, and so this is an attempt to capture that, and so there are several sub-alternatives that would lengthen the season or kind of shift it forward so that we're capturing some of the spawning season in the northern part of the range.

Then this sub-action would specify the bag limit for this group, and so this is the motion the council made. They wanted us to analyze two to four per person per day, keeping the restrictions that are currently in place for gag and black grouper, and so that's what we have here shown under Alternative 2, and they did not indicate the willingness to want to make any changes to size limits or to specify any gear requirements for shallow-water grouper, and so this is what we would bring to them in December for this group.

MR. ATACK: I had two questions. One is why are they looking at 28 North versus like a state border? Do you know what I mean? Because you're going to have different limits inside the State of Florida. Then the other question was how far does red grouper spawn? Through what months of the year do they spawn? Do they know?

MS. BROUWER: I can't remember off the top of my head, but they are being found in spawning condition into May off of North Carolina. Red grouper just underwent a stock assessment, and so we're going to be talking about that a little bit. It's not looking great, and so there is some concern that there needs to be some revision to the management for that species, and so I will have to look up in my notes to see the spawning season.

MR. ATACK: My question on that was whether it should be a six-month closure, based on the stock, if they spawn through June, versus just a four-month or shifting it, and that might be another option worth considering in this amendment, is January through June, as an option for them to add,

for them to look at, if you're looking at extended closures for the red grouper. Then what was the answer for the Florida and 28 degrees?

MS. BROUWER: The rationale with that is I believe there are existing regulations that 28 degrees is a boundary, for example for the circle hook requirement, and there are some other regulations that use that as their boundary, and so, again, we're trying to simplify and streamline things, so it captures the entire range for black grouper, and so the council just felt that was a good boundary to stick with.

MR. COX: Are we looking to add alternatives in here, in this particular place, or are we looking to maybe help the council pick a preferred here?

MS. BROUWER: We are not there yet, and so, if you guys have recommendations for more alternatives that they might consider, this is certainly a time to do that. They are not going to be able to pick preferreds until they have some analyses in front of them, and so I am anticipating them picking preferreds in March, and so, when this comes back to you guys in April, you will be able to see whatever the council has selected as their preferred, and then you'll be able to see the analyses. You can then, at that point, say support or pick a different one or whatever, and so that's where we are in the development.

MR. JOHNSON: I think one of the answers, Jim, for your question is -- I hear people from North Carolina talk about how different the fishery is. Well, in Florida, it's night and day between northeast Florida and south Florida. South of 28, it's a different world down there. It's a different fleet of species and different habitat and different everything. That's why, in the past, I've always said, you know what, they really should just manage south Florida a little different than the rest of the region, because it is totally different, and so I'm sure that had something to do with that decision.

MR. GOMEZ: I'm glad you brought up that point, because it is completely different. When we look at the closure of our shallow-water grouper in the Keys, you have to understand that, in the Keys, we're fishing a lot more days than let's say from northern Florida on up through the Carolinas. I believe you have a lot more closed days in the winter, and so, when you close off the grouper fishery from January through April, as it is now, I mean, we've been living with it for quite a while, but we certainly would like to see something different, especially because the limit is so small already. The charter boat industry doesn't feel like they're having much of an impact on the fishery, but we're still losing that fishery for those months.

MR. COX: Just real quick, I want to say that we have the same challenges in North Carolina with our blueline tile fishery and snowy grouper fishery. I mean, the difference sixty miles makes is incredible, from Cape Lookout to Cape Hatteras.

MS. BROUWER: Just for the record, I wanted to remind you that, when you looked at this last time you got together, you had recommended that the council take no action on making any modifications, and we did hear that when we took this out for scoping.

That was the predominant feeling among people that came out to talk to us, but, to Richard's comment, here, Alternative 2 would basically just take away the shallow-water grouper closure, and so that is being included as an alternative that can be considered for analysis purposes, and

then, of course, Alternatives 3 and 4 are designed to address this discrepancy specifically for Florida, and so that's why those have been included in there. Then, to go back to Jim's point, Alternative 5, we do have a range up to five months for red grouper, and certainly the AP can recommend a longer closure if you feel that is something you feel the council needs to consider.

Moving on, we're almost through with this amendment, and so just bear with me. Action 5 then would specify any changes to this proposed other shallow-water species aggregate, starting with a bag limit specification. Right now, here's what we have in place, and then we have an alternative that would look at a twenty-fish daily per person limit for this group of species. Within it, you would still be able to retain only ten snappers within the aggregate, which is currently the case, and you would be restricted to the individual limits on species that are excluded from the aggregates.

Alternative 3 is different, because it specifies that only ten fish could be gray triggerfish, and this is in response to motions that the AP has made in the past requesting that the council consider a smaller bag limit for gray triggerfish. Alternative 4 would look at putting in a limit for Atlantic spadefish, which is another species that has been brought up as being of concern. Alternative 5 just makes the overall daily maximums smaller, and so it would just be ten fish overall. Within that, ten could be snappers.

Those are the range of alternatives that we have to present to the council, and then Sub-Action 5.2 captures their wishes to reduce the minimum size limit on gray triggerfish, and, just to recap, the reason this is being done is because the State of Florida has changed the minimum size limit in state waters, and so this would bring in line the minimum size limit requirement offshore as well to match what is the requirement in state waters.

Then, finally, Action 6, this is where we go back to that overall aggregate that we were talking about in the beginning, and so there would be an action -- If the council wanted to follow that approach, they would go to this action, and they would choose Alternative 6 under Action 2, and then here is where they would have the opportunity to specify a bag limit for that snapper grouper species aggregate. As Mark was saying earlier, his motion was let's specify a twenty-fish daily maximum per person limit, maintaining the current restrictions, and so that's what this alternative would do.

Then, just to give them a wider range of alternatives to consider, we're going to suggest that they maybe look at specifying that overall twenty-fish daily limit. Then, within that, since they had talked about having something smaller for gray triggerfish, we included two sub-alternatives to address gray triggerfish and Atlantic spadefish, if they so choose, and so this sort of gives them a range to choose from, as far as what they want to see, in terms of analyses, in March.

Then I had a note here to update you that we talked about black sea bass, and you guys had talked about reducing the recreational minimum size limit. We had a big discussion about it, about why is it different for commercial and all that good stuff, and we talked about it with the council, and, because the black sea bass stock assessment has been delayed, there wasn't going to be the data that we needed to conduct the appropriate analyses for them to have in front of them to go forward with this action, and so we suggested that they put this off until the black sea bass assessment is completed, and so they gave us instruction to remove it from the amendment for the time being.

Then, as I said earlier, they also gave us direction to take out the action on powerheads and put that in Amendment 46, and so that's where we are, and, again, they are looking at receiving analyses for all of this in March. At that time, they will have the chance to pick preferreds, and they would approve it for public hearings, which would be held via webinar, sometime between April and June, and then it would come back to them in June, and they would look at public comment then, any updates to the analyses or any modifications they want to make, with the intent to have this finalized for them to send to the Secretary in September of next year. Currently, that's where we are, and if there is any questions.

MR. LORENZ: I have just one thing to state, kind of a rhetorical question and then just an idea, and I wouldn't think that anybody would want to get into that at this time, but, looking at having aggregates for the recreational sector, and then you run in with -- I always see this one issue about the partyboat captains and their need to serve the meat fishermen among the recreational fishing community and to address that.

One question I have, and it's rhetorical, but it would be interesting, would be how many partyboats are there out there, and I would put that at some boat that takes, pick the number, ten or fifteen or twenty or up. When you're dealing with this aggregate, is it possible -- Again, looking not to make this too complex, but is it possible that, for recreational fishermen, or if you're fishing on a partyboat that has a certain requirement for a certain minimum about of people, you might allow a double aggregate for those fishermen, in order to aid that one small sector, because the partyboats are quite well regulated, and they're very visible, and a lot of sampling goes on on them.

I am just wondering, to help those folks, which seem to be declining on this coast, and there aren't that many of them, that, if there were some way to allow them to have a little more than all the rest of us on our private boat -- I don't want to clean more than fifteen or twenty fish, but, if there are people that do, God bless them, and, if there's some people that can service them and make a living on it, is there a way to get to that? That's just a question I would have to think about.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Robert. Yes, that's called sector separation, which the charter/for-hire needs to be separated out of the private recreational, and I'm all for that, but that's something possibly in the future.

MR. COX: I agree with you, Jimmy. I am all for that as well. Thinking about what you're saying, I think, right now, it's a one per person bag limit on red snapper, and is that right, recreational, and so that would be a lot of red snapper on a boat that could carry eighty people.

MR. HUDSON: The problem we have, Bob, on the east coast with charter boats versus partyboats, is you can have eight people on a boat, and, if they are doing open charters and stuff, technically they're a partyboat, if that's the way the Beaufort Lab headboat deems them. In reality, we can go all the way to fifteen as a charterboat, whereas, in the Gulf of Mexico, you can only do six, and so it gets a little dicey right there.

MR. JOHNSON: I had this conversation with a guy from the National Marine Fisheries Service last year, because one of my boats is licensed for fourteen passengers, but we do not -- We are not a headboat, because we don't charge by the head. We're a private charter, and so people charter my whole boat, but they can bring up to fifteen people, and their definition of a partyboat, and somebody may know the exact definition, but it basically means that you're charging people by

the person to get on your boat, but, to the point about partyboats taking meat fishermen, in the State of Florida, that's gone.

There are no meat fishermen getting on partyboats. There is more meat fishermen getting on my boat and other for-hire private -- I shouldn't say private, but we're a private charter, yes, and so I do run into that occasionally, and this is just me personally, but my answer to them is, well, you would be better served to take this money and go to the fish house and buy some fish, because I am selling an experience.

Now, I do, like Jimmy and Jack, support limited entry, and, at some point, allowing the for-hire sector, because its needs are totally different than the recreational sector, the private recreational. I think that it is time for the for-hire sector to be able to manage their fishery to suit their needs, because you listen to some people, and there are some private guys that they want to increase bag limits. Myself, I could decrease bag limits if it meant that I could fish more, because I am selling a trip. I am not selling dead fish, and so the needs are different, and those are things that I'm sure that we're going to be discussing into the future.

MR. COX: Getting back to the amendment, before we leave it, I just want to ask some of you recreational folks something here with almaco jacks. We're talking about splitting it out and different things on the commercial side, and, right now, there is not a size limit on almaco, and they're not very valuable in the commercial fishery when they're under five pounds, and so we're kind of maybe looking at putting a size limit in the future.

There has been some discussion about maybe a twenty-inch or something, to give us a five-pound fish, to get more bang for the buck, optimum yield on it, but I don't know if it's worth some conversation here, before we leave the amendment, and would it be something that you guys would entertain? I know recreational is a twenty per person bag limit, which seems kind of high, and keep in mind the commercial guys can keep that bag limit as well, but they can't sell it. If you guys would think about maybe a size limit, if something would work for you guys, this might be a place to talk about it.

MR. MOSS: I will have to defer to Bob. Anything with the name "jack" on it is not really a viable, keepable species in south Florida, and so we don't -- It's not for us, and that would be for somebody further north.

MR. LORENZ: We're not really fishing for them, not the almaco, and so I don't have anything to offer.

MR. COX: To keep the regulations simple, would you guys entertain maybe doing something that the commercial guys are thinking about in the future of a twenty-inch size limit on almaco? If you would, it would be worthy, maybe, of putting it in the amendment, fork length.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, that's easy. We're catch-and-release, often, and so that would work.

MR. JOHNSON: The issue I have is am not -- Maybe Todd Kellison can weigh in on this, but all of these jacks are not almaco jacks. There is bar jacks, and there is several different species of these smaller jacks that I'm not sure how big they even get, but I will say that almaco are retained, especially when, like right now, greater amberjack are closed, and so people are looking to --

Especially the smaller ones, they're actually pretty good eating. Now, a big almaco jack, to me, is the wormiest critter in the ocean. I mean, he's like amberjack times ten, and so we typically don't keep the larger ones.

MR. COX: To your point, when I say small, I'm talking two or three-pound fish. They're not valuable in the commercial fishery, and so, anytime that we can find regulations that line up commercial or recreational, it certainly makes fishing a lot simpler on both sides, and the bigger fish are more valuable on the commercial side, and we typically don't see a whole lot of worms in the big ones, the parasites, like we do the greater. A big almaco be twenty-five pounds. A good, average-sized almaco, I would say it would probably be about six to eight.

MR. JOHNSON: I could support a twenty-inch size limit, if that's what you're asking.

MR. ATACK: To clarify on that, are you thinking about for all the jacks, because some people can't tell the difference between jacks, and so, if you could make a size limit that was for all those jacks the same, then that would certainly simplify it, but I don't know if that's practical.

MR. COX: You have basically the banded rudders, the lesser, and the almaco are in one complex. I think it's harder to distinguish a lesser from a banded rudder than it is an almaco from the other jacks, but, at this time, I would make a motion to implement a size limit on almaco for the recreational sector, something to put in the amendment here just for conversation, but a motion for a twenty-inch size limit, which is going to be equivalent to close to about a five-pound fish.

MR. BROWN: Jack, in our area, we catch a lot of almaco, but a lot of them are wormy. They're real bad wormy, but, the small ones, they tend not to be as wormy. When we cut them, those are the ones that seem to be the most that they want. As you get bigger, I would think you would lose your yield, and, if you're trying to eliminate that or -- I don't know if this is a good idea or not.

MR. HULL: I am going to speak up on behalf of the headboats in my area. They probably wouldn't speak up for me, but I've got to here. I mean, I see those guys come in with stringers of little almaco, and it's what made their day. I thought also we were trying to reduce discards overall in all of fisheries, and so, recreationally, to put a twenty-inch size limit on almaco -- I mean, I could change my position, but, right now, I wouldn't be in favor of it, for those reasons.

MR. COX: Okay. I just wanted to bring it up. I was just looking -- There is certainly a difference between the commercial and recreational, and if there was more of something worth keeping a fish in the water, and it's a fish that does quite well discarding, and I thought about that as well, but thank you for your comments.

MR. MOSS: We'll wrap that up, and we'll take a fifteen-minute break. It's 10:40. We will just do twenty minutes and come back here at eleven o'clock. One more question? Gary, go ahead.

MR. MANIGAULT: Just a little humor before we leave, and I probably need some education in this area, but I have heard about meat boats and a charter boat and a for-hire boat and a partyboat and a headboat, and there is the recreational boats, and I need some help. This is all new jargon for me. A couple of them, I am fully aware of, but I guess it could be self-defined also too, but I don't want to take that for granted, and so thank you. That's all.

MR. MOSS: What was your list? I will do my best, but what was your listing? You might have to go through them one-by-one.

MR. MANIGAULT: Meat boat and partyboat.

MR. MOSS: Partyboat and headboat, in my understanding, they're basically the same thing. They charge by the head. Charter boats are typically, again, down by my way, six-pack boats, where you rent out the boat and the captain for the day. A meat boat could be, I guess, technically a headboat or a charter boat, people that are going strictly for meat fish, and so they don't care about catching jacks or anything like -- They want their snapper, and they want their grouper. Recreational boats are people just like myself that have their own boats, that go out and do their own thing, sometimes better than others, and then -- Did I get them all? Did I miss one?

MS. BROUWER: For-hire.

MR. MOSS: For-hire boat, that's basically a charter boat. All right. Let's go ahead and break until -- Let's get back here right at eleven o'clock and continue on.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. MOSS: If everybody can have a seat, we'll get going. We are going to move on to the Regulatory Amendment 27, unless anybody has anything else going on. I will turn it back over to Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, David. This is Attachment 2 in your briefing book. Again, I have made a couple of revisions to this document. One of them was there was some information that came in to look at the minimum size limit for almaco jacks, and so I do have some data to show you here, and so I incorporated that in this version of the document, and that's why you see that it was revised yesterday.

Again, a little background. This is the sister document to the recreational amendment that we just discussed, and so this captures what the council wants to do in terms of commercial management measures, and so, in September, they also voted to change the timeline for developing this amendment, to keep it in line with the recreational one, because, as I said, they kind of go hand-in-hand, and the council didn't want one of them to move faster than the other.

What they're going to do -- In September, rather, we looked at the purpose and need, and there needs to be a little bit more discussion, but, basically, the intent is the same, to address stakeholder concerns, and there are some issues with access to fisheries. As we heard this morning, there's a lot of differences geographically, and so this attempts to get at some of those issues. Minimizing discards is another of the objectives, and hopefully simplifying some of the regulations.

This one is a little bit more straightforward. It's action-by-action, and, again, you have seen this before. The first one would establish a commercial split season for blueline tilefish, and we added an alternative to possibly modify the trip limit, and so the action changed a little bit since you saw it last time.

Here are your alternatives, and so the council is looking at specifying two fishing seasons and allocating the annual catch limit into two quotas. They asked to see the quota allocated 40 percent to the first season, which is January through June, and 60 percent to the second season, July through December. This would be structured the same way. The commercial split seasons are in place for b-liners and gray triggerfish, where any remaining quota from the first season that is not caught rolls over to the second season, but you can't roll quota over from year to year.

Under that alternative, with that split of the commercial ACL, then they would like to look at a trip limit of a hundred pounds gutted weight in the first season and 300 pounds gutted weight in the second season. Then also look at a little bit higher, 150 pounds, in Season 1 and a Season 2 trip limit of 300 pounds. That is Alternative 2.

Alternative 3 would retain the commercial fishing year, and so the ACL would not be split up, and, instead, you have different trip limits during the season. Here, under Sub-Alternative 3a, you would have a 100-pound trip limit from January through April and 300 pounds for the remainder of the year. The second one bumps it up a little bit to 150 pounds, and the third one is 100 pounds in the beginning, January through April, and 400 pounds May through December. Then the last one they would like to look at is 100 pounds January through June and 300 pounds July through December. The 3d and 3a looked similar there to me for a minute, but I see the 3a is January through April, and 3d is January through June.

In September, the council looked -- They had asked to see the distribution of commercial landings, to better help them figure out how they would like that commercial ACL split up, and so they had asked for us to go back and give them some numbers on the distribution by state and by month, and so this is what we presented to them. North Carolina here is in green, and South Carolina is purple, and Florida is blue, and Georgia is in red. The landings are very small, and so this is the distribution of average commercial landings by state from 2004 through 2013, and then we had to exclude some years, because there were some closures.

Then we also showed them this is the percentage of landings, of annual blueline tilefish commercial landings, by state since 2002. This table here is a little dated, because the alternatives I just showed you right now are the ones that they settled on at their last meeting. This table here reflects alternatives that they looked at in June, and so these analyses, hopefully, are going to get updated, probably not in time for the December meeting, because the deadline to have all of this material together is next week, and we're just not going to have time to do it.

I wanted to make sure that you guys had a chance to look at these preliminary analyses, to sort of get an idea of what's going on here, and so this table here shows you two different ways of predicting the length of the season, and so, where it says, "mean 2014 through 2016", it's just one of the approaches that the Regional Office staff used to do these predictions. Then, where you see this SARIMA, it's just a different kind of approach. It uses a model, and it stands for Seasonal Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average or something like that. Don't ask me details about that, but it gives you at least sort of a range of predictions, and so you have to sort of go back to the previous alternatives to sort of see where these predictions stand in relation to the actual closures.

We do have here, in Table 2, where there has been closures in recent years, and so, in 2016 and 2017, there were closures in June and July, and keep in mind that blueline tilefish has seen a lot of

regulatory changes in recent years. Back in 2013, the assessment indicated the stock was overfished and undergoing overfishing, and so the council put in an amendment, and there was an emergency rule that went into place to make sure the ACL came down, to make sure that overfishing didn't continue, and all kinds of changes.

It's kind of difficult to predict how a fishery is going to behave when you don't have data that you can reliably use for those predictions, because of all these different changes, and so just bear that in mind, and so, like I said, unfortunately, this table here doesn't help you a great deal, but suffice it to say that, because of all these regulatory changes, that the information has very high uncertainty, and so we are going to --

Hopefully, with these more defined alternatives that they have given us, with these different trip limits, which will be interesting to see how that plays out, they will have a better analysis, in order to move forward with this action, but, certainly, the AP, based on your expertise, you can recommend to them, or, if you think this range of trip limits here is reasonable or -- One thing that we were going to ask them is why is 400 pounds not being considered under this alternative here, when you have a seasonal split, when it is considered down here under Sub-Alternative 3c. That is going to be a question that we pose to the council, and, certainly, if anybody here has any ideas or any just extra information for the council members.

MR. ATACK: The one question I had, looking at the year chart, 2002 through 2016, you can see where that, basically, all the Atlantic went to North Carolina. If I try to understand what's going on there, I look down to the landings per year on Table 2 below that, but that data doesn't go back to 2002. It only goes to 2012, and so I don't know if there was a change in 2006 that caused a big shift or the ACL was met, and so that part of the South Atlantic couldn't fish on those fish, but you've got your landings from 2012 through 2017, but you don't show the landings from 2002 through 2012.

When you look up at the chart, the table, the Figure 2, you see where basically all the landings were North Carolina for a chunk of time there, but you don't show what the annual landings were during that same time period. It might be helpful to understand what's going on with the fishery.

MS. BROUWER: Let me make sure I'm understanding. So, you would like to see more years in this table that allows you to see -- Okay. One of the things that jumps out immediately is blueline tilefish used to be included in the deepwater complex, before the assessment, and so it wasn't being kept track of. There wasn't an ACL for blueline tilefish.

It was included in the deepwater complex, and so, if you went back before that, it really wouldn't give you any extra information, because it was lumped in with everything else, and that's probably why the -- I should say that these analyses were prepared in the Regional Office, and I am not the author of these things, but I can certainly at least explain, and it's a good point that you bring up, why we don't go back further, and I suspect that's the reason why.

MR. ATACK: Yes, and there's a big shift then, but they've got the percentages, and so they apparently know what was landed, because they're saying, in 2004, that 50 percent was landed in North Carolina. Then Florida and Georgia and South Carolina hit the other 50 percent together, and then they went to zero for about four years.

MR. BUFF: I would just like for the council to take note that the grouper, the snowy grouper, and the blueline tile where we're at, we're catching those fish at the same times, and so those two fisheries need to coincide, and, at some point in time, it would really be nice if we could get this down to a twelve-month fishery instead of six or seven, which is something me and Jack talk about all the time. It's hard to pay bills five months out of the year without nothing on the docks, and so if you could kind of keep that in mind.

I have thought about this, and, when you had that one chart up that had the ACLs and the landings, here is my question, and maybe somebody can answer this, but it seems to me that we micromanage these fisheries, time and time and time again, and, what we've done originally, we don't have time to see if that has any correction, and this is a prime example.

Where I'm going with this is what's getting ready to happen with the golden tile, which is a huge deal for what we do, but you take this fishery right here in 2013 and 2014, and I am pretty good at math, and I think that's a 70 percent reduction in your ACL. Then you turn around, in 2015 and 2016, and we get another 30 percent reduction, and so we went from catching 375,000 down to having an ACL of 87,000, and, honestly, you didn't give it any time to even see if there was a correction in the first reduction, and so I would like to know why does that happen, and I think that we're getting ready to do the same thing with the golden tile.

We're going from this huge ACL that we had, and then it was cut, and 50 or 60 percent, I think is the number, and then we're going to turn around and cut it another 50 or 60 percent, and, guys, I'm telling you all, and I preach this every time I come to these meetings, but there's a tipping point in this business that we're in, and that tipping point and that scale is going to go into the negative if we continuously cut these quotas, and I understand that everybody has a job, but you need to keep in mind that there's people behind this that are running a business, and, at some point in time, we're going to cut so much quota out of these ACLs that this business ain't going to make sense from the commercial sector.

If you look up and down your coastlines, these fish houses are gone, and these boats are gone, and half of the boats that were in my area -- There is probably eight or ten there now, where there used to be twenty or twenty-five, and it's just something that you guys need to think about. Just in the golden tile, if we cut half of that quota in two, that's a pretty good, sizeable chunk of money that's coming across the dock for a huge part of North and South Carolina, and so I would like to know why that continuously happens without having time to see if what we've done corrected where we're at.

MR. JOHNSON: That 100-pound limit in the first opening, I guess, because you're catching them with the snowy groupers, it's almost like a bycatch fishery, so you don't have to throw them back. The only targeted fishery, I guess, for blueline tiles was in North Carolina, and there was a longline fishery for them. I get that, and I'm sort of struggling. I mean, there is not -- I don't know how you make any money at 100 pounds a trip, I guess is my question, and so it has to be a bycatch.

Then, going to that other alternative that they were talking about, the 400 pounds, that's typically a time of year that the snowy are probably either closed or getting ready to close, and so I guess that makes better sense. Then they actually might be able to make a trip on blueline tile, but then, to Jim's point, when was the area closure lifted? Does anybody know? There was a point in time that you couldn't fish where those fish lived, and so that's going to be picked up in the landings.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, you're right. That was during 2011.

MR. JOHNSON: So that's all in this table too, and so, to Myra's point, the table is really not very good for management purposes, and so, anyway.

MR. HUDSON: I participated in the blueline tile full benchmark here in all three workshops, and the stuff from Hatteras north is clean blueline tile. Everything south of Hatteras is a bycatch, virtually, to the snowy grouper as a target. Down our way, St. Augustine, probably 10 percent would be blueline, and the rest of it would be snowy. That would be what you would be targeting.

We have a sub-group, and Michelle can correct me with regards to the recent SSC, but they still have to come up with an ABC that has to be divided between the Virginia/North Carolina line down to Hatteras and then north of the Virginia/North Carolina line. That is being worked out. I mean, it's not a done deal yet, and so I believe, by the spring meeting, we'll have different numbers that we can discuss, the 400-pound trip limit and on and on and on.

MR. COX: I was just going to say that it looks like a really nice range of alternatives. I mean, it's going to change a lot, like Myra said, when the assessment comes out. We know that the assessment was kind of skewed when it was done. The stock was a lot healthier, and we should have a lot more than an 87,000-pound ACL, but just because they didn't capture a lot of landings from Dare County when they did the previous assessment, but, from what I know in my area, and I think this is the same around the table, is, south of where I'm at in Cape Lookout, it's pretty much a bycatch fishery, and it's very important that we have a bycatch fishery, along with the snowy and the golden tile.

In North Carolina, there's a bandit boat fishery, where they are catching the rest of it, and then, north of us, there is the longline fishery, but those guys don't even hardly get to do it anymore, because the landings are so low, but the range of alternatives -- With where we are with the ACL, I certainly wouldn't support a 400-pound ACL, because I think the goal would be to leave an alternative in here that looks like Sub-Alternative 3d, 100 pounds January through June, which allows the bandit boat guys, while they're snowy fishing, to have access to their bycatch.

Then the 300-pound targeted fishery that the guys would have in a split season, north of us, and so they would still be able to go out if they wanted to set a piece of gear and catch some of those longline fish, and the fishery is so different, because, like I said, sixty miles from where I'm at, or a little bit further, they catch really big gray tile.

They will catch twelve to eighteen-pound gray tile, and we don't see that size fish where I'm at, just a little bit below them, and so we buy those fish from those guys, because it's such a great fish to have, but they will go out, and hopefully we can do something just like this with our snowy fishery, where we split the season, and they will be able to go out and target maybe 300 pounds of snowy or something along with their blueline tilefish, so they can put a trip together. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Just one more point, too, and correct me if I'm wrong, but blueline tile have the largest allocation for a deepwater species to the recreational sector, and isn't it like 40/60 or something? That makes this fish really unusual, and I think that was driven by North Carolina recreational landings, if I remember right.

MR. BUFF: Jack, to your point, are we going to break the snowy up into that group as well, to where they're going to be closed, or are they already closed now? I can't remember if they are or not and so where they're going to have two seasons.

MR. COX: We're going to get to that here shortly, and so I was just bringing that up. It was kind of leading into that, and so, when we get to the snowy, it's going to kind of look the same way, but a little bit different, in the alternatives.

MR. HUDSON: In December, the council will have to consider what we do know about blueline tile, and then I assume, by the time the SSC has their report on the stuff north of Hatteras, then the council will then get the next report, and so we're in flux for a few months.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you for that, Rusty. To follow up and catch you up on what's been going on, as you said, Rusty, the SSC met in October, and they reviewed the results of the stock assessment for blueline tilefish. The issue is that the ABC recommendation is only for the area from Cape Hatteras south, and so, as Rusty indicated, the SSCs and the councils, the South Atlantic and the Mid-Atlantic, need to figure out how to come up with an ABC that is going to be applicable to the jurisdictional management areas, which are bounded by the state line of North Carolina and Virginia.

The SSC has formed a sub-group. They have not yet decided when they're going to meet, but they're going to look at all the information, and they're going to meet together with folks in the Mid-Atlantic and try to figure out how to have an appropriate acceptable biological catch that then will translate into your annual catch limit and so on and so forth.

There is also another amendment, Amendment 38, which the council basically has been keeping sort of on the back burner, and that's the amendment that is going to deal with long-term management for blueline tilefish, and so this one here, as Jack pointed out, it depends on the timing, and, yes, things will be changing when we get updated catch levels for blueline tilefish.

The next action is the split season for snowy and so, here, we have two alternatives. The first one would split the commercial annual catch limit into two quotas of equal length, 60/40, and then Alternative 3 would put 70 percent of the annual catch limit to the first season, January through June, and 30 percent to the second season, and so this is to get at what you guys are talking about here, the idea that, when you catch your snowy, you don't want to keep catching blueline and vice versa, and so to try to line things up so that a commercial trip will be maximized and you will be minimizing discards.

Again, in June, the council received preliminary analyses. Again, we have these projected closure dates under the various alternatives based on the different methodologies. Then here is what is of most interest to you, is the average commercial landings distribution, again by month and by state, going back to 2002, and then, again, with the caveats that there were closures in some of those years, and so those data were not included, and so here is what the snowy looks like. There is a bigger component here, as you can clearly see, for North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida, and here is what the percentages look like.

One thing the council members had requested was to also look at the number of vessels that are reporting landings of snowy by state and by year, and so that's what this figure here is showing you, and so the blue is Florida, the red is Georgia and South Carolina combined, to avoid confidentiality issues, and then the green is North Carolina, and you're going back from 2006 through 2016.

Just to recap, I guess, from previous meetings, we do have several recommendations that you guys made at your previous meeting, and, as Scott just talked about a minute ago, keeping in line blueline and snowy, kind of making sure that the management for those two species is going to be complementary, to maximize for the commercial sector.

MR. HUDSON: The 2011 dip, that's the full year-and-a-half, starting the beginning of 2011 to the middle, I think, May or something, of 2012, and so any catches would have been inshore of the 240-foot line, and I know there's places where you can catch them at 220, blueline and snowy.

MR. COX: I think this is a really nice action, because, when we start to split the seasons like this, it gives people in different areas an opportunity to catch fish, and I like a lot of the things in Amendment 27, and so this is one of them, and so I just wanted to say that it gives the consumer a lot of access to a seafood, and, if we do this thing right, we can really fine-tune it.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to Action 3, this one establishes a split season and modifies the commercial trip limit for amberjack. Again, I have included the motions that came out of the most recent council meeting, so that you can see exactly what the council asked us to do, and then the resulting alternatives that we're going to talk with them about.

For amberjack, the fishing year is March through the end of February, and there is a prohibition on sale during the month of April. The commercial trip limit is currently 1,200 pounds whole weight, and so Alternative 2 would split the commercial ACL into two quotas, 50 percent to the period March through August and 50 percent to September through the end of February. It would maintain the restrictions during April, and then there would be, again, a trip limit. It would be 1,200 pounds during Season 1. Then, in Season 2, there would be a reduction to 1,000 pounds.

The council also wanted to consider trip limit reductions, or step-downs, and so, for this sub-alternative, during Season 2, there would be a reduction to 750 pounds when 75 percent of that season's quota was met or was projected to be met, and then they also wanted us to include some caveats for when that trip limit reduction would not occur.

We included in here that that reduction would not occur unless 75 percent of that season's quota was met or was projected to be met by a certain date, and so we have not yet had the time, as I said, to discuss with the council what the appropriate date would be, and then the rest of the sub-alternatives are structured along the same lines, with just differing trip limits and trip limit reductions. 2b looks at a 500-pound step-down, again with the caveat for when that reduction would not occur, again using 75 percent as the cutoff.

Then Sub-Alternative 2c has the same trip limit in both seasons and then a step-down to 500 pounds in each season once 75 percent of that quota is met or projected to be met, with the same sort of trigger there for the reduction to not take place, and so it's complicated.

One of the things that we're going to bring up to the council when we talk about this in December is the Regional Office is the agency that has to put in place and announce all these step-downs and closures, and they have to rely on information to make those projections, and it's a very lengthy process, and so we're going to explain to the council all the different steps of how long it takes, because it is something to keep in mind. It's one thing to say this would work out great, but how you implement it and whether it's feasible to make it happen without clogging up the whole system is a different story, and so we're going to remind them to keep that in mind.

For amberjack, there is a third alternative that looks at simply -- It's basically the same sub-alternatives, but, instead of having the 50/50 split, we have a 60/40 split, but everything else is the same. Then here is -- This is something the council hasn't yet seen. The information for greater amberjack was not finalized in time for them to have this information in September, and so we're going to show it to them in December, and then it's very just summary information on landings, again the distribution by state, and this goes back to 2005 through 2015.

Then, of course, we exclude April, but here is Florida, of course, being the biggest player here, and here is what the percentage of those landings look like by state and by year. Then here, again, for background, this is landings recent landings, and quota closures. There has been a couple of in-season closures in recent years, and there is the rest of that.

MR. COX: Looking back at the table, on page 12, there is a lot of blue there, which is indicating that Florida is pretty much getting the lion's share of the fishery. It's an important fishery to North Carolina and Florida, and I've spoken to folks on both sides, and I'm sure it is to everybody else as well, but I would certainly like to try to keep the way we manage our fisheries a good, fair, and equitable opportunity across the board.

I know step-downs are hard, and you make me a little nervous saying that we're going to revisit some of these things that could complicate the system a little bit, but, unfortunately, that's kind of the way we have to do business now, and, with that said, NMFS is already doing it with a lot of other fisheries, and it looks like we're going to probably have to do it with a few more, to keep seasons open.

Just like Scott was saying, on the commercial side, it's important that we stretch these things out as long as we can, and I will say, last year, greater amberjack closed October 4. This year, I think it closed about a week later, because of some of the storms, but it's an important fishery to North Carolina, and these fish don't really show up until late August in North Carolina. It seems like they kind of start down in Florida, and the guys in the Keys work on them pretty good, and I know you guys do. I've read some of your stuff and how important it is to you guys, and it's important to us as well, but I think there is some good alternatives in here that could kind of make it a little more fair.

When we switched from a May opening back to a March, we did that to give the guys in Florida a little more opportunity to capture those fish earlier in the season, and, after that's run for a couple of years, it looks like it maybe favored Florida a little bit more than some of the other states, and so I would just like to say that Sub-Alternative 2c, which goes from a 1,200-pound trip limit to 1,000, with that 500-pound step-down, looks like something that could kind of balance it out a little bit, and we're only giving up 200 pounds a trip, and so hopefully it's something that could extend our seasons.

I fish for amberjacks, and I catch about 25,000 pounds a year, and we don't start catching those fish until -- They don't really show up, and we start catching those in August, and that's when the Gulf is closed, and so the fish are quite valuable. The boat is getting \$1.75 to \$2.00 a pound, which is good, because we have a lot of freight in it as well, but, like you said, it's a complicated deal here, and so I just wanted to tell you guys what I know about it.

MR. ATACK: I remember when we had the 1,000-pound trip limit, and we weren't hitting the ACL, and some people were concerned about raising it to 1,200, which then people would hit the ACL and close it, and so, in hindsight, it looks like we probably shouldn't have gone to a 1,200-pound trip limit, because then the seasons would have stayed open, and there was years there where they weren't hitting the ACL.

MR. JOHNSON: I think there was an ACL change too, if I remember right. There was some allocation that was shifted to the recreational sector from the commercial sector, and so that had a lot to do with what's going on, and so we raised the trip limit and then, not too long after that, the ACL went down, and so I think most people would probably support that 1,000-pound trip limit. I don't know, but we catch amberjack. We don't target them like some boats do, but I know a lot of guys do target them, and that's their fishery, and then the other species are like the bycatch, where it's sort of the other way for my boat. Were you making a recommendation, Jack?

MR. COX: **Certainly. I would just say that I would make a recommendation that we look at Sub-Alternative 2c, which is a 1,000-pound trip limit and a split season. I will have to read it again. It's a split season that starts in March, and I think that runs through August. That gives the guys in the Keys their opportunity and then the guys in the other states north of them will have an opportunity, and so, yes, I would make that recommendation as a motion.**

That is Alternative 2c, and it does cover the 500-pound trip limit for a step-down. I think that's a really nice alternative, and it seems to be something that should work for everybody. When you put these 1,200-pound trip limits in, it takes a little while to see, because, for a long time, we didn't close on amberjacks, but the fish are getting so valuable now that people are targeting this stuff when other fisheries close, and so we're having to go back and fine-tune things, and we'll probably have to -- This is a way of life now, I think, in our fisheries, but can I just say one more thing?

I think it's important to note that I think this greater amberjack fishery is one of our healthiest fisheries that we have, and we're seeing a lot of recruitment, especially where I'm at, in the spring of the year. We see a lot of sub-legal fish that we're releasing and they're doing really well, and we're fishing on these fish with circle hooks, and so we're not gut-hooking them.

MR. HULL: My boats are making twelve or fourteen-hour trips, and we're targeting amberjack, vermilion, triggerfish, and some porgies all at the same time, and so I could -- We could handle this, to keep it open longer and keep all these different species lined up that we're trying to do. It seems like we're heading that way. The shorter, smaller trips are definitely what we've been doing, and this ties right in with that, and I think we could support that.

MR. ATACK: I second the motion, if it hasn't been.

MS. BROUWER: I think it would be useful, if you could, to perhaps help the council fill in these blanks. I don't know if that's something that you can do without having more information in front of you, but, more or less, when -- Would January 1 be a -- If the seasonal quota was not met, or if 75 percent of it was not met, by January 1, then you don't get the step-down, or something like that.

MR. COX: I don't think we're going to have a problem with the fishery closing like it does. Vincent, I know you're new here, and you might not want to talk a lot, but go ahead. Isn't this one of your fisheries that you target a little bit? Do you feel like you guys are going to have trouble catching your fish if you all were to only get, I think, about 350,000 pounds of quota? You get all the quota, just like we do, but I think you all catch it pretty hard and fast.

MR. BONURA: I'm kind of confused on what's going on here, actually, right now. Can you explain to me again what you're saying here?

MS. BROUWER: This alternative, the ACL would be split 50/50, and so the first 50 percent would go from March through the end of August, and then the other season would be September through February. You would have a rollover. If you didn't catch everything in Season 1, it would roll over to Season 2, and then you would have a 1,000-pound trip limit for the whole year, but there would be step-downs to 500 pounds once 75 percent of that seasonal quota was met.

What I was asking is, if you wanted to suggest to the council when these trip limit reductions shouldn't take place -- Like is there a particular time of year or a cutoff that would work for you guys when that trip limit step-down would not be necessary, and the reason the council wanted to have that in there is that, if you have met -- If you get close to meeting your ACL and then you have a step-down in the last two weeks or whatever, then it just makes no sense to have it, and so they wanted to have something in there that would automatically trigger not having that step-down.

MR. ATACK: I could see why you might have that on the second season, because say you hit 75 percent of it on February 1. Then you only have twenty-eight more days of fishing, and you leave some of the ACL out there. On Season 1, if you do the step-down with one or two weeks to go, it's going to ramp back up when the second season starts, and so I don't really see the plus for not having that on Season 1, because then you're just going to be eating up part of Season 2 if you don't do the step-down, and so I would recommend it where you just have a step-down on Season 2, say January 1. If 75 percent isn't met, then you've got sixty more days to finish fishing.

MR. JOHNSON: I was just going to say, on the second season, I would like to see it being December 1, and my rationale is you still have gags, usually, open, and people are going to be fishing sort of the same way. Then, January 1, it's b-liners, and so I'm just thinking along of is there something worth going fishing for, and so that's just my rationale.

MR. COX: I say, if we don't catch the ACL, then we just carry it over to the next year, and that's my recommendation.

MR. MOSS: Any more discussion? The motion, as it stands, is the trip limit is 1,000 pounds whole weight in both seasons. A trip limit step-down to 500 pounds whole weight would occur in each season once 75 percent of the seasonal quota is met or projected to be met. A trip limit step-down would not occur in Season 1 unless 75 percent of the season's quota is met or is projected to

be met on a given date. My question would be do we want to eliminate that little part? I know, Jim, you had said about eliminating it on Season 1, but maybe adding it into Season 2. Jack, it's your motion, and so I don't want to step on it there.

MR. BONURA: I have a question. We don't currently have a step-down at all, and is that correct? I would rather keep it at 1,200 pounds, personally.

MR. MOSS: Jack, it's your motion, again, and so I don't know if you wanted to change that first part or if you want to put a date in there for the first season.

MR. COX: I don't think so. I don't think there's a need to put a date in it, because I think the quota would get caught no problem. I would just scratch that part off of it.

MR. MOSS: Then what about for Season 2? I know, Jim, you had mentioned about maybe putting a not-go-past date or something like that on the second season.

MR. COX: On that last season, I think, if you get into the last month of the year, in December, and you haven't reached that 75 -- That's right. I keep thinking of a calendar year. Then just remove the step-down by January 31. Okay. **We'll put January 31 in there.** Vincent, with a 1,000-pound trip limit, as close as you guys are to the dock there in the Keys, it would extend your season a little bit, and so just think about that a little bit.

MR. BONURA: I fish in Key West, and I've got to go far west. It's thirty-five or forty or fifty miles west that I'm running. They're like three or four-day trips.

MR. MOSS: **The motion as it stands now, and I will reread it, and, Scott, you might have to re-second it, is a trip limit of 1,000 pounds whole weight in both seasons. A trip limit step-down to 500 pounds whole weight would occur in each season once 75 percent of the seasonal quota is met or projected to be met. A trip step-down would not occur in Season 2 unless 75 percent of the season's quota is met or is projected to be met on January 31.** Are you okay with that, Jack?

MR. COX: Yes.

MR. MOSS: We've got a second. Is there any further discussion? Go ahead, Scott.

MR. BUFF: I would just like to make note here of something that probably everybody already knows, but, when we manipulate these seasons and stuff too, just keep in mind that that kind of puts effort in other places. When you're looking at these charts and graphs, if you go back and look at that stuff, that was manipulated by something we've done and changing something to make something else fill or close, and so just kind of keep that in mind.

From our standpoint, some way or another, it would be nice, and I think we're all headed in this direction, and I never thought that I would sit at this table and ask for reductions, but, the lower we can get these trip limits in minute numbers, and not huge, but something smaller, it would keep not only the boats running and the guys out of our pockets, but it would also keep product coming across the dock. At the end of the day, that's what I am here for, to at least maybe get this ten or

eleven months, but I just wanted to throw that out there. When we manipulate one thing, it's going to react on somewhere else, because of effort.

MR. COX: I just want to say this too, and you guys have heard me say this before, and it's very controversial, and I will say it again on the record, but I support VMS, just for the fact that, as we get into smaller trip limits and try to extend seasons, it's going to make it harder for fishermen to make a living, and so it's going to push them to the limits.

A commercial bandit boat that stays at sea with a crew of three will stay at sea, in my area, for three to four days to get his limit, what he needs to come home, and that usually is the equivalent of about a 1,200 to 1,500-pound fishing trip. For the crew and to cover the expenses and things that we have to do, we need a minimum of about a \$5,000 fishing trip, to really be a viable fishery for the bandit boats.

It's a traditional fishery, and it brings a lot of fish, and Scott and I are in the same business, and so it brings a lot of fish to the market that we need, a lot of variety of fish, and some of these boats will have twenty-five different species on it, which is great, because, when you put those out in front of a consumer, it gives them a choice, but I want to extend the season, but, at the same time, I don't want the trips to be so low that it pushes the fishermen to a place that they don't need to be.

MR. BUFF: I would just like to throw something on this VMS, and I've been one of the biggest negative people on this, and we're using them in the Gulf, and it's really not all that bad, and so just to throw that out there for everybody. You get a -- There is 100 percent payback in the Gulf for a first-time purchase, which is kind of neat, and you also have contact with your vessel at all times. You can send them emails, and they can send you emails, which is really kind of neat for me and Jack to be able to know what I've got and what's coming and where are we going to go with it and how are we going to price it and how much of it is there.

This VMS stuff is not as bad as everybody makes it out to be. I have lived eighteen months of it in the Gulf, and it is really nice, when it's bad, to be able to send your other half an email and say, hey, what's happening and are you okay. For you, and not for me, of course, but you see where I'm going though. There is a little bit of sense of security for the boat, in knowing what's going on, and, if there is breakdowns or what do you need when you get home, and so it's not all bad, guys, and so I just want to throw out there, and it's 100 percent reimbursable. Mine costs me sixty-dollars a month, and, hey, I would pay sixty-dollars to talk to my boat all year long, and so just FYI.

MR. HULL: Myra, obviously there is going to be a bunch of analyses presented, as far as what these different alternatives will do to the length of the season and projections, which will be seen at the next council meeting or further down the road, because I think it would be really important to -- It's great to make a recommendation, kind of the theme of what we're doing, but, to take the 1,200 pounds away if it's not necessary and these type of things, I think there just needs to be a real thorough look at what are these going to do, because we're here representing a lot of different people that have other business plans that we do also, and so thanks.

MR. MOSS: Any more discussion on this motion, leaving VMS out of it, please. Let's put it to a vote. **All those in favor, thirteen; all those opposed, four opposed. It's approved.**

MR. GOMEZ: I am opposed, only because I would like to give the Florida Keys fishermen more time to think about this and see if it's viable for him or not.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Moving on, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: The next action looks at a split season and, again, a trip limit modification for red porgy. Here is the motion the council approved, and so they had some changes to the ACL split, and then they had some ranges for different trip limits to look at, and so this is what it ended up looking like. Right now, the fishing year is January through December. However, during January through April every year, there is a seasonal prohibition on sale and purchase for red porgy, and you can only keep your recreational limit, which is three per person per day or three per person per trip. The rest of the year, the trip limit is 120 fish.

Alternative 2 looks at splitting the commercial annual catch limit into two periods of January through April and May through December and do a 30/70 split of the ACL, with the same caveats with the rollover, and then retaining the commercial trip limit from May through December and specifying a smaller trip limit in the beginning of the year, and so the range there would be from thirty fish to sixty fish. I should remind you that you had given the council a recommendation on different trip limits for red porgy at your last meeting.

Then Alternative 3 looks at, again, two seasons with a 50/50 split, and then thirty through sixty fish, again, and then they had also included another one for 120 fish, and the reason this is highlighted in yellow is because these are going to be recommendations that we bring to the committee in December, and so we're recommending that they take that sub-alternative out of there and to make the same range as the previous one and then add an Alternative 4 that would remove the sale prohibition during January through April and specify a 120-fish per trip commercial trip limit for the whole year.

Now, I don't know whether that's reasonable, but it gets -- That's what this sub-alternative was sort of suggesting, and so we just wanted to clean it up a little bit, and then here is the distribution of landings. Again, this one goes from 2005 to 2012 and 2014 through 2016. 2013 was left out because of a closure, and then bear in mind that there is a limited amount of data available for January through April, because a seasonal closure has been in place since 2000, and so it's kind of difficult to give a very complete picture. Then here is the percentage of landings for red porgy. Again, here is just the quota closures that have occurred in recent years, your ACL, and what percent of that has been caught.

For red porgy, I think one of the main objectives is to minimize the level of discards during that first part of the year, and so this is a little bit of a different thing than what the council is coming at with the other split seasons, which were more for evening out the access. This is more for minimizing discards. There you have it.

MR. ATTACK: One question. Why was the red porgies closed in 2000 for those four months?

MS. BROUWER: It was a spawning season closure, from my understanding. That was why it was put in place.

MR. JOHNSON: This is definitely the right direction, and I think we all agree on that, because just throwing these fish back in January, when you're b-liner fishing, is horrible, but, on that same note, I don't think we need to have a very large trip limit either, because that is when they spawn, and so I think one of the smaller numbers, the thirty or forty-five fish, I think that's the way to go. Somebody, when they have a fish that's not going to make it, they can throw him in the box, which is a good thing.

MR. BONURA: I've got a question. Why is it a head count instead of a poundage count on the trip limit?

MS. BROUWER: I knew somebody was going to ask me that, and I can't remember.

MR. ATTACK: It's easier to count fish than weigh fish on a boat, right?

MS. BROUWER: I am being told that it was, I guess, for enforcement, perhaps. It's just easier to keep track of the number of fish versus the poundage.

MR. MOSS: Any more discussion on this?

MR. HULL: Myra, do you remember what the AP recommended on this the last discussion?

MS. BROUWER: I believe the AP had recommended the smaller trip limits during the spawning months, and you had given a range, I believe it was, from thirty to sixty, and so we just broke it down into three sub-alternatives.

MR. COX: I think we should make a motion here to, during the spawning season, to have a limited access to it and maybe drop the trip limit to sixty fish, Sub-Alternative 2c for commercial. That's half of what it is now.

MS. BROUWER: Just for clarification, those trip limits are tied to different percentages of the ACL split, and so, under Alternative 2, it's a 30/70 split. Under Alternative 3, it's a 50/50 split, and so which one would you be more supportive of?

MR. COX: 3.

MS. BROUWER: I'm sorry, but you don't have to -- You can simply just say that the AP supports a certain range during the first part of the year. You don't have to, but that's the way it's laid out.

MR. MOSS: Jack, did you want to select one of them, or just put it down for the --

MR. COX: To be honest with you, I've been looking at so many -- I have bounced around everything but this one. I haven't really paid a whole lot of attention to this red porgy issue here, and so give me just a minute, if you would.

MR. BUFF: Jack, I was just going to say would we not be better off at the 50/50 with the sixty fish? It makes sense. It's like Robert said, too. We won't have to throw them overboard when we're catching them, because we're going to catch them anyway, and sixty is half of what we were having. If we don't catch them in the first part, they're going to roll over anyway.

MR. JOHNSON: I would be more comfortable with the 30/70 split, simply because -- I mean, the whole reason that closure was put in place was to protect these fish while they're spawning. This fish is still in a rebuilding plan, right? So, I think we're going to get into trouble if we just basically say we're going to have a split season and we're going to kill the same amount on each season. I don't know we could defend that as a bycatch fishery, which is what we're really talking about here, or at least I thought that's what we were talking about, is trying to minimize discards.

MR. ATACK: Yes, and, really, the two seasons aren't six months each, right? I mean, the one season is four months and the other season is eight months, right?

MR. COX: Robert, I tend to see where he's coming from as well, and we are still in a rebuilding, and I think we're still overfished, and so, to have that access of the four months, it's certainly more than we have now, to have thirty fish, and so I would support that. I will make that as a motion.

MR. MOSS: Do you want to make that motion?

MR. COX: Sure.

MR. MOSS: Okay.

MR. COX: If I know how to read it right. Help me here, Myra.

MR. JOHNSON: That's not exactly what I was saying. You had two options there on the actual split of the ACL, right? One of them was a 30 percent on the first opening, and the second one was 70 percent. That's what I was saying. I would be more comfortable during the b-liner January 1 opening with 30 percent of the red porgy ACL going there, simply because I know in my area that's when we catch the big mac-daddy porgies, and we catch them because that's when they spawn, and so I just hate to throw them back, especially if I don't think the fish is going to make it, and so I'm just thinking 30 percent in the first opening and 70 percent in the second opening. As far as the number of fish, it doesn't really matter to me if it's sixty or forty-five or whatever, but I just didn't like the way the allocation -- I didn't like the 50/50 split.

MR. COX: What do you think, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm inclined to agree with Robert. I have some old stress from red porgy way back in 2000, and so it makes me nervous to completely -- To anything that would look like completely opening up during that spawning time, and I feel like it's a shorter time period anyway, and 30 percent hopefully would get us enough. I mean, I don't want us to come back and revisit it because we're shutting down, but it's better than what we had.

MR. MOSS: Robert, did you want to go ahead and make that motion?

MR. JOHNSON: **Yes, I will make a motion. You're going to have to put them back up there. My mind is scrambled, but whatever the alternative was that was a 30/70 percent, and I think that was Alternative 2, wasn't it?**

MR. MOSS: 2c.

MR. JOHNSON: **2c and sixty fish.**

MR. MOSS: Let me read that, and then we'll see if we've got any more discussion on it. **Specify two commercial fishing seasons for red porgy and allocate the commercial red porgy annual catch limit into two quotas, 30 percent to the period January 1 through April 30 and 70 percent to the period May 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would transfer to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward. Remove the sale and purchase prohibition during January 1 to April 30 each year. Retain the commercial trip limit of 120 fish from May through December 31 and specify a commercial trip limit from January 1 through April 30 of sixty fish.** Are you good with that?

MR. JOHNSON: That's it.

MR. HULL: I will second it.

MR. MOSS: Second by Jimmy. Any more discussion before we put it to a vote?

MR. ATTACK: I guess I agree with the Alternative 2. I think we're taking a big jump by going to sixty fish from no fish for four months when the in-season limit is 120, and so I would prefer to be a little more conservative, if we're opening this up in a spawning season, to go with thirty fish for a trip limit. Once you get above so many fish, people have a hard time counting anyway, if you get up to sixty, but I think we would be better off going with thirty, and that's my opinion.

MR. JOHNSON: I will respond to that. Jim, that's the purpose of the 30 percent, and so it's not like you're going to catch the same level. When it's projected to be closed, they just close it, and it's that simple.

MR. ATTACK: Right, but if you go ahead and hit that quota in February, then you're back to no take and discard mortality again for the rest of the season.

MR. JOHNSON: I think red porgy are open right now, and so the ACL -- That is why fishermen are saying, hey, look, we need to be able to catch a few more of these fish. We're not reaching the ACL under the current rebuilding plan, and so give us a few of these fish for a bycatch fishery in that January 1 opening.

MR. ATTACK: Yes, I understand that. What I was saying was, in the spawning season, when you hit sixty fish per trip, and you hit the ACL for the 30 percent, come February 28, then you're going to be closed again for the next two months and going back to discard mortality. If you set that trip limit too high, you will still close it in that part of the year, and you'll be throwing fish back. With a smaller trip limit of thirty per trip, then you've probably got more likelihood of not closing it before May 1, and we are in a rebuilding plan still for the fishery, right?

MS. MARHEFKA: For our next meeting, would it be possible -- There is that discard logbook, and so is it possible to get an idea of some kind of numbers that are really being thrown back during those months, so we know if we're increasing what is being --

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and maybe during lunch -- I think I have some of that information, and not updated, but I think I can maybe dig it up and see if I can bring it up after lunch.

MR. MUNDEN: I have a question for Myra. Up at the very top of this item, Action 4, it says, "Motion to move Alternative 2 under Action 4 to the Considered but Rejected Appendix", and does that mean that this item has been taken off the table by the council?

MS. BROUWER: Sorry for that, Red. No, that was an alternative that -- I can't quite recall what it was, but it was removed, because it just was not within the range that the council wished to consider, and so it's not even shown here. These are the motions that were approved, and then what I am showing you is the result, and so my recollection -- I can bring it up and show you, but I think it just had some blanks and didn't specify percentages, and I think it was very repetitive, and so they haven't really removed anything from consideration that is within the range that you currently see right now.

MR. MOSS: Robert, just to throw this out there, and I see what Jim is saying, that you're essentially allocating 30 percent of the fish to 25 percent of the year, when you're ideally catching a lot more and bigger of those fish anyway, and so it's something to consider with the fish limit. I don't, obviously, have a dog in this fight, being recreational and from south Florida, and so just something to consider.

MR. JOHNSON: I understand his point. Without seeing an analysis -- I mean, we're not reaching the ACL, and so it would be nice for the guys to be able to retain those fish. They are going to catch them. Obviously, any time there is a bycatch fishery, they are going to catch them. They're going to have sixty per boat when they come in, but you've got weather issues that time of year, and you're got so many factors that -- I may be wrong, but I don't think it's going to bite us.

MR. BUFF: They did give three numbers up there, and so the 45 would be splitting the middle, and so I'm just throwing that out there. It's better than none.

MR. JOHNSON: **I can change it to forty-five if the group likes that better.** You're right that forty-five is better than none.

MR. MOSS: Jimmy, are you okay with that? Do you still second it?

MR. HULL: I am fine with that, yes. I will second it.

MR. MOSS: Any more discussion? Let me re-read it before we vote. **Specify two commercial fishing seasons for red porgy. Allocate the commercial red porgy annual catch limit into two quotas, 30 percent to the period January 1 through April 30 and 70 percent to the period May 1 through December 31. Any remaining quota from Season 1 would carry to Season 2. Any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward. Remove the sale and purchase prohibition during January 1 to April 30 each year. Retain the commercial trip limit of 120 fish from May 1 through December 31 and specify a commercial trip limit from January 1 through April 30 of forty-five fish. Let's go ahead and put it to a vote. All those in favor. The motion passes unanimous.**

MS. BROUWER: I do have a table showing red porgy discards, and I can't project it right now, because it's on my laptop, and I will get it up there after lunch, but just to make sure that that's completed here, and so I'm looking -- This is estimates from 2014 through 2016, based on self-reported discards. It was accessed May of 2017, and this is in numbers of fish. For red porgy, we're looking at, for the month of January, 491 fish. February was 553, and March was 512. April was 247, and then, in May, it drops down to ninety-nine. June was forty-five, and July was sixty. Certainly the majority of the discards are happening those first four months of the year.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just remind me again what's the subset of people that are reporting to that. Is it like 10 percent or something? I can't remember.

MS. BROUWER: I want to say 20 percent. I see Chip nodding yes that it's 20 percent.

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MARHEFKA: About 40 percent of permitted unlimited vessels are reporting their discards? That is impressive.

MR. COX: Just real quick, I know our vermilion spawn throughout the year, many times. How about the information on the red porgy? Is it just in the winter/spring, or is it a fall spawn as well?

MS. BROUWER: I think it's just those -- The peak of the spawn is during that late winter and early spring.

MR. MOSS: Okay. If it's okay with everybody, we're going to go ahead and break for lunch for an hour-and-a-half, and so we'll be back here at 1:45.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. MOSS: Let's take our seats and let's get moving on. Welcome back. Now comes the challenging part, staying awake after lunch. Before we go too much further, Myra has a couple of tables of the spawning seasons and I think about the discards as well that was requested, and so I know she's going to pull that up real quick, and then we can move on.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, David. Up on your screen is a table that was put together a little bit ago. These are numbers, like I said earlier, from the discard logbook, accessed earlier this year, and here is the -- It looks like this table has been updated. Maybe I was reading to you from a different one, but these are different numbers than what I stated earlier. These are expanded to overall South Atlantic commercial fishing efforts, and so I guess what I was reading to year earlier, before we broke for lunch, were the raw numbers, and these are the expanded numbers.

You can see that the discards for red porgy, like we were saying before lunch, are pretty high during those initial four, or really five, months of the year, and so you have discard information for other species as well. You have greater amberjack. Here, it looks like there is a peak here in May, and numbers for vermilion. I am going to leave that up just for a couple of minutes, just to make sure that everybody has had a chance to take a look at it. If you need me to bring it back up as we continue in our discussions for different species, I would be glad to do that. Keep in mind that these are, like I said earlier, self-reported numbers.

MR. JOHNSON: Is this the commercial sector only?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, this is only for the commercial sector.

MR. JOHNSON: I was just trying to figure out why they were throwing back snowy grouper in January. I understand there's a trip limit, but what else are you going to catch with the snowy? Once you have your limit, why wouldn't you -- Blueline tilefish, you think? I was just curious.

MS. BROUWER: The other thing that was requested is information on the spawning seasons for some of these species, and so I have this table here, and it's kind of hard for you to see, but the species are listed over here, and it's not all the snapper grouper species, but the main ones, and then the black cells indicate the peak of spawn, and the gray is sort of the edges of the spawning season, and so you can see how things kind of line up, and so we've got gray triggerfish, and here is greater amberjack. April and May is when they're at the peak of their spawn.

Vermilion is right here, June through August, and blueline tilefish has a very lengthy spawning season, from April through September, and it actually starts earlier in the year, and so these things are spawning year-round. Golden tilefish is right here, and here is black sea bass and gag, and what else? Red grouper, somebody was asking about red grouper, and so it goes from February through June, with a peak in April. This is for the entire South Atlantic, and this is information that's been gathered from many different sources, but it was published this year. This is what I can offer. As we go on with our discussions, we'll have this information in the background if you need it.

MR. HULL: Myra, thanks. Is there any way that you could send those to the AP members?

MS. BROUWER: I would be happy to do that. I will email it later this afternoon.

MR. HULL: Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Let me just write myself a note here, so I don't forget to send that email. Moving on to Action 5, this one you are familiar with. It's modifying the trip limit for vermilion. This is something that I think the AP had brought up. Their suggestion had been to put in a trip limit for the second season, and so what we have here is several options to modify the trip limit.

Alternative 2 modifies the trip limit down to 750 pounds and retains that trip limit reduction to 500 pounds when 75 percent of the quota, each of the quotas for the two seasons, are met. Alternative 3 only modifies the trip limit for the second season, and so it would put that at 500 pounds, and remove the step-down, and then Alternative 4 would put a trip limit in both seasons at 750 pounds and remove the step-down only in Season 2. These are the alternatives that were kind of requested that they be analyzed, and here is a table that shows you, again, using two different methods to project when the season would be closed.

This table actually does still apply to the current alternatives, because they have been modified very little, and so, under Alternative 2, which takes the trip limit down to 750 pounds and retains the step-down, you're looking at a projected trip limit reduction anywhere from late August or

early September, with a closure three weeks later. Both methodologies here are in pretty close agreement, and so that's a good thing. That's what you want to see.

Under Alternative 3, which has the trip limit down to 500 pounds gutted weight in Season 2 and removes the step-down, you're looking at -- There is no step-down, and so that's why there is a blank up here, but then the fishery would potentially close around early to mid-October. Then, if you simply just take the trip limit down to 750 pounds, as it is suggested under Alternative 4, and remove the trip limit reduction in Season 2, then you're looking at the fishery staying open through mid-September, and here is your range, using those two different methods.

Recent landings and quota closures are shown here in Table 7, and so it shows you, for each season, when the trip limit has been reduced and when the fishery was shut down. That's where we are for vermilion, and I know the AP has had several recommendations for the council on this one, and so I don't know if you want to add to what you have already recommended.

MR. COX: Myra, could you tell me, in the last two years, when vermilion was closed in the second season?

MS. BROUWER: The last three years, and so we're going back to 2015, closures happened in April and September, April 15 and September 22. Then, in 2016, it closed in March. The second season, it closed and then it reopened, and it reopened just for two days last year, and I don't have any more recent information than this.

MR. COX: Then Alternative 4, what were the projected closure dates be again?

MS. BROUWER: Mid-September, early to mid-September.

MS. MARHEFKA: I might be having a blonde moment, but none of these are getting us anywhere, and is that correct, even though we're reducing the trip limit?

MS. BROUWER: Right.

MS. MARHEFKA: Why?

MS. BROUWER: I don't know how to explain that, but this is something to consider, that even though -- I guess it seems that the trip limit reduction with vermilion doesn't really get you that much of a longer season, and so it might be that you're better off lowering the trip limit across the board without the step-down, and that might get you a little bit longer, but it's not a lot.

MR. BUFF: Kerry and Jack, I want you guys, and Robert, but I would like for everybody to weigh in on reducing the trip limit for the whole year down to 750, and I would also like everybody to weigh in on the triggerfish, because I think everybody's goal here is to try to make this more year-round, and fifteen boxes of fish is a pretty good trip.

If we can keep them coming across the dock for ten months or eleven months, and the sad thing for where we're at, from where Florida is, is that really -- April, May, and June would be our prime time, because the water is starting to warm up, and then we have October, November, and December, and so we're putting a ton of effort in, and the water is either really, really cold or

really, really hot, and so it's really not a prime time for us, and it would just be nice to have the season last longer, and I would like for all of you all -- I would like to hear what you have to say about that.

MR. COX: Scott, I appreciate it. We've looked at some other things to try to do things differently, but it's certainly not slowing things down a whole lot. I would support it, but the problem is that we just looked -- If you go to 750 year-round, then it's not getting us very much more time. As bad as I hate to say it, maybe we need to get an analysis on a 500-pound trip limit rather than the 750.

MR. BUFF: It's 750 just for the second season.

MR. COX: Then, to include an alternative in here, you need some analysis done on a 500-pound trip limit, but I would make a recommendation to -- **I would like to make a motion, if I could at this time, and that motion would read: Have staff do an analysis on a 500-pound vermilion trip limit year-round for the split season, just to get a projection closure date, to see if we get any more time out of it.**

MR. HULL: Scott, vermilion is part of our bread and butter, and we sure would like to see it open longer. If you went with Alternative 4, according to this, it looked like September 18 was an agreement between these two, and we're closed now. Every trip -- If you only gained three or four more trips, in our view, that's a lot, and so, if you went to 750, I could live with 750, especially if I think I'm going to get a few more trips out of it, and those -- Every trip is that much more valuable, and I know you know that and agree with it.

Jack, or Kerry, you said we're not getting a lot more out of it, but, if we're getting another month, or if we're getting a couple of weeks even, we're at that point where we need everything we can get. The other guys in my area who I have talked to about this, and there is a lot of vermilion fishermen out of Mayport, Florida, and they're not -- They need to be heard from also, which they will get their opportunity, but a lot of them won't like any of this, but we're a day-boat fishery, basically, and we have adapted to that, and so 750 is a -- We're fine with that, and we may even be fine with 500. I would like to see analysis of that, too, and so we're all heading in the same direction of trying to get more days. If we only get a few more days by doing something, I'm all for the few more days too, because every one is important.

MR. JOHNSON: If you look at the landings, I think somewhere in this document there is landings. North Carolina's landings are not much different from Florida's landings in that first opening, and so I don't think it's a fairness issue, but I do know -- I understand where they're coming from, because they are dealers. I am not a dealer. I am a fisherman, and I think, when you take over \$2,000 out of somebody's paycheck on a trip, that's a chunk.

My point, when I first talked about this a few meetings back, and I didn't even get a second, was you've got -- That first fishery needs to be where you can make some money, because you don't have that many species available. The second opening, you do. You have got a whole host of other species available besides vermilion, and I think the way to go would be to leave the first one alone. If you're going to go to a 500-pound trip limit, do it on the second opening, when you've got everything under the sun available to catch, versus the first opening, where you've taken a lot of these species off the board. That's just my personal opinion.

750 pounds, could I live with that? Yes, but my guys are going to scream about any reduction, because they go out there and spend -- It's different between where Jimmy is. That is a day-boat fishery, and my boat is not a day boat. It goes for two or three days, and they want to go out there and catch as many fish as they can and make as much money as they can in that three-day window. Like I said, if you go from 1,000 to 500 pounds, the b-liners, two and ups, are \$4.50 a pound, and we can all do the math.

MR. BUFF: I like the 500 pounds, but I just think that, if we go that route, we're all going to get our throats cut. I couldn't even imagine bringing this up on the dock, because those guys would go ballistic, and that's why I was suggesting if we went to 750 for the whole season, and it's not really an artery cut, but it's just a little drip, maybe.

It might not be as painful across the board for everybody, and, like Jimmy says, even if we get three weeks -- Guys, I said this the first time I was here, but this is kind of a mixed-up fishery at the minute, and, at some point in time, we're either going to get smaller boats or we're going to be day boats or -- It's got to change, because you can't spend \$25,000 keeping a boat up, with the insurance and the maintenance, and have these little trip limits, but, at the end of the day, we're going to have to all move in that direction.

I have got big boats too, and, at the end of the day, we're going to do other things with them and figure out how to make it work, but these smaller trip limits is something that I think that -- It keeps the markets open, and, like Robert said, he's not a dealer, but Jack and Kerry and myself and, Jimmy, I think you -- Do you have a market, too? It's really important, guys, to have these fish on these markets, and to even have that guy do something for another month, and that's a big ordeal for us. You've got six or eight or ten boats sitting at the dock for people just to be able to work four more weeks and four more weeks of fish coming across the dock, to be able to sell to the customers and have available, I think it's worth the little bit of pain that it would cause.

MR. COX: To your point on the second season, any time I think about Amendment 27, I remember several years ago, and we were talking about a traditional bandit boat amendment, and this is kind of where we started with this amendment. I have boats that stay at sea for three days, and I have some day boats, and I certainly don't want to see this fishery turn into a day-boat fishery. That's not what we want to do.

I always think in terms of a \$5,000 gross profit, when I think of Amendment 27, and, as I look at these other alternatives and actions that are in Amendment 27, I look at other species that will be open that are not open now, a split season on snowy and a split season on almaco and the pink snapper fishery that may be open, and so I'm trying to think of some of these things that may get us to that target of a \$5,000 trip.

I am pretty shocked at seeing this 750 pounds from 1,000 doesn't extend the season but by just a little bit, but I just want you to know that I certainly don't want to see us go to a day-boat fishery, because there is a lot of folks that that would impact, and I don't know. All we're doing is asking for some analysis to see how it changes and if it does very much, but it's very interesting to see that, if you shave off just a little bit, it doesn't give you very much more time.

MS. MARHEFKA: Also to remind everyone that we're in the process of starting the stock assessment, and so we don't know what's going to happen there. I would like to think that we can be positive and we're going to get a little fish back, but I've been around this long enough to know that maybe that won't happen.

We have also adapted. Part of our story is that we've adapted to making shorter trips. Mark is a snapper grinder, and always has been, and I remember going down to 1,000 and thinking there was no way we were going to survive, and, somehow, we've adapted, and 500 would be fine for me, but that doesn't mean that I am tone-deaf to the needs of the bigger -- I mean, we're a big boat, but Mark just -- I don't know, but he just makes it work.

It's so important, really though, to have the market all year. What's important for us, I can tell you, is that November and December are just miserable. They're just miserable. It's just not being able to make any money, and so anything we can do to extend it, Jimmy, even just a couple of trips would make my house a lot happier, I know that, and so that's where I'm coming from, but I don't want to hurt the other guys too bad either, but I think we're all adapting to something. I don't think it's going to be a day-boat fishery, but I think that we're adapting to it. This is a new reality, and it's going to be these smaller trip limits if we want to stay open all year, and so I will support looking at all those options.

MR. HULL: We just need to see a lot of analysis and all kinds of options. Staying at 1,000 for the first part of the season and going down to 500 at the second, and see where we get, and then we can make choices, and the council can make choices, but it looks like this is a long ways down the road yet, and so we need to see a lot of analysis on it.

MR. BUFF: Also, too, guys, your fish prices should go up some, and we're not going to be sitting with 4,000 or 5,000 pounds of them in the cooler, wondering what you're going to get for them too, and so just kind of that little bit of reduction is going to slow the jam up with everybody having thousands of pounds of b-liners, that are going up or down seventy-five or eighty-cents, for us to try to sell.

MR. SNYDER: One thing to keep in mind that you all don't want to hear is that my guests are starting to get a little bit of a resistance to the high price of fish. I know you don't want to hear it, but it's a reality, and that's where some of the bycatch or the alternative species are starting to help me out. All of a sudden, I am selling red porgy, which is nice. It's taking pressure off the more expensive fish, but, for the first time, I am selling red porgy at twenty-two or twenty-three or twenty-four-dollars a plate, versus the grouper at twenty-eight to thirty-two-dollars a plate. Just something to keep in mind.

MR. MOSS: Any more discussion on this motion before I read it again?

MR. HULL: Just that maybe we could add -- I am sure there's going to be a lot of analysis on all the different things, and so lots of different options as far as the first season and leaving it at 1,000 and then reducing to 500 and a couple other different options to look at.

MS. BROUWER: The council, in order for us to stick to that timeline that I presented earlier, if the council wants to submit this amendment to the Secretary in September, they are going to have

to finalize the range of alternatives that they want us to analyze in December. If you want to suggest additional analyses, I would do that right now.

MR. COX: I will make that motion. I will make a motion that -- Well, I've got a motion up. Did it get seconded?

MR. MOSS: It did get seconded.

MR. COX: Then, if it has been seconded, should we go ahead and like suggest an alternative for the council to add in in December? Is that something we can do now, because this is our only opportunity.

MS. BROUWER: Right. You will have to dispense with this motion, and so you can either withdraw it and make a new one or you can vote it up or down and then move forward from there.

MR. COX: I think that we should still have that motion and vote on it, and then we can move forward with a motion to add the alternative.

MR. MOSS: Okay. If we don't have any more discussion on this particular motion -- **The motion is consider adding analysis for a 500-pound trip limit year-round.** It was already seconded. We will go ahead and vote. **All those in favor. It passes unanimous.** Jack, did you have another one that you wanted to --

MR. COX: **I was just going to make a motion that the council consider adding an alternative for a split season of January through June with a 500-pound trip limit, no step-down. Season 1 would be the same, but the second season would -- I am pretty sure that we would catch the quota, and so there's no reason to put that -- It would be a 500-pound trip limit year-round.**

MR. ATACK: How is that different from the first motion? I don't understand.

MR. COX: The first motion is just to get the analysis to see what it would look like, but we don't have time to get the analysis back to make another suggestion, and so we've kind of got to do it all.

MR. JOHNSON: I just think it's a little bit early to be -- I mean, we need to really see analysis before we -- I would like to see analysis done on a different motion than you first one, and so I would like to add that, but we can vote on this one, but I can't support this, because I don't know what it's going to do for us.

MR. MOSS: I think the reason this was done, Robert, was because we don't have time to put in the analysis and then wait for that to come back and then add the motion, and so we've kind of got to do it all in one shot, and so, this way, we can put in the recommendation to do the analysis, and then you add that other alternative as a possibility. Then, when it all comes back, we can then vote how you guys want to take it. I am kind of speaking for you, Jack, but is that --

MR. COX: You're right.

MR. PHILLIPS: I just want to remind you all that we've got that vermilion assessment coming. I think the SSC is going to get it in the spring of 2018, and I would be surprised if the council changed something and, as soon as the assessment comes, providing it's -- We will, more than likely, have new regulations of some sort when that assessment comes, and so I would be surprised if the council wanted to do a whole lot until we see that assessment, and I am listening to the conversation, and it's good conversation, but just so you all know that we do have an assessment coming, and it's coming quick.

MR. FREEMAN: A question for you guys that are involved in this commercial fishery. The fact that the numbers are kind of hard to understand, how often are you actually hitting that maximum trip limit now? If it's being done very seldom, it suggests that the lower trip limits really isn't going to change your overall gross take during the year.

MR. COX: Robert, right now, we're having a big bycatch, because we're trigger fishing, and we're discarding a lot of vermilion, and so what we're trying to do is to line it up, so we're not doing so much of that, and so we are catching -- Every other trip, we hit our limit and we catch 1,000 pounds, and so some days -- It's just fishing.

Some trips, you will get 500 or 600, and, the next trip, you get 1,000, but the guys -- I think what's very frustrating is, in Morehead right now, the 400 line or 500 line, they have beat the triggers up so bad, since vermilion have been closed the last couple of months. They're getting small, and they don't want to go fish for those small trigger, especially now that we have a size limit on it, and so we're just trying to figure out a way -- In respect to what Charlie is saying, I still think this is good for the council to look at and see how we're thinking, because this is the reality, and this is where we're going. You don't want to target a species and throw one back, and the guys are really getting frustrated.

MR. BUFF: Do we have any idea on how the assessment is going at this point? Is it positive or negative, or does anybody even know that? Are we far enough along?

MS. BROUWER: It's definitely too early to say one way or another. They're still -- You're going to get an update on the assessments from Julia tomorrow, where you will be able to ask a little more detailed questions, but it's definitely too early.

MR. MOSS: Any more discussion on this?

MR. JOHNSON: Just a question for Jack. I mean, you've got Season 1, and so what about Season 2?

MR. COX: You did good answering the last one for me, and so, if you know where I'm going with it, go ahead.

MR. MOSS: I thought that you had said, actually, that you were going to do it for both seasons, right?

MR. COX: Correct.

MR. MOSS: Okay. Again, unless I am understanding this incorrectly, which is certainly possible, the data is already there. All that Jack is asking is that we do the arithmetic a little bit different to see how a 500-pound trip limit would affect things, right? Am I correct in saying that? Okay. I don't think we got a second on this one yet, if someone wanted to second it.

MS. MARHEFKA: I will second it.

MR. MOSS: Kerry seconded it. Any more discussion on this one? Let's make 100 percent sure. Did you want to do that just in Season 1 or in both seasons?

MR. COX: **Both seasons, with a carryover from Season 1, if there is any to carry over.**

MS. BROUWER: I am not seeing how it's different from the previous motion that was already approved.

MR. MOSS: Because one is just to do the analysis.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. I get it.

MR. COX: What we're hoping is that the council has time to look at some staff work between now and December and that you guys might be able to get that done for us. You know you can do it.

MR. MOSS: All right. So, to recap, again, I think that we're trying to do here, or what Jack is trying to do, is get the analysis. Then, once the analysis is done, if the analysis doesn't show anything that's favorable, then whatever. Then we can discard it, but at least we have that option on the table with this second motion. If we don't put in this second motion, then the analysis doesn't mean anything anyway. I will read this. **Consider adding an alternative for a 500-pound trip limit in both seasons with no step-downs. All those who approve; those opposed. It passes twelve to two.** All right. Action 6.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, but I just know how painful this would be for my area. We have a lot of people in Daytona Beach and St. Augustine and Jacksonville that crew members off of charter boats spend January, February, and March commercial fishing, because there is very little business, and you're just taking a lot of money out of their pocket. At least let me make a motion to add the same thing for some different options than this one. I would like to make a motion to look at, and we can cover it all in one motion, but, if they consider alternatives, they're going to do analysis anyway, right?

MS. BROUWER: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. **To consider an alternative that leaves the first season as is, which is a 1,000-pound trip limit with a step-down, and you can step down to 500, and I think that's what it is, and then the second season with a trip limit of 500 pounds with no step-down.** It would be good to see analysis on a whole host of alternatives, really, if we're going to do it.

MR. MOSS: Okay. Let me read this one, and then we'll have some discussion on it. Consider an alternative that leaves the trip limit in Season 1 as is, and so it's 1,000, with a step-down to 500, and specify a trip limit of 500 pounds with no step-down in Season 2.

MR. HULL: I will second it.

MR. MOSS: We've got a second from Jimmy.

MR. COX: I was just trying to keep it fair. I mean, North Carolina is at a huge disadvantage because of the weather. We get like two trips, vermilion trips, if we're lucky, in that spring of the year, in January, February, and March, and the season closes, as you've seen before, and that's getting closed down by Florida, and so I think that is why I said just leave it fair and leave it equitable across the board there for both fisheries. I don't know if that diagram shows it, where it's an even distribution of landings of vermilion, but it's certainly not that way by North Carolina.

MR. MOSS: Before we go too far, hold on. It was just brought to our attention, and we didn't notice it right away, but that actually is Alternative 3, almost exactly, and so that's already up there as an alternative. We can still discuss it, and it's fine, but we just don't need to make a motion to add it.

MR. JOHNSON: Is there some place in this document that shows the landings the last couple of years? I could have sworn that -- I glanced through this thing, and I didn't spend as much time on it as I should have, probably, but --

MS. BROUWER: I don't believe we have the landings broken down, the distribution by state. Vermilion was just not one of the species on the list that the council requested that information for, and so the landings -- All I have, in terms of landings right now, is the table that shows what's been landed, but it's not broken down by state.

MR. JOHNSON: Right, and I'm sensitive to Jack's point. I am all about being fair, but then you would have people in our area that would say, well, yes, the fishing is a lot better in the second half of the season up the road than it is here, and so I don't know. I just know that's a very important fishery to those boats out of Mayport and St. Augustine, and you are going to have a lot of unhappy people if it goes to a 500-pound trip limit, and probably some boats are not going to be able to make it, because that's a huge hit. That's a lot of money out of their pockets.

MR. BUFF: The fishing isn't better in our place in the second half of the year, because the water temperature is so hot. Our prime times are May and June, which is already closed, and October, November, and December, which 90 percent of the time we're already closed, and so I would just like to make that point. Guys, we can -- Robert, it's going to hurt everybody. I am not sitting here saying that I want to send my boats for 500 pounds, but it's how long do we want to eat the pie? Do we want to eat it all at one time, or do we want to nibble on it the whole year? That's kind of where we're at.

MS. BROUWER: I guess the motion is exactly what has already been analyzed under Alternative 3. As you can see in the table, the analysis projects the season to last through the beginning of October under that alternative, and so it's already been analyzed, and I guess I want to -- I don't want to discourage the AP from suggesting more analysis to the council, but just bear in mind that

we're still early on in the amendment, and that you will get a chance to see this again in the spring with the accompanying analyses, which, unfortunately, you don't have in front of you right now.

MR. COX: Myra, I thought you just said that the council has got to have this in December for it to go to hearings in September.

MS. BROUWER: They have to have the range of alternatives, and so, as far as -- I guess I don't want you to get too caught up into which one is better than what. Where we're at right now is selecting an appropriate range, and then we'll have another opportunity to say, okay, out of all of these, this is the one that we prefer, and that step will come to you in the spring.

MR. BUFF: Should we try another number, like 600 or 650 or 625, being that we don't have another choice to send this? I am just asking. Now is the time, and should we do that? Do we even want to go through that again, or do we want to just see where the 500 lands?

MR. COX: I think what we're doing -- It's our job here to put in whatever we can and let fishermen make comment and let them think about it, and I think they need the same information we need, to see what their seasons will look like and how their portfolio will look and their business, but I would suggest any alternatives that we can add would be certainly helpful.

MR. BUFF: So why don't we make a motion, or I will make a motion, to let's do 600 or 650, just to see what that number is, and have it the whole year with the split season with no step-down. Do we want that, too? I will make a motion for 650.

MR. JOHNSON: **If my motion is already an alternative, I am going to withdraw it, if it's already an alternative.**

MR. MOSS: Okay, and so let's do a little bit of clean-up here. Robert, you are going to withdraw this, correct?

MR. JOHNSON: My understanding is it's already included in the document. Sorry about that.

MR. MOSS: Okay, and so now, Scott, if you want to go ahead and make a motion, the floor is yours.

MR. BUFF: **I want to make a motion that we do 650 and the analysis for both seasons with no step-downs.**

MR. MOSS: Is there a second anywhere? There is a second. Is there discussion?

MR. BONURA: This is to Jack and Scott. How come you haven't thought about like a higher trip limit and then, when it steps down, go to like 100 or 200 pounds and then just keep it open, so you're not throwing fish away? Catch your fish faster with less expenses and go out and catch them and come in and then you're done.

MR. BUFF: For me and Jack and Kerry, our goal, and Jimmy, is to try to keep from flooding the market, number one, and fish prices plummeting, because it's really hard, and a lot of you guys don't see this, but, around mid-February to April, once everybody gets their belly full of them and

you're getting in this little routine where that 1,000 pounds is hitting the dock every week, the market gets saturated, and you really can't do nothing with them, and so prices plummet, and so we're catching more fish at a faster rate, but we're getting less money for them, plus they're jammed up.

You can't do anything with them, and you can't hardly get nobody to take them, and all we're trying to do is keep something steady and level that will maintain for most of the year and be able to provide a trip for the boat for that \$4,000 to \$5,000 trip, to keep the traditional boats to where they can make a profit.

MR. COX: Vincent, I appreciate your thoughts on that, because there was something else that we looked at in this amendment that we really hadn't talked about, and that was the commercial boats can keep a recreational limit of bycatch, like their twenty almaco and their five b-liners a person, and so I would certainly like to see us take a little small percentage off of the ACL and set it aside just for a little something extra, where they come in a trip and where they have fish that may float off or something. They are keeping it anyway, and so they should be able to sell it. At some point, maybe we could add that as a motion. I would like to put that in before we're done with this amendment.

MR. BONURA: That's what I meant on the whole 100 or 200 pounds. You could sell them, and you're not throwing them away. I mean, I don't catch b-liners much, but, at 500 pounds, it would seem that it would be hard to make a profit at 500 pounds.

MR. COX: The goal, again, is, like I said, the guys that I have talked to, and some of the other fishermen may see it different, but, if we could have a \$5,000 stock on these bandit boats, these trip boats that stay out for three days, then we can have somewhat of a profitable trip with three crew members, and, at 500 pounds, that is the equivalent of about \$4.00 a pound to the boat, on the average, and so that gives you about \$2,000.

Then you can take some other species, as we're starting to fine-tune some of these other fisheries, and so, like I said before, I'm always thinking of the \$5,000 stock. If it's more, that's great, and, like Kerry said, we're all expecting to see a boost in the fishery, and this will probably change at our next AP meeting that we get together, but I think our vermilion stock assessment -- We're all just banking on it to be good.

MR. BONURA: All right. It sounds good, and I understand what you're saying, but 500 pounds is not \$5,000, and I guess you can go catch other fish, but, if you're going in and out on the b-liners, it's only \$2,000 and not the \$5,000.

MR. HULL: To that point, our fishery is a total mixed bag. The vermilion would just be one part of what we're doing. We get our amberjack, and we get our vermilion. The goal that we're kind of looking at is a lot more trips with multispecies that are all open at the same time, so that we can -- It's kind of like on the recreational side. You've got your menu of this, this, this, and this that you can fill. Well, that's kind of where we're at. Rather than having vermilion shut down when we're trying to catch triggerfish and then we're just throwing back vermilion, or have amberjack shut down, but it's a multispecies trip.

If it was just a vermilion trip at 500 pounds, unless you had a little boat and you were steaming fast back and forth, you couldn't make it, but, with a mixed bag, we can do it, and, if we have more -- Imagine the value of 500 pounds of vermilion in my area a week before Christmas and a week after Christmas, when there's not a lot of fish around and there's a big demand. I mean, it would really be valuable to have that.

MR. JOHNSON: Just one more comment. January, February, and March is not little-boat fishery time. That's why I said what I said about it's important to these guys. We fish a lot of rough days, and we just need to make it worthwhile to go, but we'll live with whatever.

MR. MOSS: Okay. If there's no more discussion, let's go ahead and put this one to a vote. **All those who approve, fifteen; opposed, one. It passes fifteen to one.**

MR. ATACK: Maybe it's in here, but I don't see it, I don't think, but one alternative might be the 750 in the first season, and then do your 500 in the second season, to see how that would pan out.

MR. MOSS: It doesn't look like it, if you wanted to add that as a motion.

MR. ATACK: **While we're looking at options, I think it would be worth considering adding an alternative for a 750-pound trip limit in the first season and, for the second season, a 500-pound trip limit.** It might extend your closure in March until later in the year.

MR. MOSS: With no step-downs, correct? Okay. Does anybody want to second that? We've got a second from Jack. Any discussion? Okay. Let's go ahead and put that one to a vote. **All those who approve. It passes unanimous.** All right. Anything else on this action? Any more alternatives? Going once -- All right. Moving on to Action 6.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, David. Action 6 would implement a trip limit for the other jacks complex, and, here, we had -- We brought this to the council in September, and they made some changes, and you can see the motions in there. They wanted to include some step-downs. Originally, the alternatives that we analyzed did not have step-downs. Again, this was guidance they gave us just a few weeks ago, and so we don't have the information analyzed for them.

Currently, Alternative 2 would put in a trip limit, and it varies from 500 to 300 pounds, which is the range that you guys had actually suggested, and then the council wanted to see reductions to half of the trip limit once 75 percent of that ACL was met or projected to be met, and so there would be a step-down to 250, 200, and 150, and then we are going to suggest to them to also consider, at least for analysis purposes, just straight-up trip limits without the step-down for the other jacks complex.

Over here, this is information the council saw back in June. This is the monthly ratio of almaco to the other species in the jacks complex, mainly just to illustrate that the majority of what's being caught is made up of almaco jacks, and so, under these various alternatives, the ones that are left right now, the preliminary analyses shows you right here, using these two different methodologies, how long the season would last, and this is, of course, like I said, without the step-downs.

We have anywhere from the beginning to the end of July for the 500-pound trip limit. For the 400-pound trip limit, we're looking at mid-July to early August, and, the 300-pound trip limit, we're

looking at August 5 to August 29. Here are the recent landings and closure dates for the other jacks complex for the commercial sector. Here, I guess it would be useful to comment, if you wish, on whether these step-downs make sense and whether you think that just a straight-up trip limit also should be part of the ranges they consider for this complex.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't know if we need to get into the step-downs and all of that. I think just a straight-up trip limit. We don't have one now. We don't have anything now, but I am curious. Is there anywhere where we could actually see, in that complex, what percentage of the complex was banded rudderfish and what percentage was almaco, or was it not broken down like that?

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so what I have here is just the ratio, I guess, of almaco to everything else in that complex, which is guess is lesser amberjack and banded rudderfish, and so the majority of the landings, like 80 percent or whatever, is almaco.

MR. COX: I have been waiting a long time for this. When I first got on the council in 2013, one of the first things that I brought up was that we needed to do something with almaco, because the season closes so early, and that -- Where I am at, some of the boats will hit them pretty hard, and they will come in with 1,500 pounds a trip of almaco. Then, all of a sudden, a little while later, it closes, and a lot of those fish are two to three-pound fish, and the boat price is considerably less for a small fish, two to three pounds, than it is for a fish that's over five pounds.

Before we leave this action, I had something else that I wanted to bring up, but I would consider, I think, a 500-pound trip limit. That would certainly be something worth looking at, being that we have nothing in place, and so I think the range of alternatives look well in here, to me, and I don't think that we need to do a whole lot.

MR. ATTACK: Yes, but, when you look at it, it's not really changing your season, those trip limits they've got set up. If you look at the next table, you're talking about closing it in August or July. The alternative you want will close July 28. Unless you drop, it looks like, trip limits below 300 pounds, you're not going to get past August.

MR. COX: I know it's a problem. I mean, where do you start? I certainly hate to see us go from no trip limits right on out to a 250. What we need to do is split the jack complex up, and I think there is some measurements being done on that as well, and so maybe we wait and see what happens there and just use this, but, with the split -- Well, I don't know. Certainly, like I said, I don't want to go to a day-boat fishery, and I promised myself that I wouldn't support anything less than a 500-pound trip limit. That's where we're headed if we do, but I don't know.

MS. BROUWER: Just to clarify, I meant to explain that there was an alternative in here that the council considered in September that looked at trip limits just for almaco, and that is the one that they removed, because evidently it's going to be the same thing. The majority of what's being caught is almaco, and so it doesn't make sense to have just trip limits for almaco.

As I mentioned earlier today, there has been some talk at the council level of rearranging the complexes and maybe disaggregating the jacks complex, but that would, again, be something that needs to be done in a full plan amendment, and they considered, at one point, having it in this amendment, and then I'm sure you know that it got taken out for that reason.

MR. JOHNSON: A question, Jack. I think you mentioned earlier to me that you were thinking like a twenty-inch size limit on almaco. Would you be willing to entertain something that that was for commercial only, versus -- Because I know the partyboats and some of the charter boats do keep those smaller almaco.

MR. MOSS: I don't want to jump ahead, but I think we're addressing the size limit in the next action, if you guys wanted to hold off on that for just one second.

MR. HUDSON: On Table 9, that 2012, for some reason, something seems to be acting like anomaly in my mind, and I forget if it was greater amberjack mixed with almaco or something, but something seems to be reminding me of something from back five years ago. Is there any investigation on that one particular spike, because that would affect an allocation scenario, like Jack is going for, with banded rudderfish in particular, because that was something that has been talked about for several years, is splitting those two out, and the lesser amberjack is just virtually a non-participant in this thing.

MS. BROUWER: Rusty, are you saying that the landings for 2012 for this complex look odd to you and there may have been issues with it and we should probably look into it in more detail? Okay. Got it.

MR. HUDSON: Remember that first half of the year was closed offshore, and some of the guys used to fish the Steeples and stuff for the greater amberjack, and so they would be back inshore, and so I don't know, but it just seems like there's something odd about that big number there.

MR. HULL: I was going to say, in regards to Action 6, I think the alternatives that you have listed there, the 500, the 400, and the 300, are probably adequate. I can't see where we need to add any more, in my opinion. I think that let's let it go to the council with that and see what comes out of that.

MR. MOSS: Okay. If we're good with that, then we don't have to add anything, and we can just move on to Action 7, which starts addressing size limits.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so this was an action that is a new action that was introduced in September, and so the range, as you see there, that was requested that we look into twenty to twenty-six inches fork length for almaco. Currently, there is no minimum size limit for either sector, and, as we understand it, this is something that the council is considering just for the commercial sector. They have not given us guidance to include an action in the recreational amendment to do the same thing for almaco.

Here is information, and this is hot off the presses. The council hasn't seen this yet. It's going to be included in their briefing documents for the December meeting, and so this is the length distribution, in two-inch increments, from 2014 through 2016. About 37 percent of the harvest is below twenty inches. 2a, over here, is your red line, and that's your twenty inches. Then 2b is green, and purple is 2c, and 2d, the largest, twenty-six inches, is 2d.

The largest proposed minimum size limit, and so if they were to go with that twenty-six-inch fork length minimum size limit, it would reduce the number of almaco that are harvested by 65 percent. The release mortality is about 5 percent for this species, and that was taken out of the SEDAR 49

assessment, which I believe was a Gulf of Mexico assessment, and so the decreases in harvest that you are going to see for the entire range, they go from 10.9 to thirty-two-and-a-half percent for each of those length increments. It says here that the slower harvest rates could lengthen the current commercial season, and so, by putting in a size limit, you could see a longer season, and so this table here shows the expected percent decrease in harvest for each of these alternatives.

MR. COX: I attended the last council meeting, and I heard some talk of this a little bit, and so I wanted to kind of start some citizen science of my own, and so we started measuring some fish, just to see what size they were, and so a twenty-two-inch fish, and we measured two of them. We couldn't get one twenty inches, but they were six pounds, and I certainly like the idea of extending the season.

MR. ATTACK: I guess I'm confused. If I look at this table, it looks like you have 9 percent less than fourteen and 12 percent, and so, if you add up the seven-and-a-half to 7.8 and the 12.3 and the 9.3, and I get like 33 percent or so, is what is going to not be harvested with the twenty-inch minimum size, versus your 10 percent on the next table.

MR. MOSS: I see what you're saying, and I'm just guessing here, but I would think that the thought process behind that and why it would vary is, if you're not keeping the smaller fish, you're going to keep some more of the larger fish, and so the weight kept is going to be different, and so I am -- Look, I was a history major, and math wasn't my strong suit, but --

MR. JOHNSON: This analysis was done without any kind of trip limits, and so that throws another caveat in there.

MR. COX: I think it's a great thing, I really do, a size limit. They're hardy fish, and we catch them. These fish swim up and down, and they will go to the bottom and they will come up, and they will do well, I think, at discarding, and we're even getting better in our discards, but, when you are in the commercial business of filleting fish and selling fillets and so forth, I think we would get plenty of support from fishermen to do something to extend their season with a size limit, because they get about fifty-cents more a pound for fish that are over five pounds, at least where I live anyway.

MR. JOHNSON: I guess my point is do we need to do both? If the size limit is going to give you an extended season, do you need to have a trip limit? I am just throwing that out there.

MR. COX: Yes, I would say so, just because it closes so early. I think it's going to need a little help from both sides. Remember it closes I think in July. It's either June or July, but it closes really early.

MR. MOSS: I am just curious, and this is just for me, but, for recreational guys up this way, because jacks aren't really, in south Florida, recreationally targeted, and I'm just curious if they're targeted up this way, recreationally.

MR. LORENZ: For me, no. It seems like it's incidental. I don't know anybody that talks about going out on an almaco jack trip.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, somebody is targeting them, because they closed recreational, and so it's funny to hear all these recreational guys say that we're not targeting them, and so how are they closed, if nobody is trying to catch them?

MR. MOSS: Again, down by my way, guys will keep yellow jacks, but we don't -- In fact, I was telling you at lunch that we don't keep amberjacks, and we don't keep almaco. We will keep some yellow jacks every now and then, but they just don't keep them down by us, and that's why I was curious.

MR. PILAND: Up my way, we don't target them, but we're happy when we catch them. Like he said, we don't go on an almaco targeting trip, but, when they're trigger fishing and they catch an almaco, they are very happy.

MR. MOSS: Sorry to move it off the subject a little bit there. Did you want to recommend a preferred, Jack, or are we not doing that yet?

MS. BROUWER: Maybe if the range is okay. Is twenty to twenty-six an okay range?

MR. MOSS: Do you want to keep that range then to look at? Everybody is happy with that? Okay. Moving on.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. Okay. Here is one that's familiar to you. This is structured the same way that we talked about for the recreational sector, and so this is modifying that shallow-water grouper closure. It's the same exact thing that I showed you earlier today with different months, where we would apply that to black grouper.

The only difference here is we have an alternative that would exclude gag from the prohibition on sale and purchase for the month of April, and then there would be a small trip limit for gag, just for that month, and what the council wanted to look at was a range from 100 to 300 pounds, just for gag, during April.

You were asking about 28 degrees, and so the council members also asked if we could provide a map showing where that was, and that is roughly where that line would be. This is a rather complicated graph, and you have seen this one before, but it shows the distribution of landings, and it has data that had to be sort of extrapolated for the months of January through May, and you have shallow-water groupers together in blue, black groupers in red, red groupers in green, and then shallow-water groupers, excluding black grouper, is in purple, and so there's a lot of information in this graph, but analyses for this particular action are going to be a little complicated.

We're going to talk about possibly taking the gag action out and making it be its own action, and that mainly is just because you can't compare among alternatives when they are not comparable, because you're talking apples and oranges here, kind of, and so it might change next time you see this. What else? I guess I believe that you guys had talked about taking no action on modifying the shallow-water grouper closure for the commercial sector as well.

MR. MOSS: Any discussion at all or suggestions or comments or concerns?

MR. GOMEZ: This graph we were just looking at, that was in reference to commercial fishing only and not recreational, although, as a charter boat owner, I have never considered myself a recreational fisherman, but I am heaped in there, and so, as a recreational fisherman, the fishermen of the Lower Keys would like to see a longer opening for their small limits, an opening that would have January and February included.

We have been living with it for quite a while already, but we do fish a lot more for longer, and we fish year-round, and so, for us, when we lose those groupers, those shallow-water grouper, during some very prime months, knowing that our limit is so small that it really does not affect the fishery as a whole, in our opinion, we would like to see that we are allowed to catch our limits in some of these closed months.

MR. MOSS: I hear you, Richard, but let's, if we could, table that, because we're going to focus on the commercial side here. I made a note though, and so we'll absolutely come back, and you can make a motion for that.

MS. BROUWER: What I was going to say is we have the same alternatives in the recreational amendment, which is the one that we went over this morning, and I believe -- There are alternatives in there that would look at extending the opening for south Florida, and so, everything that is south of 28 degrees, that would apply to you guys, and so those are already being included in there for the council to consider, but certainly we can come back to it if you want to.

Moving on to Action 9, this one is pretty straightforward. It's just removing that minimum size limit for those three deepwater snappers, which are at twelve inches now, and so I don't really have anything else to show you. It's pretty straightforward, and you passed a motion to recommend that the council go forward with that action, and so I imagine that we're good there.

Then Action 10 deals with gray triggerfish, and it's reducing that minimum size limit. The council has already picked Alternative 2 as their preferred, and, as I explained this morning, this is to bring it back in line with current regulations off of east Florida, because it is different in the Gulf, and so this would reduce the minimum size limit back down to twelve inches fork length, and this is something that you have already seen, I believe, and so it shows you the length distribution, and Alternative 2 is right here in the red, and so not a whole lot being caught that is below that.

Here is where we have been with gray triggerfish recently, and so there's been closures, and recall that the split season for gray triggerfish was implemented fairly recently, and I think it was in 2014, and it was done to bring things in line with vermilion, and so it was structured the same exact way as we have the b-liner season. That wraps it up for this amendment, and, again, you will have another chance to see this, and, if approved for public hearings, we would have hearings via webinar sometime between the March and the June meetings next year.

MR. COX: The only thing that I would add to this amendment is the no action alternatives be not considered, because most all of this needs some kind of action.

MR. HUDSON: Myra, on the amendment timing, the September 2018 formal review, that gets it to NMFS, and then NMFS has to go out after whatever amount of time, and so we're looking at some point in 2019 before we go to the twelve-inch.

MR. MANIGAULT: I've got a question. B-liner, could you define that for me, please?

AP MEMBER: Vermilion snapper.

MR. MOSS: Don't feel bad, Gary. It took me a while, too. They are vermes to me. We will take a quick, ten-minute wake-up break, and then we'll come back and go over outreach. It's 3:05 right now, and we'll come back at 3:15.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. MOSS: All right, guys. Let's start bringing it back in, and we'll get started with going over some of the outreach things that we're doing. All right. We're going to start speaking about some of the things that we're doing as far as outreach goes from the council.

MS. RHODES: Hi, everyone. I am Cameron Rhodes, and I'm the Outreach Specialist at the council, and I'm just going to go ahead and give you a brief overview of some of the programs that are currently underway at the council, and some of you will be familiar with these. I know Jimmy Hull is actually a user. Yes, that ended at a weird time, huh? Sorry to out you there, Jimmy.

We will go ahead and get started with our transition to a new app, and, for those of you in the room that are commercial fishermen, we're going to be working with you on how we can go about accommodating and making sure that you get some of these regulations through the mobile app, and so I'll go ahead and click on it here. We are going to be transitioning from the SA Fishing Regulations app to Fish Rules. Do any of you have our fishing regulations app on your mobile device now? Okay. Good. I'm glad to see that.

That app is currently pretty outdated when it comes to using it on your phone, and it doesn't always operate that well, and that's because it's due for a major upgrade, and, at the council level, we decided to move in a different direction, and what we've done is we are going to enter an agreement with Fish Rules app. Do any of you have Fish Rules apps on your phones? All right. Michelle Duval. Good.

We are going to be working with Fish Rules to make sure that this app is up-to-date. I will actually be the one who is inputting the regulations on our end, and this app is definitely going to be something that I think all of you will like. I will offer one caveat, is that it does not host commercial regulations at this time, and so we're going to be working with him and seeing if there is any way that we might consider developing a commercial-specific app, and, before I move on, is that something that the commercial fishermen in the room would be interested in having as a commercial-specific app?

AP MEMBER: Yes.

AP MEMBER: Most definitely.

MS. RHODES: Okay, and so we've been talking about that extensively with our outreach team, and I definitely think that that's something we're going to consider moving forward with. It is a bit of a financial issue right now, in making sure that we actually have the funds to support

something like that, but it's definitely something that we will be considering at the council level, and we'll be discussing it a bit at the December council meeting.

Just to let you know a little bit about this app and why it's quite an improvement from our current app, if you go into the system, you aren't going to have to automatically or physically update this app every time, and so some of the issues you're probably encountering with our current app is that you have to physically go in and press a button, and that will generate the update. If you don't do that, you're looking at a mobile application that probably is as old as when that app initially started, and so that's the problem. If you don't actually physically go in there and update it yourself, you're getting the wrong information.

What this app will do is it will automatically generate that information as soon as you open it, and you will be able to see the current regulations as they are updated by me on the backend. This app is also nice because it stretches not only in the South Atlantic region, but GARFO is encouraging their folks to use this app, and so it reaches all the way up into Maine.

It stretches down into Florida, and it's now in the Panhandle, and they are hoping to spread throughout the Gulf, and they are currently working with the west coast, to get regulations input there, and so this could become a United States app, which is a neat thing, and they generate a lot of different hits, and it's becoming a popular go-to for people, because it also has state regulations in it, and so our current app does not host state regulations. This app does, and we'll be working with Aubry to make sure, and I'm glad to hear that Michelle is working with him on the state level with North Carolina, to make sure that those regulations are up to date.

If you are fishing offshore and you are concerned that you're getting close to an MPA and you want to make sure that you are following the federal regulations, of course this app needs to have -- It needs to be connected, and so, offshore, you're not going to have cellular signal, but you will be able to input your GPS coordinate, and it will let you know if you are approaching an MPA and what the regulations are in that area, and so it should be a pretty useful tool, and we're pretty excited about how this will impact keeping people up-to-date with some of our regulations.

Again, we're still working on how we're going to incorporate some of the commercial elements to this, and we'll be in touch with all of you to make sure we get insight and make sure that you guys aren't left out. We don't want you to feel like you're being left behind.

What's going to happen with this app, I am going to begin making edits to it and updating regulations by November 28, and we will be completely transferred over by January 1. Our current app will go away, and so you will be receiving notifications through push notifications through the current app. We'll be sending out newsletters, and we'll be sending out news releases, and we'll be plastering this all over our Facebook page, so that people are made aware that this transition is going to occur.

We will fully be transitioned over by January 1, and so we're going to be looking to you as our advisory panel to try to help us make sure that everyone is notified, but we'll be doing everything on our end to try to combat that as well, and so, if you just go in here, I encourage you to download the app and go ahead and explore it. It works really well on Android and iOS. It's clean, and it's easy to use, and they're also considering the possibility of trying to maybe enter in the way of iAngler and start to let people report their catch. Since we currently have some exciting outreach

initiatives underway, in particular with red snapper, they might be moving in that direction as well to help us facilitate some of those efforts.

Go ahead and play with it. If you don't have a cellphone or don't have an iPad, you can still get to know it a little bit through this website here, and, if you have any questions, feel free to ask me now, before we move on to the Fishermen's Forum.

MR. HUDSON: Cameron, on the commercial part that's on the current app, how long do you envision before we have either a stand-alone app or it combined with this new app?

MS. RHODES: I don't have a timeframe in mind. What we have done temporarily is we have incorporated a link to our website under each species, so that commercial fishermen can access that information through the app. They won't be able to access that information offshore, and so the only difference is that, because that's not part of the mobile app itself, and it's not written into the code, when they're offshore, they won't be able to see it, but, if they give it a look before they go offshore, they will be able to have the updated regulations.

MR. HUDSON: I guess what I'm also asking is, where you were talking about this greater United States app for the recreational, that almost sounds like our commercial is going to be a stand-alone type of app, and would that be possibly what you are envisioning or a combination, like you're doing currently, because I have the app, the current app, and I just updated it.

MS. RHODES: The Fish Rules team doesn't seem super eager to have both sectors represented through this Fish Rules app. They would like to keep it as a recreational app and then possibly develop a commercial app. I don't know -- If we do a commercial app, it's likely going to be South Atlantic specific until other partners approach us about it, and that's a likely scenario.

The Gulf of Mexico is also on -- They are currently using the same type of app that we have now, the SA Fishing Regulations app, and they have the same provider, the same developer, and it could be that, in upcoming years, that they will be eager to make that change, and they might jump onboard with us.

I will go ahead and move on to the Fishermen's Forum, which that is where Jimmy Hull is a user, and so I'm sure he will be able to offer me some feedback on that. Just to offer you a little bit of background about why this even came about, the Fishermen's Forum was requested to be created by Chris McCaffity in North Carolina.

This was something that he really wanted to see developed, and he felt that it would be a great way for fishermen to be able to communicate about fisheries issues within a council space, but it wouldn't be direct conversation with council members. Instead, it would just be a way for stakeholders to engage and talk some things out before they do go to public hearings or go to public comment sessions.

Right now, it's a little bit limited. It just started, and so it's open to commercially-permitted snapper grouper fishermen. We have had multiple requests from people to expand this to the recreational sector, to both the charter and headboat fleet, as well as private recreational anglers, but, right now, we're trying to keep it limited, to make sure that we have all the bugs worked out.

Charlestonfishing.com is one of the forums in our area, and they receive quite a bit of traffic, and we're not quite there yet to allow for that amount of traffic. We're still trying to make sure that the forum is safe for users, and, right now, it's performing well, although there is a limited number of people that are part of the forum.

What this is, we're just creating these sub-forums here, and so we have a snapper grouper commercial permit holder's forum. Within that, there are a number of sub-forums, and commercially-permitted individuals can go in and participate in threads. Now, I am totally open to creating different sub-forums here and filling whatever conversation needs you think we might have, what stakeholders might be interested in discussing, but, right now, we've just started with some of these generic ones.

We have had some participation. Most of it, honestly, has been from Chris McCaffity. He's one of the most active users on the site, but we're still trying to figure out some of the kinks and see how we can get people involved, and we went ahead and presented this to the Information & Education Advisory Panel in November, and they gave us some insights as to how we should go about engaging commercial fishermen and some ways that we can expand this into the future.

If you guys have any questions about the forum or what it's for or how you go about using it, and it's pretty user-friendly, I think, but we have definitely had people write in to us and offer us some really helpful feedback, and, in doing so, we've been able to correct some of the bugs that do exist on it.

MS. MARHEFKA: Are you the moderator of the forum?

MS. RHODES: Yes, ma'am.

MS. MARHEFKA: I am just wondering, and maybe I missed this, because somehow I have missed most of this forum, which is really great, but I just wondered if you guys set out guidelines, as far as -- Because I can see something getting hot and evolving into insulting council members or us, and that would be bad, and I'm just wondering -- It seems like a great tool that also could be misused, and is that clearly written and all that stuff?

MS. RHODES: That has been the primary concern for us and our web developer. The group that developed our current website is also the one responsible for the forum, and so that's why we're starting off with a little bit of this smaller group that we think is more manageable. I actually go through and -- When you sign up for this, you have to submit your permit number, and I go through and make sure that that person actually does hold that permit. We've had some people try to sneak in, but, for the most part, it's true permit holders that are trying to sign up.

It is written into the code where it can pick up foul language, and, much like Facebook, it will get rid of it and scrub it, and it could be, at some point, if we wanted to and there were concerns from the advisory panel members, we could have alerts set so that, if names are mentioned, that we can go in and scrub those as well. Right now, on our Facebook, we actively take down any messages that are negative on one of our council members or one of our staff members. Advisory panel members fall into that as well, and we have that written. When you sign up for this, there is like a user agreement, and it does outline all of the behavior guidelines that we have for this.

MS. JEFFCOAT: I have a question about the app. Are you responsible for updating it, or -- I know you were saying that this was through someone else. The reason I'm asking is because I just pulled up amberjack, and they are listed as open for recreational.

MS. RHODES: I am currently not responsible, and I assume responsibility November 28, and so, once I have my official training, I will be taking over, and I still -- I encourage everyone to keep using our current app, because I do update that one. Just make sure that you actually go in and press to update it. When you go into the settings, you will be able to click for it to update. There will be a transition period where I will be updating both of them, and so that, eventually, will segue over into the other one. It will take me a while to make sure that all of those species are properly regulated.

MS. JEFFCOAT: Thank you.

MR. COX: I think this a great tool. Why is it so hard to read the screen? Why is it not clear?

MS. RHODES: I don't know the answer to that. It's clear on my screen.

MR. HULL: I was just going to make a comment that all of this work is really good, and I think that one of the most important thing is to get the word out to people, not only about this, but everything that the council is doing, to communicate and to get out to the public the knowledge of events that are happening.

This is more of professional fishermen here talking amongst ourselves, which is good, and it's like coming back to the dock yesterday, and there was three or four boats, guys I know, and they have no idea that this stuff is going on. They just don't know, and they could be communicating, and you could spur a lot more input, which is what we need, and get more ideas, and so I think it's great, and you just need to get the word out as much as you can. I realize that only a certain percentage of people are going to get involved, but more would be better.

MS. RHODES: If you -- I mean, our Information Advisory Panel did provide us some feedback on how we can go about spreading the word about this, but, if you in the room have any insights on how we should go about encouraging people to participate -- This isn't only for -- Right now, only commercial permit holders are able to physically write into the forum, but anyone can see it, and so, right now, we're viewing it the same way that anyone else would be viewing it on the outside of the program.

If you have any ideas about how we can draw attention to this, whether it be sending information to fish houses, posting things up at docks, whatever you think might be the best practice for us. Most of our communication is done electronically now, through email or we do a lot of stuff on our Facebook. That has definitely become a hotspot for people to get some information, but we're certainly open to whatever ideas you all might have.

MR. COX: How do you all censor it? How do you keep it clean? This is fishermen using this, and I'm curious.

MS. RHODES: I can speak mostly to our Facebook on this, since this is still really starting out, but, to speak to that point about the forum, it's written in the code, and so it will recognize words

that are words that we don't want to see up there, and our Facebook does the same thing, and so, if someone says something that has already been typed into our backend system that we don't want, it will scrub it. That person doesn't know that it's gone away, but, on my end, it's gone away, and other users can't see it.

MR. MOSS: This seems like it would be a really nice thing. I know it's not nearly robust enough yet to handle recreational traffic, but, if you could take something like this and link it to even various other forums, like Florida sportsmen, and, again, I speak from my Florida bubble, but it would certainly help explain a lot of things. You definitely would need to have the language filters on there, but I think it would help -- Like Jimmy said, you're not going to get 100 percent buy-in, but it certainly would up the participation level a great deal, and, if you're not posting on forums or hosting forums or anything like that anymore, you're definitely behind the eight-ball, as far as trying to get information out, and so this is awesome, and I can't wait until it takes that next giant leap forward.

MS. RHODES: One thing I definitely, before I close up, is I want to make sure that it's clear that this isn't a public comment forum, and so we're still encouraging people to fill out public comment forms online and to attend public hearings and public comment sessions. Right now, we don't have anything that can allow for this kind of public comment, and that would have to include something like Facebook, and it would really become a difficult thing to manage, and so we're still encouraging people to offer their public comments in a more structured way.

I am open to -- This is still in its very early stages. If you would like to see different sub-forum topics in here that you think would be of use, please just shoot me an email. I am cameron.rhodes@safmc.net, and you can just give me a shout, and I would be happy to accommodate that. Right now, we're not allowing users to go in and create those sub-forum topics. That might happen in the future, and most forums don't do that. It's a security risk, but we're happy to work with you on what you think is the most relevant material.

MS. MARHEFKA: Will you add a forum for like help wanted or jobs wanted, because that is something that we have all talked about, as far as one of the biggest problems we all have, is finding captain and crew members, and it might be a good place for people to just -- It's very hard, if you're not in the industry and know people. You can't just put something on craigslist, at least here, and so that might be an interesting place to put it.

MS. RHODES: Yes, I think that's a neat idea, and I will definitely bring that back to our staff and see how they would like to approach that, but I think it has -- It can definitely grow, and we can go in those kind of innovative directions, but we're open to whatever you guys suggest.

MR. ATACK: Are you looking at expanding it to just maybe like some of the seafood retail people? I know, in our area, there's like John Hague might want to -- He might not have a boat and have a commercial fishing thing, but he's buying fish from commercial fishermen, and so I don't know if you would consider expanding it to people other than just the unlimited snapper grouper permits.

MS. RHODES: I think that's definitely the direction that we hope to move, and I think that's the way that we'll actually end up generating the best conversations, is to have these crossovers of people, and to have different people be able to participate in these conversations and initiate

dialogue, and so I think that's definitely the direction we're going. We are just moving at a little bit of a slower, steady pace, to make sure that we have everything lined up before it gets too big for my britches.

MR. ATTACK: Right, and like all the guys that have the charter permits -- I guess they can't comment on this right now.

MS. RHODES: They can't right now, and, truthfully, that has been a source of frustration from a number of people. When we posted this to Facebook, there was a bit of pushback. A lot of the charter fleet that was commenting felt like they had been left behind, and we certainly don't want to give that impression. This is a pilot, and that's probably the best way to sum it up, is it's in its pilot phase, and it has plenty of room for growth, and so I think we'll be moving in that direction shortly.

DR. DUVAL: I guess there is tradeoffs, right, in terms of some user groups feeling like they're being left out, and I think, certainly, as we make the move towards the Fish Rules app -- Obviously what we're hearing is that folks with commercial permits are going to feel left out, and I know that a lot of our marine patrol officers actually use the South Atlantic Council's app to keep up on regulations when they're out on the water, and I could not be more excited about this forum.

I really hope that it gets a lot of use, and I think it's a great way for you all and other permit holders to discuss -- To hear each other's viewpoints and educate one another about how the fishery operates in different areas, and I think that will allow you to then make more informed public comment, via the council's public comment form or email or coming to an in-person public comment period, by listening to what other folks on the forum have to say. Thank you.

MR. MOSS: Thank you very much, Cameron. I have actually used the Fish Rules app too, and it's just a shameless plug here, but one of the really nice things is it doesn't have pictures of the fish, again from a recreational perspective, but it's got actual photos, and so you get more of a real-life look at fish that maybe you're not 100 percent sure of, like graysby and coney and some of the weird groupers and stuff that we get down there, and so definitely awesome stuff. Thank you. Moving right along, we'll go into the Fishery Performance Reports.

MS. BROUWER: While the computer is unsticking itself, some background on these fishery performance reports. Recall that, last time we met, we did the first one for red grouper, and so we're going to proceed the same way. The council members are very excited about these, and the SSC is very excited about them, and so it's still sort of a work in progress, and so we are proceeding with the idea that we're going to provide you with a background document that is by no means intended to be a complete summary for each of the species.

It's sort of a snapshot for that species, and the idea is to give you enough information to sort of generate discussion and get you guys telling us what you know. Then that's how we are going to produce these reports, and, so far, we've been doing it sort of as an assessment comes up, and so we're going to be talking about black sea bass and vermilion this go-round, because those are the assessments that are currently underway.

Ideally, we would have done one for blueline tilefish, but that time sort of came and went, and we did one for red grouper, like I said, and so, from now on, we're going to try to keep up with the

stock assessment schedule, in order to provide this information, not only to the council members, but also the analysts and the panelists on the SEDAR panels and the Scientific and Statistical Committee members, who are the ones that are taking a lot of the very technical information that gets generated through the stock assessment process, and sometimes they will have questions about the fishery that the information is not readily available, and so that's where you guys come in.

The idea is to get you to provide -- I don't want to say anecdotal information. I don't like that term, but kind of your observations and your experience and your on-the-water knowledge about the fishery and take that and synthesize it in a format that can be useful to the managers, and so that sort of is the idea behind these.

I am going to start with black sea bass, and so we have this information document that we put together, and we modeled these -- We looked at what the Mid-Atlantic Council does, and they generate these information documents for their fisheries. They don't have as many as our council does to manage, and they have an advisory panel that gets together just to produce these fishery performance reports, and so there is -- For black sea bass, for all of these, there is going to be information on life history and biology and then an overview, like I said, of the commercial and the recreational components of the fishery for that species.

We have information here, and I'm not going to go through all of it, but basic information on the biology of black sea bass. We tried to include as much of the more recent information for each species, and, unfortunately, a lot of the baseline information doesn't get updated as often, and so you're going to still see things that date back to the 1980s or whatever, and that doesn't mean that the information is no longer useful, but, as new information comes along, we're going to try to incorporate it into these information documents.

We have some information on habitat, where the species is found, and the depths at which they occur. You can see here that it says from sixty-six to 197 feet, and that is from a source from 1995. There is information on the reproductive biology, and so black sea bass are protogynous, which means they change sex from female to male. The minimum size at age in this part of the world is about four inches standard length, and all females are mature by seven inches and age-three.

Spawning, the information that we have, there has been some, I think, more updated information on the spawning, but, generally, it occurs from March through May in our area, and the peak is going to be March through July, or March through May. Stock status is taken from the latest stock assessment, and so I didn't go back and summarize all the previous stock status information, and so what I'm going to do is I'm going to tell you what the latest stock assessment says, or the most recent one.

The most recent stock assessment for black sea bass was conducted in 2013 with data through 2012, and so it's already quite dated. It concluded that sea bass were not overfished and they were not undergoing overfishing. I have some information on the spawning stock biomass, and some of the information in these reports is going to be a little bit technical, but I know that some of you are very active in the stock assessment process, and you've been through SEDARs.

You've been panelists and stuff, and so it's going to be tricky to try balancing things out, you know how much technical information to include or to exclude, and so, certainly, if you guys have

suggestions for how to improve these -- I have tried to use as little acronyms as possible, or at least spell them out, so you know what you're reading.

It gives a little background on how the SSC, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, came about their acceptable biological catch recommendation. At the time, there was some information that showed the recruitment at the time the assessment was completed was higher than the expected average recruitment, and so the SSC made the recommendation based on the equilibrium level for black sea bass. They did caution, though, that they wanted to see that the projections that the assessment generated were going to have to be redone, and I think they said two or three years, and it's been longer than that.

Nonetheless, the assessment for black sea bass is proceeding, and that is SEDAR 56, and so, tomorrow, we'll get an update on where we are on that, and, as I mentioned earlier today, the Steering Committee for SEDAR approved delaying the amendment, and there was some data delays in producing the data that the analysts needed to run the model, and so it's going to continue. The terminal year of the assessment, which means the assessment is going to include data through 2016, and it's going to be available -- I believe the council is going to get the results in -- Julia is saying that the Scientific and Statistical Committee will review the assessment in the spring of 2018, and then the council will get those recommendations in June of 2018, and so that's where we are with the assessment of sea bass.

For the management overview, I went back and sort of gave a history of the management, and so it goes back to the original FMP, and so I'm not going to go through it all, but it's an interesting history, and it tells you when the various regulations went into place and which amendment put them into place, if you're interested, and how the fishery came to be where it is.

One of the big amendments that affected black sea bass was Amendment 13C, and that one went into place in 2006, and so that one put in place pretty substantial modifications to how that fishery was managed, and I have listed them here in these bullet points. There were some substantial reductions over three years to phase in ending overfishing, and then the council put in a rebuilding schedule.

Then, of course, more recently, there has been implementation of the endorsement program for the pot fishery. That one went into place in 2012. There are thirty-two vessels that hold black sea bass pot endorsements in the South Atlantic, and this is for, obviously, the commercial fishery. There were some restrictions put in place, as far as the number of pots that you could have. You have to bring them back to shore at the conclusion of each trip, and all these things were put in place in an effort to cap effort in this fishery.

This was also the time when there was an increase in the commercial minimum size limit from ten to eleven inches, and the recreational minimum size limit went from twelve to thirteen inches, and the council, if some of you remember when this all came down, some of these things were put in place to slow down the rate of harvest. The ACLs were being caught very quickly, resulting in very quick in-season closures.

Then we had an update to the assessment in 2013, and that is when the council was able to increase the ACL for black sea bass, and so that took place fairly recently. The fishing levels increased over a three-year period, and they have remained at those levels until now. That was also the time

that we saw implementation of the closure on the use of pots from November through April, and that was done to address concerns over gear interactions with endangered whales.

There were changes subsequently to the commercial fishing year, from June 1 through May 31. Then, for the recreational sector, the fishing year was also changed, back in 2014. There was a trip limit that was put in place, and I don't want to spend too much time going over all the changes. Most of you are familiar with these. On the recreational side, most recently, there was an increase in the bag limit, which was five per person per day, and it went up to seven in 2016. Then the council made some modifications to the closed area, to ease the socioeconomic impacts of that closure.

Another thing that I included in here is some fishery-independent trends, and so this is information that's gathered in the course of scientific surveys in our area, and it's another piece of information that helps the managers assess how the stock is doing and trends in abundance and such, and so, this figure here, the information came from the MARMAP survey. It's a survey that's been conducted in our area for a long time, and it's the primary source for scientific information that is not related to landings, and so that's why we call it fishery-independent.

Here, you see basically just the trend in abundance over time, and clearly you can see quite a sharp decline here in recent years, according to that survey. The council received this information in June, I believe, of this year. During the June meeting is when we get the annual update from the fishery-independent survey.

Under fishery performance, there is a lot of information here, and that takes some time to kind of synthesize, and we included the various sources of data. We're always getting information of why the data that I get on the website doesn't match what you guys are putting out and all kinds of questions about how the data are gathered and disseminated, and so there are several sources where the information comes from, and so we've put at least a little bit of information here to answer those questions.

Commercial landings are presented from 2000 through 2016 by state, and they come, as it explains up here, from various data sources, and so we have a table that has total commercial landings in pounds whole weight and the ACL or quota, whatever it may be, for each of the years from 2000 through 2016 by state, and data for Georgia and South Carolina often have to be aggregated, due to confidentiality.

This is information that comes from the Accumulated Landings System, which is maintained by NOAA Fisheries, and so you can see the total commercial landings here on the far right, and then you have it broken down by state for each of those years, and so you can see how the ACLs or quotas, whatever, have changed over time.

I should point out that 2016 here is in italics because the data are not -- I don't want to say they're preliminary, but they are not comparable to the information that is presented here for previous years, because that comes from a different database, and it's a little complicated to explain, but suffice it to say that that's why I flagged this, to make sure that folks are aware that the data may not be comparable to previous years for this last row of this table.

Here you have these commercial landings by state, broken down by year, and it's landings in whole weight, pounds whole weight, and so, for sea bass, you can see that North Carolina is a big player, and then Florida in more recent years. Since about 2009, we've seen an increase in commercial landings of black sea bass.

Here is commercial landings by year, and so you can see a bit more of the trend, and so the blue line shows you the total landings, and the orange shows you the commercial ACLs or quotas, and so this is where we had that big increase after the stock assessment update, and so this is currently where our commercial ACL is, and this is where the landings have been, and so you can see there's been a little bit of a declining trend and a little dip over here.

I go through a little bit of the description related to those landings, and we also broke it down monthly, so that we could talk about seasonality of the fishery, and so this shows you commercial landings by state by month for 2000 through 2007. Again, North Carolina is clearly dominant for as far as the seasonality, and you can see there is a peak here in February, and landings ramp back up in December. Florida is barely visible on this graph.

Here is monthly commercial landings by state from 2008 through 2016, and we see Florida a little bit more prominently, and I guess the reason we broke it down at that level is so that you could actually see some of these trends, because, if you combined everything from 2000 through 2016, then you weren't going to be able to see some of these tiny little bars. It was all just going to get squashed down.

Moving on to recreational, here is landings, again, from 2000 through 2016 by state, compared to the various quotas or ACLs that have been put in place, and where the information came from, and so these are data that are gathered from the Marine Recreational Information Program, but then the Southeast Fisheries Science Center translates those estimates using weight information, and then they can convert it to pounds landed, because MRIP, as you know, takes recreational landings in numbers of fish, and so the data source here is the Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

We do have it broken down by each of the states, and so you have the numbers there and then the figure that accompanies those landings, so that you can compare and see the trends. Here, you can see more of a uniform distribution. There is not a clearly dominant state, and here is the landings by year compared to the recreational ACL, and so, again, we have the ACL that's up here and the landings that seem to be going down since about 2010. Here, we are presenting average recreational landings by wave. As you know, MRIP obtains information, or releases information, by two-month waves, so that you can get an idea of when during the year the landings are more prevalent, and then that's also broken down by state.

DR. KELLISON: Myra, could you go back to the previous figure? It may be the same, but so, in recent years, the landings have been way below the ACL for recreational, and it was too for the commercial also, right?

MS. BROUWER: Yes.

DR. KELLISON: I just wanted to point out, and I'm not sure if it's true for commercial, but isn't there an enormous amount of released fish? It's not like there's not fish there, but the fish that aren't being landed aren't of sufficient size, and is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: That is correct, and I will show you here some information on discards in a minute, but thank you for pointing that out. These are the directed recreational trips, and so people that go out in order to fish for black sea bass in the South Atlantic region, and we also present that to show you the trend over time.

Then here is the information on discards, and so, generally, the number has gone up since 2009 in the private and charter modes of the recreational fishery. The release mortality right now that is being used in the stock assessment is 1 percent for commercial pot gear and 7 percent for hook-and-line gear. There was a recent study that just was published in recent years to examine release mortality of black sea bass off of North Carolina, and they have some different release mortality estimates. They reported a 19 percent release mortality for fish that were sampled using hook-and-line gear, and they do it by depth, and so there is, as you know, a different release mortality associated with different depths, and so this is more recent information that will be considered in future assessments of black sea bass.

Here is the trend. These are numbers of black sea bass by components of the fishery, and so numbers of releases, and so, as Todd just mentioned, the trend, as far as released black sea bass, fish that aren't landed, has gone up in recent years, especially in the recreational component, and so you've got commercial in the blue down here, and the headboat is the orange, and the private recreational is in the gray.

MR. HULL: I think isn't it above 90 percent of the recreationally-harvested sea bass are discarded?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and those are some figures that were presented to the council fairly recently when they were looking at Regulatory Amendment 25, and that is when they said, okay, then it sounds like we need to be looking at maybe increasing the recreational minimum size limit, and so we went about trying to do that, but then it coincided with some delays on the data for the assessment, and that's why we've had to kind of slow down on that, but, yes, the numbers of discarded black sea bass are pretty high, and so clearly the size limit is an issue there.

MR. HULL: Now you're saying that there is new information that the discard mortality level was at 19 percent rather than --

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so these are numbers that were done, like I said, off of North Carolina for different depths for hook-and-line gear, using a specific methodology, and I don't know the details of the study, but I can provide those for you, if you would like. Yes, there has been more information that can then be included in the overall estimates of discards and how many of those fish are actually being lost to the fishery.

MR. HULL: I would just say that those numbers are troubling, because if you have increased -- If you have a high number of discards and a higher death, that's not what we want.

MR. MANIGAULT: I don't see that much of a mortality rate when we catch them, and we catch them, and they're all in the way, actually, but they're a pretty tough fish, from the depths that we pull them from, I can honestly say, and so I don't know where they got the 19 percent from and if it's reliable, but I don't see it. I don't see it at all, and we don't target them, because they're

everywhere. Like you said in one of the actual things that we have to address, size limit is the actual thing that needs to be addressed, because it needs to come down at least two inches.

MR. LORENZ: Myra, I found it interesting, and I was, in my lifetime, kind of a -- I had to do a lot of what they call process control in manufacturing, and, if you take that type of a thought, and I look at the commercial data, which I think is on pages 6 and 7, and you throw out the low and the high year, the commercial catch seems extremely consistent, and, if you're a process control person, if you get something in there that is looking like 490,000 pounds, plus or minus 20 percent, that seems pretty good. That seems like a really nice, stable fishery, and I know they may not be meeting their ACL for whatever that reason is, but that is a nice number.

I see in the -- They have an eleven-inch size limit, and the recreational group is all over the place. You can't do that and have much more variation, and I do think it's probably rooted, at this point, somewhere within the thirteen-inch limit. Those larger fish certainly are out there, like in North Carolina, twelve or eighteen miles, but they're not coming much into the out to twelve-mile zone and where a lot more people could get a hold of them and that sort of thing, and so it's kind of interesting when you're looking at saying the sea bass numbers could be declining, and, when you look at the commercial, that doesn't seem to be so, and the recreational may be just another issue on how we're fishing.

MR. ATTACK: I guess, when I look at the data, it's a little concerning. When you look at the catch per unit effort and how it jumped in 2010 and then has come down and dropped to almost a low, and that kind of mimics the landings, because then when you look at the ACLs -- The commercial ACL is set higher than historical landings. I mean, the highest historical landing was back in 2004, and the ACL is set higher than what that landing was, and then you've got the same thing on the recreational.

The ACL is almost at the peak of the historically high one-year high on the recreational landings, and so, when you look at the landings and kind of average them out, they almost kind of average out to the old ACL in both cases, and so we'll see how the assessment comes out, but it's almost like the ACL is really twice what it should be and that's why you're not hitting it, and we're probably taking too much out for the stock to go back up, because, otherwise, your CPUE would be going back up, but it's still dropping, and so it's concerning, and that's why we were concerned a year or two ago when we were all talking about how many throwbacks there were. With all these fish out there, why are they not getting big enough to catch, and then we still increased the bag limit from five to seven.

MS. BROUWER: I appreciate all the comments, but I don't want to miss any of it, and I should have said this from the beginning, but the idea is to get through this report real quick, and then I'm going to take you through the questionnaire, and I am going to be attempting to write down everything you tell me, and I'm going to ask other staff to help me take notes, but that's the idea, so that, if you just please -- Whatever you have already said so far, let me capture it when we get to the part where I write it all down.

Really quickly, we also have some information for you on economic performance of the fishery, price per pound and that sort of thing, and so, for the commercial sector, here is the average ex-vessel price per pound since 2000, so that you can see the trends on that, and, again, it's by state and for the whole region, and so for the whole South Atlantic is in yellow, and here's a value of

commercial landings, and so you can see the trend there. There's an interesting little thing going on here, and that's it.

Like I said, the information document is presented as sort of background, mainly to just say this is what we know, based on the data that we have, and now we want you to tell us, in your experience, if you have any observations and different things that would help us elucidate some of these trends or try to figure out what's going on with the fishery, and so, for that purpose, we put together this template, I want to call it, for the fishery performance report with various questions.

The questions are not intended to be kind of like a survey or anything like that, but mainly to generate discussion, and so I guess what I'm going to do is maybe go one at a time and then try to capture as much of your comments, but certainly I don't want to slow you down, and so I'm going to just try to catch as much as I can as you guys discuss things.

For Item 1, looking at catch levels over the past five years, things that we want to know about would be, for the commercial sector, how has price and demand for black sea bass changed in recent years, and how has demand for charter and headboat trips changed for black sea bass in recent years? As we have been talking about, recreational landings appear to be declining, and what do you think is causing this decline, or what have been your observations regarding that?

Are you seeing any changes in the availability of fish? Have you seen any changes? Has the size of the fish changed in recent years, and can you describe the trend over the past five years, if possible? Do you think there's been effort shifts from black sea bass to other things, and why have commercial black sea bass landings from Florida, Jimmy, decreased so much since 2011? We are going to take this Item Number 1 first, and I am going to let you guys have at it.

MR. COX: The change I've seen on the commercial side in North Carolina is there has been an increase in the ACL north of us, Rhode Island and New Jersey, for the trawl fishery, and so we've seen a decline in the price per pound of our larger fish, jumbos and larges. We've seen a decrease in those two, but we've seen an increase in our medium fish. That partly is because those guys are able to select the size of the fish that they're targeting by the size of their net, and so there is a lack of that medium fish on the market.

MR. HULL: Item 1, catch level over the past five years, off of Ponce Inlet, Florida, yes. After the peak in that recruitment spike of about 2013, the stock started to decline in my area. The fish just were not there, and, as far as the commercial sector, the price and demand, the demand is ever-increasing, and the price is following it. It's increasing also. As far as for the headboat trips, I can speak to the charter boats, because I own one. Recreationally, when you're discarding 90 percent of your black sea bass most of the year -- Sometimes in the winter you're in pretty good shape, with some larger fish, but it's hard to target them. I sent this to you also, Myra. I sent you what I wrote in here, but just to maybe strike up some conversation at the table, also.

MR. MOSS: Do you want to take it question-by-question and have some discussion?

MR. HULL: Yes, and I will stop at that time.

MR. JOHNSON: I wanted to add one thing about that decrease in Florida, and, Jimmy, you know what I'm talking about, but there was two or three brothers that, during one point in time, those

guys were on those sea bass so hard. Every day that they weren't working as firemen, they were sea bass pot fishing, and I don't think any of them have pot fished in recent years, and they caught a large portion of the landings during that couple-year period, and that was right before the changes went into place and the sea bass pot endorsement was put into effect, and I think one of them has got his endorsement up for sale right now, and so that had something to do with that decrease.

MR. HULL: Since you jumped to that one question of why have commercial black sea bass landings decreased in Florida, I looked up my -- I have been pot fishing for probably thirty years, and I was the only pot fisherman in Florida for a long time, and I kept it real quiet, but I got caught, and then we had the giant increase in recruitment, and so, in 2011, for instance -- Your question is since 2011, and so, in 2011, I had fourteen trips that had black sea bass landings, and those trips were made primarily with pots, and I had 11,000 pounds of bass.

In the next year, 2012, I had twenty-one trips, and I had 16,000 pounds. In 2013, I had thirty-three trips with 15,000 pounds. Then, that year, we got stopped, because of the whale closure, from pot fishing, and so the next landings that I have are strictly hook-and-line, and so, in 2014, from 15,000 pounds, the next year it went down to 7,000 pounds. In 2015, it was 3,700 pounds. In 2016, it was 1,500 pounds.

So far this year, twenty-nine trips with landings, and it's been 2,000 pounds, except for the last four trips which I made, which are not reflected in here, and I used pots, after the hurricanes, and it was wide open. The pots are full again, and the fish are there, and so things have changed dramatically just very recently, but this also -- It has to do with when the big recruitment spike was there and all those fish were everywhere that we all witnessed, and that's when everybody jumped into it to take advantage of it, and then, once it started to decline and with the closure with the whales, then they all got out of it, and so I'm the only guy pot fishing, probably, out of Florida at this time.

MR. JOHNSON: The fishing year changed around that time too, didn't it? When I was sea bass pot fishing, I could pot in the winter.

MR. HULL: Yes, and they stopped us, because of the whale closure. In 2013, they stopped us, but the stock was actually just like the chevron trap shows. It was declining in abundance, at least where they're fishing with that trap. Now, I'm not saying the overall stock, but at least where they were fishing, and it was the same for me. The animals were not there, but we weren't fishing, and we didn't catch them. They moved on their own, for whatever environmental reason. They moved. They were not there in the area.

As I say, the last four trips, the same places where I've been fishing all my life, it looks to me real good, and it's coming back quick, and that's after the hurricanes, after all that action in the ocean, and so that's the reason I can give you why the Florida landings decreased so much, because there is nobody pursuing it. At the whale closure, that's when it really stopped, and you can look at the number of pot trips, which I got through you, Myra, and it only goes to 2013, but you can see the big increase in trips that were made in Florida with pots, and it was mostly ten or fourteen in a whole year, and that's me, in 2008. Then, about 2009, everybody jumped in it, because those animals were there, and so you had sixty or seventy trips a year. Then it started to decline right after 2013, and we don't have that information here, but that's when it dropped right off again.

MR. JOHNSON: To that, there was a lot of things going on during that time period. That's also when Amendment 17A was being kicked around and the area closure in the South Atlantic that would prohibit any bottom fishing from Cape Canaveral to I think it was Brunswick, and that's when some of us got sea bass pot endorsements, because that was one of the few things, commercial diving, that you would be able to do, and so there was a lot of variables that explain, I think, that decline. Some of them may be lack of fish, but a lot of them were management decisions.

MR. HULL: To Jim Attack's point about if you look at the index of abundance from the chevron trap deployments, it goes past 2015, and it is -- I will bet you the chevron trap sea bass is one of the predominant fish that it catches. A trap is really good to -- Bass will pot up, and so, when you see a reduction, and there was a huge recruitment, a huge recruitment, which is shown there, and it was everywhere.

Because the chevron trap shows that it's back down to the levels that it has been since about 1993, it doesn't mean that the stock is in this huge decline, but it just means that that recruitment level isn't there any more, or at least where they're setting those pots at. Water temperature has an awful lot to do with this animal, and, in our area off of Florida, we haven't had a cold-water winter in years, I mean like a really good hit of cold water, and that's why you haven't seen those right whales down there either in years, because they're going to come with that big intrusion of cold water.

We have not had it, and so the bass that are offshore won't move in, and so there's a lot of environmental factors that are involved with this and not just fishing effort and mortality, especially with a species that has such a vast area of habitat. I mean, I catch them in the river, in my crab traps, and you catch them offshore out into 500 feet of water, 600 feet of water, and so this animal has a huge habitat, and the fluctuations can be great, and so I'm very encouraged about what I've been seeing though in the last bit here. It looks really good. It's really nice animals, and a lot of them, and so hopefully it's a swing in abundance going back up instead of the decline that we were seeing.

MS. JEFFCOAT: For us recreational charter fishing, the demand hasn't really changed, because, when the fish was closed years ago, we went to sheepshead fishing offshore. We changed what we were doing, and people liked it, and so they were coming for that. We have done some near-shore sea bass trips here recently, and it's still not a really great bite. I would like to say that we're not seeing them because there are so many red snapper out there eating them, but we know that's not it.

Using the sabiki while we're offshore, trying to get some of the bigger rubies and stuff like that, we saw a ton of small sea bass, which we have not seen, which is really good to see, and so maybe there is that year class coming up, but we saw some really nice ones out deeper, when we were out there with the red snapper this past weekend, and so I think they're coming back, as you said.

MR. LORENZ: For southeastern North Carolina, I can pretty much mimic or agree with everything Jimmy Hull said, and I think there is an environmental factor that is out there, at least for recent years, with a reduction in the recreational catch, and I'm going to talk to the private recreational catch. The water just does not get cool enough to bring this fish in in what used to be December and January, within that twelve miles to the beach zone.

They're always out there. There were plenty of them this year in early summer, fourteen or fifteen or maybe almost a sixteen-inch fish, if you go eighteen to thirty miles out, but it seems hard to get anything to do around Christmas and New Years' time that we used to have, and the water temperature in our area just isn't dropping to that mid-fifties zone very much, or at all, to get those larger fish in.

Even this summer, when you go like in the eighteen-mile zone where they were, and that's sixty to ninety feet of water, there is a tremendous number of fish that we had to throw back that were twelve-and-a-quarter to twelve-and-three-quarter inches, and that is on two times when we actually limited out, four anglers, and so big fish are there, but, for some reason, they're not coming inshore, and I think, with a thirteen-inch limit, there's no opportunity for people to catch the fish, because, in the wintertime, many, many people either can't afford or don't have the craft to go out that distance to catch those larger fish, and so you're not getting keeper-sized fish coming in that maybe three to ten-mile zone that so many people would be comfortable going out in during the wintertime, which is when they used to come in, and there was a large period of time, I guess in the mid-2000s, that we couldn't go out in that nice time of year to catch them.

MR. SNYDER: In our market, when it comes to the price, it's gone up over the last five years. Not so much the last couple, but, three and four and five years ago, the price of black sea bass went up, and a little bit different to Deidre's market. Our private recreational boats are just not seeing the value, period, of going offshore, and so the guys just don't want to leave the dock a whole lot, because they can't keep too many fish, and so I think that's why black sea bass for us, the recreational reports, have been down.

MR. JOHNSON: I think the size limit is probably the biggest impact on recreational landings. When you went to that thirteen-inch size limit, you just heard people talk about throwing back twelve-and-three-quarter-inch fish, and I think you have stuff that shows that.

MR. MANIGAULT: I totally agree, across the board, the size, the water. All that played a major part, because we used to have them in our area, and they're there, but the size is the main thing. If you take it down to probably where the commercial guys catch them at, they could catch the bag limit and be out of them, because, in our area, people just don't target black sea bass. They want to fish offshore.

They pay for a trip to go offshore, and so then we've got stay within the bag limits of each fish, and so they can catch what they're going to catch, and the black sea bass -- We'll be out of the black sea bass, but we don't have to go out that far to actually catch them. We're fortunate to have a lot of reefs and rocky jetties and a lot of different places that they congregate, and they are in the way in our area, but the size is the issue. You very rarely catch a thirteen-inch. Like you said, it's twelve-and-three-quarters or twelve, and that's about it, and that's all I have to say.

MR. FREEMAN: For charter fishing, nobody calls wanting to book a sea bass trip. They're wanting snapper and grouper and stuff like that, but they're mixed in where you're going to catch your b-liners and triggerfish, and so they're happy to have them. They're a very good-eating fish. For every thirteen-inch fish we catch and keep, we are probably throwing back four and five, and lots of them are twelve-plus-inch fish, and so I think the thirteen-inch limit is definitely impacting the numbers, the total number of fish, the pounds of fish kept, and that sort of thing. I don't know

whether we did the right thing, because I remember back fishing when you were keeping ten-inch sea bass, and for them, for sure, that's not a very big critter. There's not much meat there once you get past the head.

MS. BROUWER: In terms of -- I heard someone say there is plenty of habitat where the fish are found, and have you seen any changes in where -- Perhaps there were places where you used to catch them and they're no longer there, or vice versa, and has any of that changed recently?

MR. HULL: As I stated earlier, the places that I have fished all my life, there was a time period from about 2014 or 2015 where there was nowhere near the animals there that there always has been. There was definitely a decline in abundance on those reefs, but, now, today, I can take you there, and it will astound you the number of animals that are there, and so it has changed, and it's probably likely going to change some more, because that's what it does, and, as far as -- I think it has reached its decline point, and it's now on its rebound.

I believe the fish are coming back inshore, for some reason, and we're going to see a big increase in them. I would like to ask Todd a question, if I may. On the chevron trap, do they record the temperature on the bottom every time they deploy it? Is that information available?

DR. KELLISON: We typically do a CTD cast associated with groups of six traps, or sometimes a little less than that, and so we have a bottom temperature measurement that's in the area that would be generally consistent with each, and so we have a bottom temperature that we can relate to that trap. It's not taken directly on that trap.

MR. HULL: Has anybody looked -- Do you all look at that to see if there's been an increase in bottom temperature over the time period where like you see the decrease in catch in the chevron trap, to see if there has been an increase in water temperature or a decrease?

DR. KELLISON: That's a good question. Kerry and Mark and I were having a discussion earlier today, and I was talking about the bigger picture. In the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, there is a lot of evidence of like increasing species distribution, or species expanding their distribution, like black sea bass way up off of New York, and summer flounder are way up there, and blueline tilefish is another one that gets mentioned.

There is clearly -- The shelf waters in the Mid-Atlantic and the Northeast have been warming over the last couple of decades, and so from at least initial analysis, some involved analysis of the trap time series, coupled with the SEAMAP coastal trawl survey, which is shallower waters, and it goes back several decades, but it appears that the shelf and the shelf break temperatures for the South Atlantic have been pretty stable over the last couple of decades.

Then people that have looked at -- There's been a pretty intensive analysis of that SEAMAP trawl data, which is a great database to look at changes in species distributions, because the survey has been done in the same way for two-plus decades, replicated seasonally within each year, and, as opposed to what they found when they have looked further up the coast, in the Mid-Atlantic, where they see these northern shifts in like the center of abundance of different species, there's not any really evidence of that occurring within our region. There was some small shifts northward for some species, but other species had slight southward shifts, and some were kind of constant over time.

A broad answer to your question is the temperatures have been relatively stable, or appear to have been relatively stable, over the shelf over the last couple of decades, two-plus decades, and a caveat is those are temperatures measured during the trap and now the trap-video survey season, which is May to September or October, and so it's not clear whether the winter temperatures have also been consistent or they could have been warming, but I don't know if we have -- I don't think we have specifically looked at like the interannual variability relative to recent changes in sea bass abundance, but I would say that when the indices of abundance get generated for use in assessments, absolutely temperature is considered, like the effect of temperature on this catches, and so it is incorporated into the indices that get used in the assessments.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that, because, even with the -- You look at the chevron trap indices of abundance that was presented to the council and which we had presented to us, and it's -- That was a huge increase in recruitment for that period, when it started in 2009, and then to have it -- It lasted for three years or four years, and then it just immediately dropped back down to about the levels where it was, and so we certainly didn't -- We weren't fishing at that time, most of that time, at least not with pots, and so it just seems there is some big environmental factor going on there, is just what I see out of it, and so thank you.

MR. HUDSON: As Jimmy mentioned about the different effects that have occurred on management, I believe the final rule on the 23rd of October, 2013, that basically shut down the pots, through Regulatory Amendment 19. We didn't get that reestablished until January 30, 2017, which is Regulatory Amendment 16, which then we got the line markings. This year, you can technically fish in places, but the guys up north are going to have to be fishing further off, and, also, back in 18A, on the 7th of January, 2013, the ten-inch went to the eleven-inch for the commercial, and the recreational went from twelve to thirteen, and that's when you start seeing some of these differences between the two sectors.

In combination for the commercial, those two different things of virtually creating the endorsements and finally getting that into place, it delayed a lot of stuff, and so that's three-plus years of no wintertime, and Todd alluded to the reality of the May to September or October for the independent surveys, and it would be nice if there was some subset of what they do to be able to look at the wintertime stuff, because that's kind of an important feature of looking at our year-round fisheries, to me.

One of the other things I used to see, growing up around Ponce Inlet, was, in the rivers, you catch those little sea bass. They're very small, but, when we would be catching our pinfish and stuff, they would be going with us out offshore, because it was south. I don't know if this closure on red snapper has affected some of that very, very small black sea bass, but it's just another one of those thoughts.

The other thing I want to ask a question about, Myra, has to do with the Mid-Atlantic Council, which is referenced in the red grouper fishery performance report. They have a dedicated spot on their website for these, and these are virtually updated almost every year for all of their animals, but we've got a whole lot more animals here, and I see the usefulness for the management, for the SSC, for us at the data workshops and stuff, for having this stuff and having it up-to-date.

The big problem with the wheels coming off of MRIP over the last couple of years, and it won't be fixed for another year, is the fact that you've got to QA and QC all that recreational stuff, and so those performance reports are going to be lagging a year or two behind, whereas the commercial is going to be a little bit more clean, to be able to help us make management decisions, and so a lot of caveats to what's going on here, but I guess my other question about how the Mid-Atlantic does it is how do you all plan to do it with where you're going to store these fishery performance reports, because I know you have your dedicated spot for amendments, but it sort of strikes me that it should have its own place on the website, so it's easy to get to.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, that is a good suggestion, and we haven't had those discussions, and so certainly those comments will be useful when we do talk to the council and outreach staff, as far as how we're going to be disseminating these. Remember last time with red grouper, and there was some suggestion that these should be included as working papers, perhaps, during the assessment process. To my knowledge, there hasn't been any more discussion of how to proceed, and so we're just going about generating them, and, if you have suggestions for how these need to be prepared or made available, then certainly please let us know.

MR. HUDSON: I guess the reason I'm bringing it up is, being a history buff and everything, these are virtually living documents, is what they are going to be. Year in and year out, you never know what is going to change in the document, but, yes, that would be a fit at a data workshop, where you're doing working documents and that particularly is the species of focus in that particular assessment, and then that is where it's going to get some degree of update, but then there's going to be other scenarios around the management and around the SSC environment, and maybe even just people out of the blue that's reading this stuff on the websites and stuff.

All of that needs to have a conduit and easy access. Sometimes navigating on the webpage, since it's been changed a couple or three times in the last few years, it creates enigmas, because I get 404 errors. If you go on Google and you go to google something up, sometimes it takes you to a 404 error. In other words, you can't get to the page, unless you know how to work the website, and so anything we can do to improve the information for assessments and management is a great thing. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so maybe we should move on to management measures, and I heard some folks wanting to take more about the regulatory environment for this fishery, and so questions that we had for you, as far as management measures go, is what is the appropriateness of the current minimum size limits, and I have already heard some comments on that.

Are there new measures the council should consider, and I know the AP has voiced their recommendations and concerns in the past. ACLs, as far as how they should be modified, within the limits, of course, of what the council can do. As you know, the acceptable biological catch and overfishing limit are going to drive how much of that can be available to commercial and recreational sectors, but, should there be some modifications, and I guess the assessment, of course, is going to dictate how and what direction that moves.

As far as the gear, should the pot mesh size change, remember last -- I believe it was last spring, or maybe it was a couple of years ago, but we had Paul Rudershausen come and give you guys a talk about the pots and how to optimize the mesh size for that sector of the fishery, and so there were talks at the council level, as far as making that a regulation, and then council members

decided that there is only thirty-two endorsement holders, and so perhaps it's something that the fishermen themselves would do voluntarily without the council having to impose this as a requirement.

We sent a letter to all the endorsement holders, and we said, hey, this is information that the council has received, and these are the results of the study, and I haven't heard back whether folks have gone ahead and make that change on their own, and so, if you have any information on whether that has happened or if there's been any talk about changing the mesh size of pots to optimize the commercial catch in pots, then that would be useful to know.

Also, how has the area restriction on pots affected catches and effort? That would be good to know. The regulations on that were recently put in place, and so maybe there hasn't been enough time to figure out and evaluate the impact, but any information you can share on that would be useful for the council, too.

Other measures that should be changed for sea bass, if you guys have any recommendations there, and then, thinking ahead, there is this action on powerheads that they are getting ready to consider, and so is that going to have any impact on black sea bass, to your knowledge? Let's talk about those things.

MR. HULL: I am just going to go down the bullet list here, and it would be easier, I think. Is the eleven-inch minimum size limit for the commercial sector appropriate? Yes, it is. It works fine, especially with the gear that we're using. Is the thirteen-inch minimum size limit for the recreational sector appropriate? No, it's definitely too big. Are there new measures that the council should consider? Yes, they should reduce the recreational size limit.

How should the ACLs for each sector be modified? No change. Should the pot mesh size be changed to a different mesh size? No. How has the pot area restriction impacted catches and effort? Well, it has pushed us offshore of the prime fishing grounds. Are there other existing measures that should be changed? No.

As far as the powerheads, I don't see where it's going to have an impact, but someone could change my mind on that. Have you perceived any unique effects or environmental conditions of black sea bass? As I have already stated, off of Ponce Inlet, Florida, we have not had a cold-water winter in several years, and so those bigger population of bass have not moved inshore to our prime fishing grounds.

The spawning off of my area is January through March, and, as I already stated, yes, the black sea bass in the last few years have been hard to find, but, ever since the hurricanes, it's been a dramatic increase. It's starting to look good again. As far as recruitment of small fish, I see all sizes of black sea bass. I do a lot of crab trapping, both stone crab and blue crab inshore, and I catch lots of bass inshore in the river, and they're also inshore close to the beach, and, as far as artificial reefs versus natural reefs, sea bass -- My best sea bass bottom is live bottom, where there is small crabs and worms and clams and scallops and things like that. Those are my best spots, as opposed to an artificial reef.

As far as suggestions for research priorities, I think that recruitment is a key factor to keep track of. You can see what happened to us with a giant spike in the chevron trap, which I'm not sure of

the size of the mesh on the chevron trap, but I have done recruitment studies for snapper using small traps, and it was basically a pinfish trap that we used offshore, and we were catching sea bass the size of your fingernail in this thing, and so something could happen there where you could actually start to measure recruitment of some of these animals using a very small mesh trap. That is pretty much it. Thank you.

DR. KELLISON: I don't know offhand. I could look it up, but, Wally, do you know what the --

MR. BUBLEY: I am trying to find it really quick.

DR. KELLISON: It's bigger than can contain small sea bass, and so Rusty was mentioning, and I know, Robert, I talked to you about this, and so sea bass have nursery stages. Some of them are in estuarine waters, but definitely a proportion of their population settles far offshore, and so you see sub-inch long sea bass settled on the bottom, far offshore, and so I know, just from experience, watching traps come up out of the water, and so sometimes you see a little sea bass falling out of them. We, of course, know that our mesh size doesn't collect fish smaller than -- So we account for that, but it's a good point. I mean, they are out there, the smaller fish are out there.

There is a question, to me, I think, about the importance of offshore habitats as nursery versus inshore estuarine waters, and there is a student at UNC Chapel Hill who looked at that in sort of a restricted area, and I think he collected some data from some of our cruises and used otolith microchemistry to try to figure out what proportion was coming from inshore versus offshore, and the proportion was greater than from estuarine waters, but I think it was kind of a limited study, and it could be done with a bigger footprint, also.

MR. JOHNSON: Just a quick question. I can't remember if we ever -- I know we discussed in the past, on the commercial sector, having some type of portion of the ACL set aside for the hook-and-line, and I can't remember what ever happened with that. Did we do that, or did we just talk about it? Is that in an amendment somewhere? I can't remember.

MS. BROUWER: No, there is no portion set out. We're not -- Let me start over. The golden tilefish is the only commercial fishery where there is the ACL that's split up based on gear, and so you have your longline portion of the ACL and the hook-and-line portion, but that wasn't done for black sea bass, and, yes, it has come up. I can't quite remember the rationale for not doing it, and I'm just not even going to try too hard, because it's not going to come back to me anytime soon, but --

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Myra. Me either. I couldn't remember where that stood, and it hasn't been an issue, because the ACL hasn't been met, because of all the restrictions, like the number of pots and bringing them ashore and all the other things, but, if the pot fishery is allowed to be conducted in those cooler months, I have a feeling that it probably will be met, which I know is the goal.

MR. COX: I think the reason we didn't go to a percentage like we did in the tile fishery is because the ACL wasn't getting met, but I mean a lot of pot endorsements have changed hands, and it's not because people bought them. It's just because they got them when a permit was bought or sold, but there's just other fisheries, except for a couple of months out of the year, which we're

trying to rectify now, like November and December, and so some of the guys are just opting not to go bass potting.

MR. LORENZ: I will just state a few things, and I will go through the way Jimmy Hull did. On the environmental and ecological side, as I said before, the unique effects on environmental conditions seems to be the lack of any really cold water for any length of time in the winter. It's interesting, timing and length of the black sea bass spawning season in my area, and the only way I would know would be by cleaning fish that have roe in them, and I don't see it too often, but that could be because of catching them more in November and December and then May and June, and that's about it, and so I don't see a lot of roe in fish that are cleaned, and a lot of those fish are thirteen or fourteen inches.

Has the abundance of black sea bass changed over five years? No, I don't think so. I think, for five years, there have been a lot of them. They are just not at a size level that you can keep them. On catch rates on black sea bass, artificial reefs or natural reefs, it's the natural reefs you can catch the good ones on, and that could be a North Carolina problem, because the artificial reefs, the ones that are further inshore, if they're within about twelve miles, when those fish show up in the cooler weather on the reef, you can go back three or four days later and they're gone, for whatever reason. Either we caught them or they get caught up or they move on and none replace them for some period of time.

MR. ATACK: We went back to -- If we go back to when we looked at size changes, I think the original we had ten inches commercial, and I know we raised the recreational, and we were going to step the commercial up, and the whole reason behind that was for keeping a big enough biomass out there and large enough fish for sustainability and long-term higher ACLs.

I know we have talked a few times about getting the SSC or somebody to run the models as to what would give you the MSY for certain sized minimum fish, and so it would be good to kind of know that before we make size changes, because, if we reduce the sizes enough, and then you take out the larger females, then it can be going down the rabbit hole over time.

The mesh size, we had a presentation on that. The mesh size for the pots, I don't think it's the right size. There is bycatch, and there is smaller fish that are caught, and the mesh size should be bigger, in order to not have the discards. We had a presentation on that, and I did a little research. Mesh sizes are available for the sizes that would match up with whatever size we pick to be, whether we say it's eleven-inch or twelve-inch, but I think we should size the mesh to match that to not have the discards.

Abundance, we've seen a decrease. I mean, we don't really target them, but we do a lot of scuba diving, and so, visually, we see what's on the reef, and, no, there is not as many black sea bass in our areas as there has been, and so we've seen that degrade over the last couple or three years, and the time of year is a factor, too. We do see a lot of big spawning females in March and April and with full roe, and their color is all lit up, when we dive. Powerheads, I don't think that should impact the black sea bass. That would impact some of the larger fish that are getting targeted, but it should not impact black sea bass.

MR. COX: I will give it a crack. I am not going to be as efficient as Jimmy, but I will run down it pretty quick. If you want to start from the top, I will add to it, and I don't have to read it again.

MS. BROUWER: The management bit?

MR. COX: Yes. I would agree with Jimmy on this stuff here. I think our size limits are good for commercial. The recreational guys, it's set too high. The ACLs look good, and, the pot mesh size, I am only seeing about a half-dozen sub-legal fish in my traps, at the most, when I have a lot of fish in it, and so I think what we have is working. If we did have to modify it, Charlie and I spent a lot of time looking to find a different sized mesh, and we didn't find anybody that makes them. It will be very expensive to have it done, and so I think what we have works fine, as long as we don't increase the size limit.

I think our fishery is healthy. I mean, I haven't seen a lot of change, except for the fishery really doesn't start ramping up until a little bit later than it used to, because it's taken a lot longer to get the water to cool. The water is staying warmer a lot longer in the fall. Just now, we have started really seeing great catches of bass, very recently, to where it used to be in September we had good catches, back in the mid-2000s. That is pretty much it.

MR. MANIGAULT: I need some clarity on a chevron trap versus a blue crab trap, because what the Department of Natural Resources mandated for us to do when I was in the crab business to let out the small crabs, so they won't be eaten, they required us to have a ring in two areas in the upper and lower part of the actual part, and does the chevron trap have that already, or can a trap be modified to have something like that in it, so those fish can get out of that particular size?

MR. HULL: You don't want to have that in a chevron trap, because it's a sampling trap. You don't want anything to escape. A chevron trap is specifically a National Marine Fisheries Service device, gear, that they're using to sample with, but, yes, all of our crab traps everywhere, every state, has that pretty much, but they want to catch everything they can catch and sample with it.

MR. MOSS: Gary, the chevron traps that they're speaking about are what they do for sampling for the statistics. What these guys are talking about are the black sea bass pots, which are for commercial fishing, and it's two different systems.

MR. MANIGAULT: I guess my question is since I can't envision what you have in regards to that, but I have only seen black sea bass caught with crab pots in my particular area back in the day.

MR. HULL: A sea bass pot is very similar to a crab pot. It's got a little different baffle inside, and a different entrance, but the same theory, the same design, and about the same size. Two-foot-by-two-foot is the maximum size. We have to use two-inch-square mesh, and very similar, but, a crab trap, if you go bait it and drop it offshore in some sea bass, and it will load up.

MR. MANIGUALT: Thank you for the clarity.

MR. MUNDEN: I have a question for the fishermen here who have experience with pots. One of the issues that we were asked to provide comments on is should the mesh size be increased, and isn't that already being accomplished by the escape rings in the pots?

MR. HULL: Red, the way I understand it, if you have a trap that's made totally out of two-inch-square, you don't have an escape ring. I don't have an escape ring in any of mine. All of my traps are made out of two-inch-square mesh, and the ratio, as Jack was saying -- If I had thirty animals in that trap and I have a really short soak time, maybe an hour or an hour-and-a-half, there might be one or two that didn't squeeze out yet, or maybe they got gilled a little bit or something, because I've got a little octo wire in there too, on my entrances, and they will sometimes gill in that, but, with the two -- If you didn't have a two-inch-square, the whole trap, you would have to have one of those vents. We call them vents. You have to have a vent in there, but most everybody I know is totally two-inch-square mesh.

It's a very small portion of undersized animals that are in the pot. They squeeze out. Now, I saw that presentation that they had, and that was a beautiful presentation, but, for us, it's not necessary because of one or two animals in a full pot. You're going to change everything at this time just for a couple of animals that they may or may not make it when you let them go? To answer your question, no, with a two-inch -- Because the vent would be no bigger than that that's required.

MR. COX: Just one thing to say about the bass pot fishery. I've been doing it for a long time too, and it's a really neat fishery. It's very clean, and we bring them up slow in shallow water, and so our discards, whatever few we have, do very well, but we did look at, as we rebuild pots and our old ones are fading out, we do have a two-inch panel on all of them now, and it was required, and so that really took care of the problem.

To build a new pot, I would certainly go to a two-and-a-quarter, and I think that was the presentation that Paul Rudershausen showed you guys, and it was a two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh. Charlie and I spent a lot of time looking for the wire to do it with, and it's just not available, and they said to do a run of it that it would be very expensive to do it, and so, if it ever comes available, I would probably build it out of it, just for the sake of doing it, so I would have 100 percent clean and not have to worry about culling anything.

MR. JOHNSON: It's been a few years since I have dropped a sea bass pot over, but that is a very clean fishery. I used to sit there and watch it when I was pulling them up with the hauler, and it would literally rain those little animals. You would see them, and it was like where are all my fish going, and they were -- That's the beauty of it. That's why the mates love it. They just shake it in the box. They look in there, and they may have to pick out one or a little triggerfish that's going to bite them on their finger, but, other than that, it's very clean.

MR. COX: I was always hoping that we could go out to this deeper water and find these lionfish that we were hoping that we could target with pots, but, Jimmy, I don't know if you've had any success, but we have.

MR. HULL: Bill Kelly with the Florida Commercial Fishermen's Association has been working on that project for a while, and you know they're catching them in the Keys with their lobster gear, but it's more of a habitat thing for them rather than -- Like you don't bait it, and they leave them there for long periods of time. Like you would leave it there for weeks and then go back, and the lionfish will be in it. It provides them a habitat, and it obviously works, but we haven't been able to -- Because of bycatch issues, or potential bycatch issues, there's been a lot of opposition, I guess, from the Science Center or someone to start to conduct even studies on it, but I think we've got a big problem with lionfish, and we need to be doing something about it, no question.

Just one more comment. Looking at -- When you look at what the management of how the -- Of course, the Scientific and Statistical Committee sets these ABCs for us, and annual catch limits, and so then the council picks and chooses, and it just seems like not just for sea bass, but for all of these stocks, you know you have these huge spikes in recruitment, and then they say, okay, let's raise the ACL up to this -- With sea bass, we did a huge increase.

Now you saw where the chevron -- They're going to use that chevron trap index, I guarantee it, and here we're sitting here telling everybody that it's coming back, but they're going to use that, and so we're going to see this probably huge reduction in our ACL on black sea bass, and then we're going to get this -- It's just like a knee-jerk reaction to all of these spikes in recruitment and then declines. Well, that's what fisheries do.

I mean, they cycle in abundance and decline and based on environmental factors, and so I would just like to see the council stick with a more level ACL, something kind of like what we're trying to do with trip limits and catch limits and things, to get something that's more stable, so we don't have these huge spikes up and then big declines, and let's just pick something that's more stable, that we can monitor our fisheries and either slowly raise them up, instead of these huge declines, and then you would have this slow decrease.

It's just like the poor tilefish fishermen. Here they've had this huge increase, and now they're going to cut in half, and so these are things that I would like to see changed, that we have less knee-jerk reaction in setting these things, and let's find a good level that works and that we can monitor these fisheries with less dramatic changes in catch limits.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Well, thank you all for that. I am going to try to piece all this back together, but certainly, if overnight, you decide that you want to share more information on sea bass, by all means, we can do that tomorrow morning. You can send me an email, which is what Jimmy has done, and I'm more than happy to just -- If you feel more comfortable just writing stuff down for me, then that would be great.

We will take the same approach tomorrow morning for vermilion, and so, if you get a chance to think about it overnight, so maybe we can get through it -- Not more quickly, because I don't want to speed it up. I think it's very valuable to have these discussions and to promote whatever conversation you want to have on these species, and so thank you for that, and I will turn it back to you.

MR. MOSS: Okay. That's probably a good place to call it a night for tonight, and we will reconvene tomorrow, and we'll pick up with the rest of the stuff with vermilion snapper, unless anybody has anything that they want to add right now before we break.

MR. GOMEZ: I am going to be flying out tomorrow, and I have to leave the meeting at three o'clock. I don't know if any of this agenda stuff could be moved about, but there are some issues that are more important to me, and I don't know if we can get to them, and when does the meeting end tomorrow? Is it five? I may miss some important stuff, and, if I have to, I will, but I would imagine that I could just write something out, if you can't move any of the agenda around.

MR. MOSS: We can discuss it and see what it is that you need to talk about and see if we need to move some things around. I certainly want your voice to be heard. All right. We will see you guys tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on November 8, 2017.)

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NOVEMBER 9, 2017

THURSDAY 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, November 9, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman David Moss.

MR. MOSS: If everyone can take a seat, we'll get going here. We're going to continue right where we left off yesterday. Myra is going to continue on with the vermilion snapper. If we could, just kind of hold questions until the end, and then we'll go one-by-one, and we'll try to do it a little bit more concise than we did the black sea bass, and we'll make a little bit more sense of it, and so we'll get started.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, David, and good morning, everybody. What I want to do is walk you through the information document that we put together for vermilion, like I did yesterday with sea bass. I'm not going to spend too much time on it, assuming that everybody, of course, read it thoroughly before you went to bed last night, and I also sent everybody the Word version of the questionnaire, so that, if you want, after the meeting, if things got left out or you remembered something you wanted to contribute, you could always write it in there and send it to me, whatever you would like to do.

For vermilion, we followed the format that I presented yesterday for sea bass. There is a little bit of the biology information at the very top, and there is some information on spawning. We know that the season extends from April through late September in our area, with a peak in June through August, and that is corroborated by recent scientific publications.

Vermilion are not protogynous like sea bass. They do not change sex during their lifetime. There is very few immature vermilion snapper that have been collected in our region, and, based on the limited information that we do have, they seem to mature by age-one, and they are all mature by age-two, and so there is still a good bit of work that needs to be done to pinpoint the size at maturity and that sort of thing, because there's just not been that much sampling done to be able to gather that information.

The maximum reported age for vermilion snapper in our area is nineteen years, and there is a little bit of information here on diet and that sort of thing. As far as stock status, there was an update that was done in 2012 that had information through 2011, and so an update -- When you do an update to a stock assessment, basically what happens is just additional data are input into the

model, and they just crank it up and get more information. There is not a lot of very substantial changes that are done to the assessment, and so the benchmark, which is the more thorough kind of a stock assessment, was done back in 2008.

Based on the latest update that we have, vermilion are not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring, and so there is some more information here that is more detailed on the spawning stock biomass and where they all are. Overall, it looks like vermilion are doing okay, they are doing well, and there is an assessment, like you heard yesterday, that is currently underway, and so we'll be getting the results of that assessment next year, and Julia is going to be talking a little bit more about that later on this morning, when we get into the updates for all the species that are being assessed or will be assessed soon.

Management overview, again, management goes back to the early 1990s. Actually, the original FMP had some regulations that were put in place specifically to impact vermilion snapper and to avoid -- There was some indication that the stock was experiencing growth overfishing, and so the council put in a regulation for a four-inch trawl mesh, with the intent to allow undersized small fish to escape, and that was done, in particular, to affect vermilion.

MR. COX: Real quick, would you just tell the panel here exactly what kind of assessment it is, and, just in a few words, the difference between the assessments and how fishermen are included in which assessment?

MS. BROUWER: If you don't mind, I think Julia would probably be the best person to do that, and so let me get her up here.

MS. BYRD: There are typically three types of assessments that we do: benchmark assessments, standard assessments, and update assessments. Benchmark assessments are for first-time assessments or if there is significant, really large changes that need to be made to an assessment, if they're changing models or if there are a lot of new data sources.

In a benchmark, all of the data sources are on the table. You're developing a new model. We typically have three workshops: a data workshop, an assessment workshop, and a review workshop. Fishermen are involved, typically as panel members, at a data workshop and then as appointed observers at the assessment stage and the review stage.

The other extreme is an update assessment, and that is what Myra just mentioned a few minutes ago, and that is when there has already been a benchmark assessment done. You already have a model, and so what you're doing is you're adding new years of data to that model and then just re-running the model. An update assessment is strictly done by the assessment team, and so, for the South Atlantic assessments, the Beaufort Lab would get that data and re-run the model, and there is no kind of outside involvement by fishermen or other scientists in an update assessment.

A standard assessment is kind of in between a benchmark and an update, and so, for a standard assessment, there has been a benchmark assessment done, and so you have a model, and what you're doing is you're updating that model with new years of data, but it has some flexibility, and so you can make some new changes to the model. If there are a few new datasets that have been used in other assessments that you want to incorporate in the model, you can do that, and we try

to lay out what those changes will be, so it's clear in something we call the terms of reference, which is kind of the list of things that needs to get done in that assessment.

For a standard assessment, there is a panel of kind of outside scientists who help make decisions as well as fishermen who are appointed observers who contribute to the process. For a standard assessment, sometimes it takes place over a series of webinars, but sometimes it takes place with an in-person workshop, too. It just kind of depends on the species and what kinds of changes are going to get made, and so, for the vermilion assessment that's going on right now, it's a standard assessment, and so it's that kind of in between. We are updating the model that was done last time, but we're looking at a few new data sources, and I can talk about that a little bit more tomorrow, but does that help?

MR. COX: Yes, I hope that helps. It's certainly good information. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: That always helps me too, because I get them all confused in my head. Moving on with the management, there has been -- From early on, from the early 1990s, there's been a minimum size limit of ten inches that was put in place for recreational, and a twelve-inch minimum size limit for commercial. There is a ten per person per day bag limit.

There was another assessment, the first assessment, that was done in 2003, and there was an indication that the stock was undergoing overfishing, and so then the council took action to end overfishing through Amendment 13C, and they specified a quota. Then, later on, there was a recreational closure, and some of you may remember that. That was from November 1 through March 31, and the recreational bag limit was reduced to five fish per person per day, and so that stayed in place for a while.

The commercial split season that we talked about yesterday was put in place in 2009, and there were a few other regulations that affected vermilion snapper that all took place in the 2000s, through 2013, and then the council revised the ACLs, in response to another assessment, an update assessment, that was done in 2012, and then the commercial trip limit was reduced at that time to 1,000 pounds, with the step-down that is currently in place to 500 pounds gutted weight. Then we recently removed that recreational closure, and we also, most recently, in 2014, removed the prohibition that was in place for captain and crew to keep vermilion, and so that was taken away in 2014.

Here is the fishery-independent trend from the Southeast Reef Fish Survey with the chevron traps that we talked about yesterday, and so you can see, in later years, there is this little dip here in abundance for vermilion, and then the same sort of information, with some background at the beginning for where the data are coming from that are included in here and the difference between the different data sources and caveats for how to interpret the information.

Commercial landings are shown here first in this table, and we have the same thing that I showed yesterday for black sea bass, and this is information that comes from NMFS, from the Accumulated Landings System, and so going back to 2000, and we have landings by state. Georgia and South Carolina are combined for confidentiality purposes, and then the quota and ACL are presented right here in the far-right column. You can see that the quotas have gone down from 1.2 million pounds to where we are now, which is 876,000.

Here is the commercial landings by state, and so that same information in the table presented graphically, showing the distribution by state over time. Here is the commercial landings by year compared to the quota or the ACL, and so the landings are in blue, and the quota, or ACL, is in orange.

There was, here, a little snafu that happened over here that looked like the landings went above the quota in 2014, and here is the average landings by state, presented by month. Florida is in blue, North Carolina is in gray, and Georgia/South Carolina are in orange, and so it's pretty well distributed. Florida is a little bit below everybody else. This is monthly landings by state, again, 2011 through 2016, and above here was 2000 through 2010, and so there's an interesting little dip in here.

Then on to the recreational information. Data come from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, as I explained yesterday, and they take the information from MRIP and convert the numbers of fish to pounds landed, and we get those data from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. The data for 2016 had not yet been converted, and so that's why I put that in italics, to make sure that you understand that those data are not really comparable to the rest of the data presented in the table, and here it is presented in a figure by state. North Carolina is in yellow, and so certainly there has been a noticeable dip right here in most recent years for vermilion recreational landings.

Here it is by year compared to the ACL or the quota. This is presented by wave, by two-month waves, over time, from 2000 to 2016, and so July/August, right here, is the peak. Then here are the directed recreational trips, and so these are targeted or harvested.

Going back to 2000, you can see a declining and then an upward trend in most recent years, and then we did have some information of the percentage of vermilion snapper landings in the headboat survey, and so these data are obtained through the survey that is kept up in Beaufort, and then, in terms of discards, the gray line presents the MRIP information, and so these are in numbers of fish that were released, and so you can see that we, again, are having some issues with discards in the recreational fishery for this species as well, and we talked about black sea bass yesterday and the issues there. The commercial is in blue, and the headboat is in orange, and so the MRIP would be charters and private recreational landings.

Then the same type of information that we presented yesterday for sea bass of the average ex-vessel price per pound over time, going back through 2000, and the entire South Atlantic is presented here in yellow, and so we see a little bit of an increasing trend here in the last ten years or so. Here is the ex-vessel value of commercial landings over time, since 2000. That is what we have for vermilion. Are there any questions or any clarifications that you would like to make?

MR. COX: I would just like to say the graphs look really nice. I love seeing that, when you're trying to manage four states and everything is pretty equally distributed in the species like that, and so that's very encouraging.

MR. JOHNSON: I just looked at that MRIP data on the discards, and you've got headboat discards, which would typically encounter larger numbers of small vermilion, in Florida at least, because they are fishing closer to shore, and they have not that many discards, but then you look at the charter and private recreational, and you've got this huge amount of discards, and that is not based in reality, I don't think.

MR. FREEMAN: Some of the charts are confusing to me, because I don't remember the exact years that -- You go from ten fish kept to five fish, and that's got to have a significant impact on what's showing up up there, and I think, for future data displaying, it would be a real lesson to the success of management to flag when there was a significant occurrence in the regulations that obviously impacted the numbers on poundage and all this kind of stuff. If you cut my catch that we're allowed to keep in half, it's got to be significant.

MR. HUDSON: The same thing. When I saw Figure 11, it gives you heartburn a little bit at those two peaks from MRFSS/MRIP, but, then again, we know the wheels are coming off of that apparatus, but why that super low period of 2011 to 2013 and contrast that to the two peaks on either side, and it just doesn't make sense. Thank you.

MR. ATTACK: Rusty, I believe it does. When you look at the number of directed trips, they went way down in those years. That was right after the economy burst, and the commercial landings stayed up, because the commercial guys were still going out there targeting. The catch per unit effort went down, saying that your stock kind of dropped, but the commercial landings stayed up, but the recreational dropped, because, if you look at the number of trips, the directed trips went way down, and so that would explain that, and that would also correlate to the MRIP, because, if you're not targeting those trips, you're not going to have those intercepts and surveys.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't understand MRIP entirely, but I do know that one of their techniques is they count boats going out inlets, and so that is probably effort, but I don't know how they assume what every boat going out an inlet is actually fishing for, and so, to Jim's point, yes, there was maybe increased fishing effort, but obviously they didn't sample -- I guess they sample a subset, and MRIP is very complicated, how they come about things, and that's one of the issues with it, but, even with increased effort, that's just an awful lot of discards. It doesn't seem right.

MR. LORENZ: One of the things that I am continuing to wrestle with now, and it's coming on the end of the third year that I've been with this group, and we talk of the recreational sector and its discards, and, depending on the fish, I think the situation can be quite different, and it is warming me up to thoughts of knowing what we -- I like to say that I represent the private recreational angler, and so I'm talking to a group of people that we are not excessively sophisticated.

We are fishing for these kinds of fish, and the groups that I will hang with and be working with, we are fishing boats twenty-two feet, to maybe thirty-four feet, on our own. We don't have quite the network among ourselves, and the species can differ so differently with what we direct. I find it interesting to say "directed". I can tell you that I know no one that is a friend or in my circle that directs that we go for vermilion snapper.

Quite frankly, where we are, as I found out today in talking to Robert and Jimmy, there is a reason for that. We just don't go far enough. A great day for us is to pick a nice weather day, where there is three-foot seas, and, yes, we'll go out forty-two miles, and we will get to 120 and 140 feet of water, and, yes, we'll get vermilion snapper fourteen to sixteen inches, and they're just part of the general grab-bag of what we're trying to go for.

We didn't go out that day to get vermilion snapper. We went out that day to try to get red grouper or maybe a gag, and the vermilions show up, one or two, and I myself further inland, with a smaller

boat, a twenty-four footer, will get, in thirty feet of water, or eighteen, or even in twelve, we will come up with a vermilion, once in a while, of twelve inches or thirteen inches, and it's fun, but they're not targeted, and we're not catching that many, because we're grab-bag fishing, and, therefore, we are not discarding that many.

Then the nature of our trips, when we're out there, is we're trolling in the morning for other things that are more fun, like the dolphin, or maybe a nice wahoo, but we are not targeting things like vermilion, and so this is one of these where I wonder if maybe there must be charter boats that go after these and will go that extra -- Instead of the forty-two, that extra ten or fifteen miles to get the fish in the proper depth water, but it isn't us, and it isn't that whole group that we know is kind of a problem, folks like me that you can't seem to document what we're catching.

That brings about an interesting mindset of how to capture these catches and effort, and it may almost start to be a need to kind of segregate that private group, because we make up a huge mass of people, and so us just catching two or three fish a trip may add up, against a charter that knows where to go and can limit everybody out. We're not going to personally -- I will never limit out on vermilion snapper. It's just a fun, pretty fish to throw in with the sea bass and the grunts and everything else that I'm picking up off the bottom.

MR. ATACK: If you had 120,000 directed trips, or 130,000, like they showed, then the MRIP is only two throwbacks per trip is what the average is on those big peaks, which is very reasonable on a recreational trip. If you're going to just throw back two b-liners, that's not that big of a number. It looks like a big peak, but it's only two per trip is what the average is. The other years, it's like per trip, the low numbers.

DR. KELLISON: Don't get caught up in the magnitude, the actual magnitude, so much as the trends. Clearly, discard information is some of the weakest information, but it's useful when you aggregate it over the entire South Atlantic and you look at the trends, but don't get so caught up in the magnitude of them.

MR. MANIGAULT: I totally agree with my colleague to my right. We never go out and target vermilion. It's all a part of that whole entire grab-bag of fish that we catch, because most of the customers just want to catch some fish. It's very, very, very rare that we actually go out and target anything other than maybe wahoo or dolphin when we're trolling, and so I am supporting him. Thank you.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, everyone. Some of these comments will go to answering some of these questions, too, and so we're going to start through with these questions, just as we did with sea bass, but we're going to go through one question at a time, and so we'll start off with the commercial sector. Has price and demand for vermilion snapper changed? We will throw that out to the panel.

MS. MARHEFKA: We have seen both go up, for us.

MR. HULL: We have had stable pricing for the larger fish. The demand is ever-increasing, not only for vermilion, but for every fresh, local fish.

MR. COX: I am just about like these guys here. The demand is increasing, and the price is going up all the time, except from the Gulf, that doesn't have any regulations on their vermilion. When they push a lot in, it goes down a little bit, but, other than that, ours stays pretty good.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just to add one of the ways that our market has increased, and I don't know about anyone else, but is for like the three-quarter to ones. We're having a lot of success moving those to the restaurants, who are using them as like a whole-fish preparation, and so that's a little bit of a -- It's not a completely new thing, but a newer thing, to be able to move those smaller fish.

MS. BROUWER: Can you clarify by what you mean by three-quarter to one?

MS. MARHEFKA: Three-quarter-pound to one-pound, that slot. That's how we rate them, three-quarter to one and one to two and two to four.

MR. BUFF: I would just like to note that, when we close these fisheries and we open these fisheries back up, that, once that food is taken off that restaurant market, it's really kind of hard to get that little bit of window to get it back into that market, and it's good to have, I guess, those two or three weeks that closes and then there's a little left and we're going to get a little back, but we may want to take a little look at what else is getting ready to open, or there is some stuff in the Gulf that goes on that kind of crosses what we're doing that may be better to just see how we utilize that little bit that's left, because once our local markets take these fish off of their menus, it's really hard to do something with that, and so it might be better utilized some other way.

MR. MOSS: Okay. Moving on to the next one, how has demand for charter/headboat trips targeting vermilion snapper changed, or has it?

MR. JOHNSON: Like my colleague to the left, people just go fishing, but I will say this. When we took red snapper off of the table for our charter boats, then vermilion became something that people were much more willing to catch and keep. Before, everybody wanted red snapper, red snapper, and so we catch our limit every trip. It's very, very rare that we don't catch a limit of vermilion snapper. People like them, and they're good, and I would say the demand has increased.

MR. MANIGAULT: Once again, believe it or not, a lot of them don't even know the difference. They look at the color of the fish, and they're excited, and so, as I stated before, a lot of them just want to go fishing. They just enjoy being out there and not throwing up and being able to catch a variety of fish, and that's what actually makes the actual charter in itself. We're not targeting anything, is what I'm trying to say, is what actually makes the charter, and so, once again, I'm supporting my other colleagues that we don't necessarily target vermilion snapper. It's a great catch, and people just have a great time. Thank you.

MS. JEFFCOAT: I agree with both of them, but, for me, where I am, sea bass was a pretty strong staple for us, and so, with the lack of over the last few years, we probably are targeting the vermilion more so than we were in the past.

MR. HULL: My charter boat, vermilion is -- It's a reliable catch, and it's part of the everyday bottom-fishing menu. They get their trip limit of vermilions, and then they move on to getting their trip limit of bass and so forth and so on, and it's reliable, and it's an easy catch, year-round.

MR. PILAND: In our area, it's just like Robert and Gary. When we go bottom fishing, they want to catch the snappers and triggers and bass. To say that we're targeting, it's part of the target, but it's not the only target, but we certainly have no lack of vermilion in our area, and they are very reliable, and people want to catch them. Thank you.

MR. COX: I live across from the Captain Stacy, and I will tell you, when he comes in, he's got those vermilions wrapped around the headboat, and they hang them up, and it really dresses up that boat, and I'm sure -- It is a flashy fish, and they are pretty when they're hanging up like that, and so I'm sure it's important to those guys as well.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. The next one is recreational landings have declined sharply from 2007 to 2011, and what has caused this decline?

MR. JOHNSON: I would think it's probably effort. I mean, you're talking about the crash, what we call it in Florida, the market, the housing market crash, and, when it was booming, every guy that had a hammer on his hip was going charter fishing, and so a lot of people had boats and sold boats and got rid of boats. Times were tough, and fishing was one of the first things that came off the list of things to do.

MR. FREEMAN: One thing that we don't track very well, but the fuel cost has a lot to do with it. Some of these guys, they've got great big boat payments, and, when you look at what it costs them to fuel up some of these things -- I remember a doctor out of Greenville, South Carolina saying that he was invited to go with somebody fishing one day, and they said all you've got to do is pay for the fuel, and he had no idea how much fuel that boat was going to burn, plus he says, and I got in and had to clean the boat too, and so chartering makes a whole lot more sense to me, but fuel costs will drive these graphs up and down, the number of trips and how many people you're going to see out there.

MR. BRAME: Actually, if you look at the CPUE chart, it actually declined in the face of a near 100 percent change in CPUE from 2005 to 2006 and 2007, and so it was relatively high CPUE, when you compare it to the previous three or four years, yet effort went down, and so it has to be the recession, because recreational fisheries generally respond to abundance. As abundance goes up, folks go fishing more.

MR. ATACK: What year did we tell them that they couldn't sell fish unless they had a federal permit? I know when that happened, in our offshore waters, the number of boats out there bottom fishing, and in coordination with the crash also, we probably saw a 90 percent reduction in the number of boats fishing in those far offshore waters, and so that's another factor, I think.

MR. BROWN: I was just trying to remember back, but I think there was some management changes between that timeframe too that probably was impacting that on different species.

MR. LORENZ: Myra, I have tracked these things, like fuel prices and all, due to other interests I have as my way of making money, and I would like to look into that and probably send you what fuel prices were over some of the years, because, as Captain Robert said, there was that period of time where the fuel prices at the dock went from like \$2.75 to close to \$5.00, and, as he mentioned, I had a charter captain that wasn't doing too well that approached a bunch of us that he would take us fishing if we would just pay for fuel, and, yes, we did have a day where -- Normally, when he

made us those offers, we would pay \$400 to \$450, and we had a \$900 trip to go get these kind of fish, and that came up, and it was like we're not going to do that anymore. I feel sorry for him, but there's a limit, and so there was a period where the fuel did impact things a lot. I can't quite remember the years. I think it was back maybe five to eight years ago, and I don't know how that lines up against the other statistics.

MR. MOSS: The other thing is, down by our way, we get some vermilion, but it's typically in the deeper water, 150 and deeper, and so, if that's the same thing farther north, then I can only imagine how far you guys have to run to go get them, and so I'm sure that fuel prices definitely play a huge factor in that.

MR. HUDSON: 2008, we have to agree that that housing drop, particularly in Florida, the foreclosures and the buyer's market for boats and the whole nine yards. In 2010, Magnuson had to stop overfishing, and, in 2011, they had to set ACLs on everything, even if they had no science, and so that is where it starts really getting a little more complicated, between the fuel prices, when we were bumping \$4.00 and \$5.00 a gallon, versus like the two-something, and that makes a big difference to everybody.

Again, back with MRFSS, with that 2011 to 2013, when you've 20,000 or 30,000 discards for the whole year, versus a quarter of a million, it's just contrasting, and it conflicts so much, but, again, there is so many things, and everybody sort of spoke it very clearly. Bottom fishing is the grab-bag thing, and, bottom fishing, there is a variety of ways to approach it.

Back in the 1960s, we would have bigger hooks, nice Eagle Claws and stuff like that, but then, in the 1970s, with the big headboats, with fifty and ninety people on them, we shifted to a lot of 5/0 Mustad and stuff like that for the smaller fish, and so the grunts and the vermilions and stuff started picking up. Then I think we have circle hooks that started coming into play through some of this period, and so there's a lot of different things you can start pointing at. You almost need to create a timeline that shows you all of these different actions.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, all. Moving on, when and where are the fish available, and has this changed, and so I'm sure it's going to be regionally different.

MR. JOHNSON: I started fishing in 1980 in St. Augustine, and I can tell you there are as many, if not more, vermilion snapper today than I have ever seen. That fishery is doing so well. We catch legal fish in eighty feet of water, and it's just not my charter boats, but all the charter boats and the headboats. They typically get their vermilions. I mean, they are readily available, and they're a staple. It's almost like you don't even talk about vermilions when you go fishing. You're going to get your vermilions, and then you're going to look for some other stuff.

MR. MOSS: Is there a time of year for you guys that is better than others?

MR. JOHNSON: In the wintertime, it's harder for the near-shore anglers that are fishing out to about twenty miles, because of water temperature. When that water gets cold, the bite slows down, but that's really about the only variable that I would throw in there. As you get north of us, off of Jacksonville, they're going to have to go a little deeper. They are going to have to get out there thirty miles, probably, to get vermilion in the winter.

MR. MOSS: Down by us, we catch them -- Like I said, in the Keys, they will get them in the summertime, but I think that's probably more a weather thing, just because you can get out to the deeper water a little bit easier in the summertime. I would think that we catch them in probably 180 or so, and I would be curious, commercially, what they do out of Key West and stuff, but, in the summertime, it's just easier to get to those depths and fish it.

MR. BROWN: Robert, the effort off of our area right here is not quite as great as it is in some other areas. We see a few boats, but not nearly as many, but the vermilion are in a lot closer now. I mean, I'm catching them -- I can see the water towers on the beach and catch a limit of them. I mean, they are coming back inshore and spreading over areas where we've never seen them before.

MS. MARHEFKA: I talked to Mark about this, just to make sure that I got his view on things, and he says that he's seeing them year-round, historically in all the same places, but in much greater abundance. He goes right past the inshore stuff and leaves it alone and does go out deeper all the time, but he is limiting out in two days on his fish, and so it's a pretty good trip for him.

MR. JOHNSON: I do need to clarify, for the people that don't understand where I fish. I fish out of St. Augustine, Florida. We have no natural habitat within the first thirty miles east of my inlet. You have to literally run actually thirty-four miles to get to twenty-one fathoms of water before you hit the first natural bottom, and so, unless you take a left and go off of Jacksonville, you're going to be fishing in an artificial reef out of St. Augustine, and that's a huge -- That's a big difference between a lot of these other areas. I am sure, if we had that natural habitat in closer, but it just doesn't exist, and Todd can back me up on this. It's not there. It's just sand. If there is not a wreck, there is nothing.

MR. BUFF: I would just like to note that, in North Carolina, that we're probably fishing the worst months that we could pick for the year, because of the water temperatures, and, by the time it closes, that would be April or May, and that would start our best time of the year, and then it closes again in September, and so October, November, and December, and so our effort is more because of the time of year that we're having to fish, but, there again, we're catching our limits, just like Kerry said. It's taking a couple of days, but the effort would be less if it was a different time of year.

MR. COX: Where I'm at, we stick out just about as far into the ocean as anybody, and, this year, the vermilion fishery is very robust, and I think it's one of the healthiest fisheries that we have. They seem to be doing really well and are recovering, but, this year, I have to note that we've seen more current this year than we've seen in many years past, and it seems to be becoming a common occurrence, more and more current, for whatever reason, and so the guys, when they can get out to forty-fathoms, they catch those really big fish, those two to four and a few four and ups.

When we look at stock assessments and things that we look at, unfortunately, we can't track current and water temperature and things that are really important to look at in assessments, because, when you look at the sensitivity runs and so forth, it's really what is going to give us a boost in our assessment, but, when you have years like we had this year, it's going to really impact that.

MR. JOHNSON: As far as my statements, I was speaking to the recreational and the for-hire industry. The commercial industry out of St. Augustine, those guys run fifty or fifty-five miles, and they don't fish in there where everybody else is fishing. They get out near the shelf edge,

where the bigger fish are, where they have a better opportunity to catch other species, like the gray trigger, which you wouldn't catch back in a hundred foot in any great number, and so the commercial and the recreational and the for-hire industries fish in totally different areas in the winter.

MR. HULL: We make our living on vermilions in 140 feet of water, and we have to travel forty-five to fifty miles to fish to the northeast of our inlet to get to where big triggerfish and big vermilion -- We catch them together, and that's pretty much right where Robert is fishing.

MS. JEFFCOAT: We have to run about thirty miles, on average. This year, we're seeing them a little bit closer, maybe twenty-five miles, in about seventy-five to eighty feet of water, but, generally, the ninety feet of water is where we like to find them. If you go out a little bit further, you do get into the bigger ones.

MR. MOSS: All right. Thank you. I think the next question was have you guys seen any size change, and, if so, describe it, over the past five years?

MS. MARHEFKA: Mark just said that he's seeing all size ranges represented now, everything. He skips over the small fish, but he's seeing all size ranges.

MR. MOSS: I am just curious. In the past, did he see more of the smaller fish or more of the bigger fish?

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't know. I didn't ask that.

MR. MOSS: I was just curious.

MR. BUFF: Jack and Jimmy may be able to chime in on this, but we're seeing a lot more one to two and two to four, it seems like, more on the average, for what the guys are bringing in, and it also has got to do with how far offshore you're going, too. The smaller fish are going to be more inshore.

MR. COX: We fish -- The commercial guys that fish out of Morehead, they try to get out at least thirty miles, putting them in about 120 to 140 feet of water, and they try to stay off of those small fish, and that's more or less where a lot of the headboats and recreational guys go for their day trips. If we get out to thirty-five fathoms or forty-five fathoms, we really get those nice, healthy two to four, and there is plenty of them out there, and so we're actually, in the years past, seeing a really good increase in size. This year, like I said, the current just held those guys back inshore a little bit.

MR. MOSS: All right. Thank you. Moving on, and I think we kind of answered this one, and so we'll go through it quick, but has there been an effort shift from vermilion, and I think that will probably, obviously, be different for commercial versus recreational.

MR. JOHNSON: I think commercial, yes, absolutely. When we went to these ACLs and all these -- We used to, when I first started commercial fishing, I went fishing, and I caught whatever. I would stop on a spot and whatever was biting there is what I caught, and then I would go to -- But now we have targeted vermilion trips, especially January 1, when they open up. That's the money,

and that's what you're going after. It's become a targeted fishery, whereas, back in the 1980s, we just went fishing for whatever we could catch.

MR. MANIGAULT: I don't think that I know of any charter captain that actually used a bullet effect, meaning targeting vermilion snapper, when it comes down to customers, repeating what I said earlier. Whatever is there is what they actually harvest for the actual customer, and so I don't think that there's any directed actual effort to actually fish for vermilion, most of the guys that I know.

MR. GOMEZ: This isn't my dog, but Jack brought up a very good point. When dealing with these stock assessments, current plays a major role, and so, for us, with the mutton snapper, a lot of times during that spawn, the current is very strong, and so we're not going to get a good number of fish caught, because only the best of the best can go out there and get their limits, and the current does play a major role in all fisheries, and I think that's something that definitely has to be looked at and maybe thought about when we're doing these stock assessments.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Now is management measures, and I guess we'll go down them one-by-one. Is the twelve-inch minimum size limit for the commercial and recreational sectors appropriate?

MS. JEFFCOAT: I think the twelve inches is just fine for recreational.

MR. JOHNSON: I think absolutely for both.

MR. PILAND: I agree with Robert and Deidre that the twelve-inch is a good size for recreational.

MR. LORENZ: I agree with everyone else for the twelve-inch.

MR. MANIGAULT: With everyone else.

MR. MOSS: All right. Are there new measures that the council should consider to do anything different?

MR. BUFF: I would just like for the council to -- Like what Jack and Jimmy and everybody else is saying, is to just take into consideration with something that we've done to shift effort somewhere else and to kind of take into consideration what's going on as a whole and not just -- Just like this year, for our assessment, like Jack said, the current and the water temperature has been horrible for us, and so that's got to affect that assessment in some way, shape, or form, and so I would just like the council to take into consideration that, when they're looking at some of this stuff, that when some of these charts look wrong or if there is something in it that is wrong, maybe that might ought to be a little bit lower on the chart than where it normally would be, knowing that there's something going on with it.

As we change something else, that's going to shift effort somewhere else, and the thing that -- I have been thinking about this golden tile thing for two days. That is really going to shift a lot of effort back to the b-liner fishery, because my guys go and catch those fish every trip, and so, when you change something else, that's going to put effort in another area.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think it will be important too for the team to go through and possibly look at the big major storms that happened during vermilion season in the past couple of years. If you remember, right before it closed last year, and I think it was right before Matthew, and, of course, this year, we had a bunch, and so I think that's an important data point, because it really does hamper effort. I mean, it extends the season, I suppose, but I think it's important to note.

I think there is more of them now, and they're affecting us even if -- This is a thing that I'm sure you all know this, but I find that a lot of the general public doesn't understand, but a storm can be off the coast of Florida, and it's still going to keep Mark tied to the dock. The effects are greater ranging than just where it makes landfall, and so I think it's important for the team to know that and understand that.

MR. COX: I would just like to say that, as we've talked about all of these things about vermilion, it is really one of the most important species that we manage, as far as recreational and commercial. It's very important, and we need to make sure that we get the assessment right. I think anytime the assessment team, the scientists, can use data from fishermen, they need to incorporate that into our Citizen Science Program, if there's opportunity, but we've got to get it right, because it's very important. In my industry, it's really hard going into the Christmas and the holiday season when the guys can't go catch vermilions, and they're trying to provide for their families and give their kids gifts, and the vermilion fishery is a vehicle that allows them to do such.

MR. LORENZ: We always have, or we continue to have, the conversation about the recreational fishing and the charters, and I guess maybe the headboats, being logged in with the masses of the private recreational, private boat-owning, fishermen, and this may be an interesting fish to pick as a pilot program to really try to investigate what the real private, independent private, recreational fishing effort is and their success rate. You might find it's lower than you may imagine, but to start to get a handle where -- Folks keep talking about do we need sector separation and that sort of thing, and so this might be one good fish to go for, because of how difficult it is for most of us north of Florida to make any effort at getting it.

Then maybe another species would be where it might actually flip the other way with some thoughts that gag grouper is declining, and yet I can show you private recreational fishermen that say they are everywhere and you just don't know where to fish, and maybe that's a species some day that goes to the other end, and I might pick vermilion, along with gag, as kind of a good way to someday get a study to differentiate what those two distinct groups are doing.

A lot of us recreational fishermen will go to a charter captain to put us on vermilion, which we're not doing the proper job, and we don't have the boat in order to really go there consistently, and so that might be something interesting to think about, and those might be two species to kind of start to get a handle on that, of are the millions of recreational fishermen from private boats as big of a problem as we think, and they're probably not a problem in some fisheries and are a big problem in others.

MR. MANIGUALT: It might be a long shot, but, since we are in the area of management measures, and I brought it to the attention of one of my other colleagues, my colleague to the right, but I noticed that there is a size limit that's consistent in this area for the commercial and recreational sectors. Is there any way possible that we can unify this across the board, when it comes down to commercial and recreational sectors, and for us to harvest the same length of fish?

I know we already talked about it, and all of us agree that it needs to change in the area of black sea bass, but, since the commercial guys are harvesting eleven-inch black sea bass, can we go along and harvest eleven-inch black sea bass in the charter and recreational area also, because, like I said, we're doing the same thing with the actual vermilion, for the commercial and the recreational guys. Just some unification across the board in fish sizes, if it applies, or if it can apply in a lot of the other fish areas. That way, maybe it will be consistent data for the stock assessments and whatever else across the board, if you understand what I am trying to say. Help me out here.

MR. HULL: I appreciate that comment myself, especially on the bass situation. Obviously the size limit recreationally on black sea bass is too big, and I think that was put in place at one time thinking that they were going to help have bigger males into the population and slow the recreational catch down, and on and on and on, and it doesn't seem like that panned out.

I think every fishery is different, and every situation is different between the sectors, and so it's like we were talking about almaco and putting a size limit on almaco. Well, I would be against putting a recreational size limit on almaco, because those guys are fishing inshore of where we're fishing and catching almaco, and our market -- We would like to some bigger almaco rather than little almaco, where, recreationally, I think you -- Like headboats and stuff in my area, they're catching those little almaco, and they need that. If you put a size limit -- I agree with you, for some species. That's right on, and they should be the same, because things are similar, but, in others, no, they can't be, because of the different reasoning for the different sectors, but, for bass, obviously, they should be the same. Thank you.

MR. MANIGAULT: I appreciate that. Once again, I'm the greenhorn here, and so it was just a thought, and so thank you.

MR. ATACK: A question I've got, looking at the info on the vermilion snapper, was the spawning period is June through August, the prime spawning period, and I know we close, usually, because catch the limit in the spring. Then we open back up on July 1, and we're concerned about closing October 15, because we catch the second season, and so would it be worthwhile to push the start back or look at another month on b-liners when other things are open, and would that extend you farther into the fall, close to Christmas, and still get your same catch for the year, but it will also help some of the spawning that you're catching now and maybe help future recruitment, and I just wonder if that's worth looking at when they look at management measures for this species.

MR. MOSS: That's probably a good question, and Myra was ahead of me, and so that brings us into the next question, which is are there any other existing measures that should be changed, and so we'll go down that route.

MR. JOHNSON: To Jim's comment, I think vermilion are highly fecund. I have seen roe in them just about every month of the year, and I really don't think -- That may be the peak spawn, but I think it's an animal we don't need to be so concerned about when they spawn, because they seem to be capable of spawning all the time, which is a great thing.

MR. COX: When I think about protecting spawning, I think about important it is that we do protect spawning seasons, and especially with those groupers and things that live a long time, that it takes

them a long time to grow, but the vermilion seem to be roed up really well throughout the year, and I guess they must spawn four or five times a year, just from what I can tell when we go to gut them, but, with the fishery as healthy as it is, I would certainly -- I don't know. In different areas, I think they spawn at different times of the year, and I think it's more important to figure out what times of the year the fish spawn in different areas, but I think I wouldn't be so worried about it with vermilion, as healthy as the stock is.

MR. MOSS: All right. Last one. Would allowing powerheads in South Carolina SMZs impact vermilion snapper?

MR. JOHNSON: No.

MR. MOSS: I see a lot of head shakes, but somebody has actually got to say something on the record.

MR. ATACK: No, and I'm a scuba diver, and that would not impact vermilion snappers.

MR. BROWN: Mel has been blowing my phone up about this. South Carolina is not asking for powerheads to be allowed in the SMZs. The SMZs will still not allow powerheads in them, but the powerheads -- We're asking for it to be open in other areas, just like all the other states, but just not within the SMZs.

MR. MOSS: All right, and I think the prevailing note here is I don't think anybody thinks that powerheads are going to have an effect on them one way or the other, right, regardless of -- Nobody is going after them with spear.

MR. ATACK: Powerheads are an issue on the larger fish. Nobody is going to use a powerhead to target a fish that's smaller than a certain size, and so I think most of the powerheads are probably used on the larger grouper or the amberjacks and stuff, and it would impact those, but not these species.

MR. MANIGAULT: Once again, a little humor. For the sake of the new guys, the jargon here of a powerhead -- I just discovered yesterday, from one of my colleagues, what they are, and so I don't know whether that was just the seating, that you guys placed us around experienced people, to be able to ask these questions, but they may not know what it is, and so if somebody could bring that across the board and explain to them what it is, because they just may not know. Thank you.

MR. COX: I am a diver as well, and I do powerhead every now and then, especially stuff like cobia, but, as we're talking about diving and some of the different equipment that they use, the bandit boat guys are starting to have a lot more interaction with dive boats, and so it's just something worthy of bringing up at this point.

There will be a boat, a bandit boat, fishing on a reef, and a dive boat will come up to them, and this is starting to be more frequent, and they're starting to go down and start powerheading, and so there is some interaction with that boat that's vermilion fishing and then that dive boat comes up there and works that same reef, and to whether they are diving with powerheads or if they're just using spears, but I think at some point we're going to have to address it. It's just becoming so commonplace. When you're fishing, if the fish bites, you catch them. If they don't, you don't,

and Mother Nature has a role in how much fish you take, and so, when you go diving, you can just kind of clean house, and I just wanted to bring that up.

MR. MOSS: Do you want to explain to everybody what powerheading is, just for clarification?

MR. COX: It's just an adapter, and it's a little stainless steel piece that the divers put on the end of their spear, and you put different bullet cartridges in it, and so mostly it's made for big fish. It's made for shooting groupers and cobia and amberjack, things like that.

MS. MARHEFKA: I was just going to give some history, because the council has been down this road before, many years ago, back when I worked for the council, and it was very controversial. Mark agrees with everything that you said. I put my biologist hat on, and, from a biology standpoint, it's very hard to make a case against powerheads, because they are considered selective. The catches, everyone has the same limit. How they are harvested, as long as there is no significant bycatch, it's hard to make a case against one gear type or the other.

I am just bringing it up, because there is history with it. There is a long record of the council dealing with this, and it becomes very controversial and very mired down, and so just know that. I am not saying one way or the other about what we should do about it or what this panel should think about it, but just so you know that it was very controversial.

MR. ATACK: It's analogous to a gear type. With the powerheads, a lot of people will go amberjack fishing, and they will shoot the first one and just keep boom, boom, boom, and they will bring back a lot of amberjacks in one dive that way. It's analogous to pots versus bandit gear versus hook-and-line. It's a different type of gear, and it has advantages and disadvantages, depending on what fishery you're using that gear in.

MR. JOHNSON: Just a question for clarification. On the SMZs in South Carolina, do they allow commercial fishing?

MS. MARHEFKA: No.

MR. JOHNSON: I didn't think so. I mean, you can't commercial fish in an SMZ anyway, right? Okay. I just wanted to clarify that.

MR. LORENZ: I am not in this, but it seems like where we're heading, if there's an issue with powerboats and somebody working a bandit rig or something out there for a particular fish -- Once somebody claims a location, maybe it's just like hunting rules and everything else. A boat is on there, and you are diving with the powerhead, and somebody else can't come in and fish within a certain region, or, if somebody else is down there, the divers can't come in and fish with the powerheads, for a matter of safety, and I don't know if that's something that can be done as you get to things like VMS and reporting and everybody knows where everybody is sitting. That might be a way to get around it. The fighting, you can't.

MR. MOSS: I don't think it's so much a safety issue as it is just an issue of, if you're on top of the water hook-and-line fishing and somebody pulls up to you and starts spearfishing, your hook-and-line is done. I mean, it is what it is, and there's nothing you can do about it, but it's like in the Keys. If you're yellow tailing and one of the commercial boats comes up next to you and you've

got your regular chum stream out as a recreational angler, and then the commercial boat comes up with the milk crates full of chum, your yellowtail is done. You're not catching anything else. It is what it is. It's everybody's ocean, right?

All right. Moving on to environmental and ecological. Have you perceived any unique effects of environmental conditions on vermilion snapper, like say current? All right. Everybody quieted down a little bit, and so we'll move on to the next one. Rusty, have you got something?

MR. HUDSON: Bottom water temperature. When it gets extremely cold, it's kind of like a lockjaw effect.

MR. BROWN: I didn't know where to bring this up at, but I'm going to bring it up now, because I am kind of wondering about something. Last year, I caught my first mutton off of Charleston, on a rod-and-reel, and we fish a lot, and we caught it in deep water, about 190 feet, and it was a keeper. It was big enough to keep.

Then, this year, and we're seeing a lot of different, weird things happen, like with the vermilion moving up in there, and I don't know if that's just an expansion of the stock, or maybe the environmental changes or conditions or something, but, in October, on October 13, I went out, and we caught a mutton in ninety feet of water, and, on the very next day, I caught one twenty-five miles away in eighty feet of water. Then, about two weeks later, I caught another mutton, and I could see the water towers on the beach, and so I caught three in October, and I only caught my first one last year.

I talked to one other charter guy that does a lot of bottom fishing, and he caught four in sixty to eighty feet of water in October, the first time he had ever caught them, and so I kind of wonder sometimes, when you're talking about these environmental conditions -- I don't know if it's just a -- I wonder if it's a redirection of the fish or water conditions or what, but something is weird going on though, because, like I said, going all the time and not seeing them, and then, all of a sudden, here they are.

MS. JEFFCOAT: Now that he has mentioned that, we're catching them in fifty feet of water. We're catching them inshore. There is a lot of juveniles that are inshore, but I have a picture that a guy sent me that he caught just a few days ago of a legal-sized mutton snapper inshore, and this is the first, and this is pre-Irma. This isn't like they were pulled up with the storm or anything. There were some that were seen last year, juveniles, but nobody knew exactly what they were, but, as time has gone by, we were able to start putting some pieces together, and so that's rather interesting there, as far as environmental.

MR. JOHNSON: Backing up to Rusty's point, in Florida, we never know when we're going to get these strong thermocline events. We may go a year and not really get one, and then we may get one that lasts for four to six to eight weeks. When we get that, there is no bottom fishing. You catch amberjacks and mangrove snapper fishing the upper water columns, and I don't know if you get thermoclines in South Carolina and North Carolina like we do, but that has a huge effect on the vermilion fishery, on all the fish really, but especially the vermilions. They will not eat in that cold water, and, when I say cold water, it gets in the fifties on the bottom.

MR. LORENZ: I remember, when I was in Florida, those cold-water inversions that would come in, and they do not occur in at least southeastern North Carolina. That does not happen, but mutton are showing up, the smaller juveniles, and they're not legal to keep, but, the past two or three years, and this year, with a lot of easterly wind, and sometimes gentle easterly wind, that makes that water so clear, yes, they're in structure, as Deidre had said, in fifty-five or sixty feet of water, and the nice little pretty fish are showing up, and they hadn't been there for the ten years previous, and so apparently they are trying to extend their range.

MR. MOSS: All right. Thank you. It's good to know that the muttons are showing this far north, because they are not in Broward County. What are your observations concerning the timing and length of the vermilion snapper spawning season in your area?

MS. MARHEFKA: I will just reiterate it, but you already said it. I think they're all year. I think they're constant.

MR. HUDSON: Last night, Myra sent out a zip file, and, in the picture there, it looks like what they have for vermilion more or less matches right up with red snapper, as far as the peak period from April to I think it was September on the chart.

MR. MOSS: All right. Do you perceive that the abundance of vermilion snapper has changed over the past five years? If so, how? You guys have got to say something. Hand signals don't get recorded so well.

MR. PILAND: In Hatteras, the abundance has increased, as well as the size, I believe, in our area.

MR. HULL: I think we've already stated, everyone, that it has increased and improved.

MR. MOSS: All right. We won't spend too much time on that, because I think it's pretty unanimous. What do you see now in terms of recruitment? Are they small fish?

MS. JEFFCOAT: Just a few days ago, we were fishing probably in fifty feet of water, using the sabiki, trying to get some tomtates, and we had to move, because we couldn't get away from the four to six-inch vermilion. They were everywhere.

MR. HULL: I concur, and I think one of the -- In the preamble that Myra read of the stock status, the sampling said that they weren't sampling many small fish. Well, if they would do just what she said and cooperatively try to collect some data with her, or all of us, they would be able to sample those smaller fish.

MR. LORENZ: In those shorter, closer areas, that five to ten miles out, as I said, we're starting to see them, the juveniles, but, unlike Deidre, no, we are not seeing them to that extent. They are still fairly incidental, but you're going to get one or two any trip you're out there, which you never did before.

MR. JOHNSON: We do catch them when we're trying to catch sardines on our sabiki rigs. At times, there is just clouds of them up in the water, little guys. They seem to be doing well. When I say little, I am talking three to five-inch vermilions, little.

MR. MOSS: All right. Then the next one is are catches of vermilion snapper higher on artificial reefs or natural bottom?

MR. JOHNSON: We catch our limit on both, and so I don't know.

MR. COX: We've got a lot of wrecks off of where we are, and there is just a lot of vermilions on them. I mean, it's -- I wouldn't know about the artificial reefs, but the wrecks hold a lot of fish as well as the natural bottom.

MR. HULL: We make our living on natural reefs and ledges.

MR. MOSS: All right. Any suggestions for research priorities for vermilion snapper?

MR. HULL: I would like to have a cooperative hook-and-line sampling conducted at a federal level and not just by states doing it, but like at a federal level by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to start cooperative hook-and-line sampling for all reef fish species to be used concurrently with the fisheries-independent chevron trap information that's being done along with all the other data that they get. I think that a cooperative sampling is the way to go, but it needs to be done at a federal level across the entire region.

MR. MOSS: Anything else important for the council to know about vermilion snapper?

MR. MORING: I haven't spoken much, because I'm new, but, being in the restaurant business, looking into vermilion snapper, it tells me that we haven't done a very good job of promoting that fish. It's a pretty fish, and, looking at the pictures, if we had pictures in our restaurant -- We have people all the time ask for red snapper, and everybody that knows me, when I have spoken at this council, I am very protective of red snapper, and I spoke against opening up the season a number of times, but I think that we could --

With education to the public, vermilion snapper could be a way to kind of push some of these red snapper people that come into our restaurants wanting red snapper, and I hear it all the time, but, in all three restaurants, pushing vermilion snapper with photographs, and I think that, if the council would look at some type of education and promotion of vermilion, that we could do a better job of protecting red snapper until they can come back as a stock, by pushing vermilion snapper, because it really -- The average person is not going to know the difference, if you look at the fish, I mean look at a picture, and so I think, in the restaurant industry, we have done a very poor job of trying to buy vermilion and promote it, and I just came to that conclusion today.

MR. HUDSON: To what Jimmy just said a little while ago, one of the deficiencies that I see with the independent surveys is the truncation of the time that they utilize. Generally, it's April to September, and it would be nice to see that independent somehow expand into a little bit of different seasonality, and the cooperative research proposals are definitely a must. Picking the fishery experts' brains and working with them is a great way to be able to maintain our benefits that we're seeing on the water.

Unfortunately, down our way, Jim, with red snapper -- Like we dropped down last Thursday and we caught a sea bass immediately, and, after that, it was red snapper. We couldn't get away from them, and so it's the same phenomena that our headboats and charter boats and everything have

been encountering for several years, and we are the heart of red snapper country, and so, vermilion, that is a go-to fish for a lot of the headboats, and, as we brought up the cold water stuff, back in the 1980s, I would go out to the west edge of the Gulf Stream, out by the big ledge, and, where you had some warm water to get away from that inshore stuff. In June and stuff, that would be prolonged, and even it got so bad that the headboats had to come out there and try to do stuff, but they can't afford to go fifty and sixty miles one way, and so there is a tradeoff for us.

We have reefs fifteen and twenty miles, and, when I hear all the talk around the table for up the line, there is a lot of people having to run fifty miles and stuff like that commercial fishing and recreational fishing. If you have environmental conditions and stuff like that -- We need to get this sampling protocol, so that we can have a better picture of the year-round fisheries, because it's a year-round fishery for all user groups. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Just to address Jim, it's an interesting idea to ask the South Atlantic to do some things, I guess kind of in outreach, but I think you got a little -- What we used to call the Skunk Works group right here that could do it, and I heard Scott and Kerry said that they get spells during the year when they get a little loaded with those vermilion snappers and have trouble getting rid of them. Maybe you ought to exchange some cards and give that a shot. Some time when they've got an oversupply, they call you, and you run a nice special with some great-tasting fish, and they have a place to get rid of a few and give it a try.

MR. BUFF: I don't know where the right place is to put this, and so I'm just going to throw it out there. I just want to reiterate what Jack said to the council that this fishery is the meat-and-potatoes of what drives our business. It is very, very important to the economy for where we're at, and I would just like for the council to consider -- As good as this fishery is, if we could get a little bit more, and I don't know what a little bit more is, but we should be able to get a little bit more ACL out of this, and it sure would go a long way, and it would alleviate a lot of pressure that is put on some of the other fisheries that may need it. This fish is thriving, and it reproduces very quickly, and I think this is something that the council should really look at when they are doing their stock assessment.

MR. COX: I would just say, speaking in terms of numbers, I think our ACL is close to about 900,000, and, if we could just get a couple more hundred, it would really stretch us out. I mean, we're not asking for a whole lot, but it would really push us to a place that we could probably have a year-round fishery, and I think, from what we're all saying here, it wouldn't hurt the fishery a bit.

DR. DUVAL: I think the council is well aware of the fact that this is kind of the base. This is the bread-and-butter for our commercial fishery, but the ABC recommendation that we get from the SSC is what we get, and so we can't go above that, and so I just put that out there, that this is not -- There is a limit to the flexibility that the council has, in terms of that decision. Thanks.

MR. HUDSON: Michelle is right. February 2018, SEDAR 55 for vermilion snapper, and it's a standard, is going to be a completed project, as far as at that point. Then we have to go to the SSC. Then, by the time we get through that spring meeting, then we're in June for the council, and then you're going to be talking about whatever framework and amendments, and then we're in 2019, and so don't hold your breath too long.

MR. HULL: Everyone at this table, every stakeholder or fisherman, is welcome to go to the SSC meeting and state all the things that you have stated here at this table and see how that does for you.

MR. COX: If you really want to make an impact, and Jimmy is right. Jimmy and Rusty spent a lot of time working on red snapper, and we can thank these guys too for a lot of work they did to help us get where we are on red snapper. They attended a lot of SSC meetings and were very involved in it, but, just beyond the scope of the meeting we're at now, if you get involved in that process and kind of oversee and look at some of the data streams and things that they are looking at, you can make an impact going to those meetings.

MR. MOSS: All right. Thank you, everybody, for that. What we'll do is take a quick ten-minute break, and then we'll come back with the red snapper best fishing practices.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. COLLIER: For Amendment 46, we don't have too much information for you. Right now, we are in the development of putting together an options paper that we're going to present to the council in December. Amendment 46 is going to include a lot of the pieces that were originally in Amendment 43, and so a lot of you guys are aware of that, but there are several new people on this group.

In Amendment 43, we had twelve actions in there. Eleven of those have been moved to Amendment 46. Some of those actions are more or less some actions that kind of define what are sustainable levels, and those include the OFL, the ABC, the ACL, and so we're going to be going over those in Amendment 46.

Something new that has come up since the last SSC meeting is the SSC has developed a sub-panel to look at developing an ABC for red snapper, and they are working together with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, in order to develop that ABC, because, based on SEDAR 41, the SSC indicated that they weren't able to develop an ABC, or acceptable biological catch, that could be tracked with the current monitoring methods. They are going to develop a new way, hopefully a new way, to track it, and that is going to be available -- They are hoping to have it done for the April meeting of next year.

As we develop Amendment 46, that information is going to be included in it, and other pieces of information that will be included in this new Amendment 46 will be recreational reporting, a consideration for that, as well as a recreational permit. That was in Amendment 43, but that's going to take a long time to develop. You guys are going to get a report on our pilot project that we have going on as part of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and we've teamed up with the Snook & Gamefish Foundation, as well as Elemental Methods, to give private recreational fishermen an opportunity to report their red snapper catch during this mini-season.

It's also going to have options to revise accountability measures and develop some best fishing practices. We have been promoting some best fishing practices for red snapper, and some of those include using a descending device, if you're catching fish and they are showing signs of barotrauma. Also, if you're targeting red snapper, only use a single hook. You can only keep one,

and so only fish for one at a time. That way, you're not bringing up two and have to discard one anyway.

Another best fishing practice that we've been pushing for red snapper has been, as you approach your bag limit, go ahead and leave. Red snapper are everywhere. Don't get to your bag limit and leave. Leave beforehand. You are probably going to catch them somewhere else too, and so just try to avoid red snapper, where possible.

Those are some of the best fishing practices we had that we're considering for red snapper, but there's other ones that are being considered as well. The council asked us to look into the circle hook regulation. In the Gulf of Mexico, you're not allowed to use offset circle hooks, in the Gulf of Mexico. In the South Atlantic, you are currently allowed to use those. The council has also requested us to look into removing the requirement for circle hooks, and so that's going to be included in Amendment 46.

Then one final piece that Myra had brought up during the visioning amendments is we're going to look at the powerhead regulation off the State of South Carolina, and that's going to be an option or an action for this amendment as well. That is pretty much all I had for Amendment 46. It is going to be a very big amendment, and it's going to have a lot of actions in it, probably at least thirteen or fourteen actions in it, and it's going to take a while to develop, and so we're going to be working on it together for a while. If you have any suggestions for certain things that you would like to see for red snapper or some best fishing practices or other items that we're going to be discussing, please let us know, and we can ask the council to consider them.

MR. HUDSON: When I was having discussions with Jack McGovern about a lot of people's concern about fishing for red snapper in the peak of the spawn, and roughly speaking say June and July, the concept of doing a split season with both the recreational and the commercial, something in the spring, before they are actually roed up real well, and then the same thing with something later in the season, and some people suggested August and stuff like that, and so he said this would be the mechanism to do that, but, as far as going to the other thought that he and I talked about, the two-for-one and trying to eliminate that, Gregg thought this was not the vehicle to do that and that we would have to do it in a more ambitious snapper grouper plan, and so those are two things that I had on my mind about this 46.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't know if this is the appropriate time, and I don't have the answer to this question, but I just wanted the group to think about it. With these mini-seasons, we have sort of created a problem, where, as a charter boat captain, when my people come onboard, they can only have one red snapper, and it's their one day for the year to catch that red snapper, and they want the biggest one they can catch.

We have taken the snapper fishery and made it a targeted fishery that is only targeting the larger fish, and I don't know how we can change that, other than getting some kind of longer season, but it's not good, really. I know we have no size limit, but just the fact that you don't have a size limit -- Most of your private charter boats, and I think Jimmy would agree, we're catching the larger fish.

Now, there is plenty of them out there, but, long-term, obviously this is not going to be something we want to continue to do. We want to get back to a situation like it used to be, when I would go

fishing and red snapper were open, two fish a person, and we would fish, and, if he was twenty inches, he went in the box. When you got your limit, you got your limit, and I don't know how you change the public's behavior, but this is not just charter boats. This is private boats. For the most part, it's all boats, because they've only got -- You can't blame them. They've got one day to fish and one fish to catch, and so they want it to be the biggest possible fish.

I don't know what kind of discussion we could have moving forward, hopefully with more days, and how we could address that, because I don't want it to come back and somebody down the road say, yes, we're looking at all these landings and all you guys are doing is killing all the big fish. I don't want that to be used against us. It's just some thought.

MR. MOSS: I don't know how much you would be able to change that, even with more days. That's what people want to do. When they go fishing, they want to catch and keep the biggest fish possible, for the most part, and I'm speaking recreationally. I know, when we catch grouper, we don't like to keep the really big ones, because they don't taste as good, but, for red snapper and for yellowtails, you want as big of a yellowtail -- If you can get those big three or four-pound ones, that's awesome, and keep all them that you can. That's what people tend to do. I don't know. I agree with you that something has to -- I don't know how you do it though, other than maybe putting a maximum size limit on it, which I don't even know if that's the right answer.

MR. HUDSON: To the sizes, when we had the twelve-inch, that was a one-pound, one-year-old animal, basically speaking. When we had the twenty-inch and we shifted that, that management change actually did a lot of benefits for our red snapper population, and I think a lot of people know that, but that's three-and-a-half-year-old fish, roughly four-and-a-half pounds.

Then when you get into those sows, you're going to have anything like ten to twelve years of age on up to thirty or forty years for these animals that are the twenty-pound-plus, and so how do you rationalize all of that?

Jimmy and I used a non-offset circle hook, and we were able to see the corner of the mouth on every animal, and I know that there is occasionally somebody that is going to swallow something a little further, but we're trying to avoid the big ones, in the sense of what is useful in a seafood market and in a restaurant, and we're back to the proverbial chicken snapper and the fillets and the display on your plate, instead of taking a big animal and then having to butterfly a section, but, both ways, you've got a presentation for the consumer, and so there is some rationale for at least a very minimum size, perhaps a twelve. In the Gulf of Mexico, they use a thirteen for the commercial and a sixteen-inch for the recreational, and so I can't rationalize what a sixteen-inch is. It might be a two-year-old or something like that.

MR. HULL: I think, Chip, the immediate remedy to some of the problems that Robert and Rusty had is the discarding techniques and discarding equipment and descending devices, all the things that the council is already working on. They really need to get it up to speed in this amendment, which I know that's what is going to happen, and make this -- Because you're not going to change what's happening now. It's going to continue to happen regardless. There is going to be discarding of snapper whether you want big fish or you want little fish or whatever you're looking for.

The survivability and the training of -- In the charter industry and in the commercial industry, we pretty much take, overall, really good care of our fish, and we all successfully release animals. I

think -- I am not bad-mouthing the private recreational in this regard, but I think that's where we really need to concentrate, and everyone should be required to have descending devices in the snapper grouper fishery and have possibly some type of training in it, and I know there's been a lot of talk about it, and I think you're headed in the right direction, and that is the only answer to those problems, because that will help the situation, because the snapper stock -- There is every size animal there on the same spot. You can catch them from this size to sows on the same exact spot, and so you can't move from spot to spot and think you're going to change the size of the animals. They're everywhere, but the descending and release equipment and education is going to be key.

MR. ATACK: I agree with Robert and some of the comments about the derby fishing. I mean, these little mini-seasons -- Really, a year ago, we couldn't harvest anything, because everything was exceeding the ABC with our bycatch mortality, and so now we have a mini-season, and we have a directed fishery. It's a derby fishery, and people, like he says -- There is probably high-grading.

If we're trying to eliminate discard mortality and allow some of that take, I think we should really look at restructuring it to where it's more of a non-directed target trip, where it's like a bycatch, where you can keep some of your bycatch, whether it's one fish per boat or one fish per trip or something like that, and not have them targeted so bad.

I am anxious to see how the ABC comes out in April, but the July season, where there is still spawning, and we'll still be kind of probably, in April, trying to figure out what was landed in the fall, based on history. Usually, the MRIP and the recreational landings takes six months or so to figure out what was actually landed, and so I think we're better off shooting for another fall fishery next fall, after all the data comes in and we get our ABC and we get to review it. I just think July is going to be another all of a sudden we find out this week that we can fish next week, and I understand why we're trying to open up the fishery, and it's good thing, but I think we can do it in a much better way. The other question I had was can you better define what you mean by recreational permits? Is that for all snapper grouper, or is that just for red snapper, or what are you talking about?

DR. COLLIER: There's an option to consider several different ways to do it, whether it's just red snapper, whether it's deepwater species, whether it's shallow-water species, whether it's species associated with red snapper. There is different ways that you could do it, and so it would be, more or less, if you're in possession of those, you would have to have a permit.

In response to your statement on having the next season in the fall, Amendment 43 is getting ready -- It's under the final revisions and getting ready to be submitted to National Marine Fisheries Service for their review, and that includes an opening that would occur in July, and we weren't able to have different options for the season for next year in Amendment 43, in order to get that amendment to go through pretty quickly, and so we were limited on the options that we could do. We wanted to focus on one option, in order to have a season next year. Otherwise, there was the potential of losing out on all of 2018, and so what we did was just a simple ACL amendment and had that and analyzed it, and it is getting ready to be submitted. If it is approved by the Secretary of Commerce, we would have a season in July for next year.

MR. ATACK: But we don't have like an ABC yet, right?

DR. COLLIER: There was an ABC that came out of Amendment 28. That is currently still on the books. There was a previous ABC recommendation by the SSC on the 2016 version of SEDAR 41. Since then, there was a revised version of SEDAR 41, and we have not received an ABC based on that stock assessment.

MR. PILAND: I agree with Jimmy about the need for descending devices on all the snapper grouper fishermen. They are effective, and they're easy to use, and it would greatly reduce the dead discards, the real dead discards.

MR. GOMEZ: I also agree with Robert about possible longer seasons. The mini-season definitely creates a whole other group of problems, especially with the size, but when thinking about opening up another mini-season in July, I would be very careful not to open it up around the lobster mini-season in the Lower Keys, because that would definitely create a large problem. A lot of things we have had to learn to live with down in the Keys, I would hate to have to learn to live with a whole lot of red snapper leaving the Keys all at once.

MR. LORENZ: I thought about this this weekend, and, with respect to this red snapper mini-season, you're going to be getting a lot of data, because it seems like every state is doing -- There's a lot of people out there collecting and monitoring what is going on, and so that's going to be good, and that's going to be the snapshot of kind of the derby fishery the way anybody would fish for red snapper, and one thing I thought of -- In disclosure, I have never done it, and so, for those of you -- A lot of you fish a lot more than me, because you take people fishing as part of a living, but one of the things I thought that might be missing, or would be interesting to try, is if we gravitate to that single-hook rig concept, the single-hook, which is what I do.

However, I put it on more of a -- I like sliding sinkers, and so Fish Finders, Carolina rigs, whatever, three or five or six-inch leader is what I will have. The fish can swallow those hooks with that. They have the ability to do that, but one of the things that I thought of, and people may hate it, but it may work, and it makes you fish more to get your fish, is what about the concept of having the heavy weights closer to the hook?

There are rigs like that, and so that, at least with the circle hook -- You said you might allow the j-hooks to come back, but, with the circle hooks, if you use what south Florida has -- A lot of folks use these on the reefs, the knocker rigs, which have that sliding kind of sinker that gets down towards the hook, and it's often used to get very close to reef and structure without hanging up, but getting fish near the bottom, and other snappers can be up a little more, but that would be one, like a knocker rig.

Get that weight near that hook, be it the j is what I would love to see started, since we have j's now. The next mini-season, I would love to see how that works out, with that being one of the rigs you allow, or, as we found out in North Carolina, the drum rig is only a six, I think, or an eight-inch is all you're allowed to leader between that and your eight-or-whatever-ounce sinker, the concept being that fish picks that bait and it gets hooked in the lip, and so we'll have discards, but they will be discards that will be lip-hooked that with descending devices may work a little better than those of us that occasionally get the gut-hooked one, and so maybe that's something to put out there, even if it's for public comment, and see what other fishermen think.

As I said, I didn't do it, because I am such a believer in the longer rig with fish finding, particularly because I'm not going to fish for snapper, but that's the way I seem to think that I catch more grouper, and you could use it with the circle hooks, and you might even want to recommend a minimum size circle hook for one of the seasons, and, if you were able to put that in, it would be interesting to see how another -- You have to pick a mini-season like what you had this year.

Pick one weekend and see what happens, and I would be very interested to see if you can reduce dead discards, mainly through gut hooking, and then see what other fishermen think about it, because some may think it is -- You're going to have to be a little more skilled about it, because you can't just let that thing lay on the bottom. It has to come up a bit, and it's almost like jigging with bait, but it's something to think about.

MR. HUDSON: There are several graduates of the Marine Resources Educational Program around here, and one of the classes was the different types of descending devices and elevators and things like that. That somehow needs to play into this over the next couple of years, being able to do outreach with that, whether it's a video or a PowerPoint or something along those lines, because we had a guy live there actually demonstrating the equipment.

On the sliding lead scenario, in my own experience of fishing large red snappers, using a single-hook leader, come to the swivel. No swivel above the lead, because, that way, if it breaks off -- Some people have a tendency to use too light equipment or something like that. If it breaks off, at least he's not dragging the lead around. It's just the concept of how to be able to protect the fish a little bit. I am not a real big advocate on the j-hooks at this time, because the circle hooks work so well in the corner of the mouth, and I just don't see why you want to rip the gills. Thank you.

DR. COLLIER: There was a little statement, and what Bob had mentioned was you said that j-hooks were allowed. J-hooks are only allowed south of 28 degrees, and so I did want to make sure that that was correct.

MR. LORENZ: I thought that you maybe would let them come back and that's all.

DR. COLLIER: Then, for Rusty's comment, you had indicated that you wanted to see some outreach material for descending devices, and so we actually have a website that we have dedicated to red snapper, and you can see different -- South Atlantic Fishery Management Council red snapper, we have a page that we have dedicated to red snapper, because they deserve it. It's under electronic reporting.

On this page, if you scroll down towards the bottom, there is some best fishing practices and ways to recognize barotrauma, and then we have a YouTube video on descending devices, and so you had mentioned the gentleman that actually does a lot of this, and it's Steve Theberge, and he is presented right there, showing you how to use a variety of these different techniques. It's a short little video, and I welcome you guys to watch that any time you want.

There is different things on keeping the fish in the water, how to use dehooking devices to remove -- A lot of people have complained that you can't use a dehooker with a circle hook, and so we have a video of past staff member Kari MacLauchlin doing that exact thing, and so it is possible to do. We have reasons why to report and several different things, and so, if you would like to visit that page, you are more than welcome to. It's got a bunch of information on there.

MR. MANIGAULT: Can some of this information be compressed and added to the Fish Rules app, so they will be able to access it offshore with them at that particular time, using some of the descending devices and using some of the actual gear, so it will be more accessible than them trying to utilize the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council offshore, because most of them are going to get into the situation out in the water, versus on land and them actually looking at this and preparing for a trip. Most fishermen aren't going to do it. Then, that way, even some of the charter captains can actually have it there too, along with the commercial guys, or just whoever.

DR. COLLIER: I will point out that what we're developing is an app called My Fish Count, and it will be directly linked to that, but we can talk to Fish Rules, to see if they would be willing to pick up some of this stuff as well, and so it will be in a couple of different spots.

MR. HUDSON: When you go to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's webpage, you go right to the very first page, and that page for My Fish Count should just be somewhere bold enough that you can just click right there when you get to that page immediately, and then, that way, it gives people an opportunity to not have to hunt around. I know sometimes it gets a little weird trying to do the dropdowns and then be able to know where to go.

DR. COLLIER: When that red snapper comes up, it takes you to that page. As you know, we manage multiple fisheries, and some people aren't too concerned with red snapper. They are more worried about other species, and it could be rock shrimp or coral or king mackerel or cobia, and not all of them -- If you see this red snapper come up, and if you click on it, it takes you right there.

MR. HUDSON: But what I'm saying is that just talks about the mini-season and not about all the techniques and stuff. If you had just a little kind of phrase that catches people's eyes that they know that My Fish Count is -- I was told that by Amber a week or so ago, and it has a good feel about it. It just sort of catches into people's minds as a phrase, and that may be a go-to kind of phrase, if you are following what I am saying.

MR. COX: A couple of years ago, I put a descending device on one of my commercial boats, and I kind of talked to the crew and told them how we should use it, and their response was, well, that takes a lot of time and don't really expect us to use this, and so they were being honest, because I am not on the boat all the time, and I appreciated them being honest with me, but I think that the outreach kind of starts with us, those of us that are kind of leaders in what we do.

Once you let these guys know the reason that we have the fish that we have and are given the opportunity to catch red snapper is because we've rebuilt the fishery and got it to a place that we can harvest it, and so any of the stuff that the South Atlantic does to help educate the guys and show them, I think -- Say, hey, we may not have this opportunity in future years, and this is not something that's in place forever and it's kind of temporary, and maybe they will come around, but it's not something that is going to happen overnight. It's going to take a lot of education to explain to them that just because they throw the fish in the water and it swims off, it does not necessarily mean that he's going to survive.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't know about the other states, but I do know that Florida sent people around to various fishing clubs and did these descending device presentations and talked to people about best fishing practices, and so I think that's a good place to start. Like I said, I know, in my

area, I was actually speaking at a club one night, and they had a girl from the FWC there, and so I think all of these things are great ideas, and I agree with Jack. It does start with us, especially some of us that have multiple boats that have people under our employ. We need to make sure that they understand what is required too, because it is a privilege to be able to go out and catch these fish, and some of us who have been in the industry for a long time and love them like I love them -- I mean, I want that privilege to continue. I want to be able to catch these fish on into the future.

MR. BUFF: I can't remember who did this or where it -- It was in St. Petersburg, but we had a class, and they had a guy come in that demonstrated the options and where to get them at and how they worked and all that, and I think that might be something interesting for us. It only took about thirty minutes, and there was one guy that brought four or five different apparatuses and explained how they worked and what they were useful for, and so I think that somebody ought to look into that for maybe the spring meeting or something. It wouldn't take very long.

MR. COX: To that, Scott, a lot of times, it really comes better from leaders of their own industry. Commercial guys, they kind of look up to us, and so we can train those guys, and let them kind of work with their own kind of group, and then it kind of goes a little bit better than kind of a top-down approach.

MR. JOHNSON: I agree, Jack, but I think it's important for the recreational sector, because that's that big, giant group that have the largest impact on the fishery, and that's who has to be reached about best fishing practices. If you go to these online forums and read some of the stuff that people post on there after these mini-seasons, it will make you shudder, and so, I mean, that's the group that has to be educated, and they also have to understand that it is a privilege and that, in order to continue to do this, we need to practice these best fishing practices.

MR. MOSS: All right. If we don't have anything else, thank you very much, Chip. We appreciate it.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you all for your time.

MR. MOSS: We are going to move into the wreckfish ITQ, but, before we do, and it's my fault that I forgot to mention it, all guests that are here, please make sure to register, sign in, before you take off, anybody that's not on the AP.

DR. CHEUVRONT: For those of you who don't know me, I am Brian Cheuvront with the South Atlantic Council. This is one of the last items that was on your agenda, but, because of the way of timing and things are going, we're moving it up a little bit, and that's not a problem. We don't anticipate that this is really going to take very long.

What I wanted to talk to you about today is that the council has started the process to review the wreckfish catch share program, and I just wanted to give you all a little bit of a background on that and where we are with this, the wreckfish catch share, ITQ, and one of the members of the Snapper Grouper AP, who was not able to be here today, unfortunately, holds shares in that fishery.

This fishery is the oldest finfish catch share program in the country. It goes back to the 1990s, and that puts it in a rather unique position, in that it was begun before the National Marine Fisheries

Service had actually started any kind of guidelines or directions for how catch share programs should work.

Subsequent to that, there have been some catch share guidelines that have come out. In 2009, the South Atlantic Council did what is now considered to be the initial review of the catch share program, and the guidelines that we now have to operate under say that every five to seven years, but not later than 2017, every catch share program in the country needs to be reviewed. Now, for those of you who may not understand catch shares quite as well, a catch share program is where - We apply them only to commercial fisheries, and we only have one in the South Atlantic right now. The council has tried a couple of times and considered catch share programs in other fisheries, but they did not make it through the process and were not instituted, but this one was done.

It started back when the wreckfish fishery just exploded in the 1990s. It went from nothing to millions of pounds within just a couple of years, and so the council got very, very concerned about what could happen to this fishery becoming depleted very quickly, and so the notion of catch shares at that time was relatively new. What they did is they gave everybody who had participated in the fishery up to that point commercially a stake in the fishery, so that they could continue to participate, but they would have a way of limiting the growth of the fishery.

Now, this is a very deepwater fish, and there actually have been no MRIP reported recreational landings. We do know they occur, because you go out on the internet and you look at recreational landings of wreckfish, and you can see some, but we simply don't know anything about what those recreational landings are, but the allocations right now are this is a 95 percent commercial fishery and 5 percent recreational, and you must be a shareholder to be able to land these fish in the commercial fishery.

The task that's before us now is we are starting this subsequent review, and the guidelines that were put out by the National Marine Fisheries Service require that these catch share programs be reviewed at least every five to seven years, but we needed to start it by 2017, and so what happened was that, in the management of this commercial fishery, by the time the council was setting ABCs and ACLs for the different fisheries, the landings had become quite low on the commercial side relative to what they had been historically, and, in absence of a stock assessment that they could use to determine the ABC, the SSC had to go with landings and the history of recent landings, and they really didn't have much in the way of information at that time as to why the landings had been reduced.

To make a long story a little shorter, the original quota for wreckfish was two-million pounds that was set, and it got reduced all the way down to 250,000 pounds, and so, suddenly, all these people who were participants in this wreckfish fishery saw their shares lose about 90 percent of their actual value overnight, and so the council is trying to figure out, well, what are we going to do and how are we going to handle this, and so it was in, I believe, Snapper Grouper Amendment 20A that the council redistributed shares in the fishery.

Basically, if you were not actively participating in the fishery over a number of years, your shares were taken away and they were redistributed among the active participants. Since that time, and that was in 2012, there has been a fair amount of consolidation in the fishery, and we're down now to seven shareholders in the fishery, and not all seven shareholders are actually fishing their shares

actively. All the shares are being fished, because some of the inactive shareholders currently are leasing their shares on an annual basis to those who are actively fishing.

Anyway, there is some concern about the fishery, in the sense that is the catch share program set up the way it needs to be to be the most effective at managing this fishery, and is it working for the participants in the fishery? What do they want to do? Now, just to reiterate, this is not being done because the council sees that there is anything particularly wrong with this program. The participants in the fishery, the shareholders, are very happy that this is the way the fishery is set up, but one of the things that -- The NMFS guidelines are requiring a review on a regular basis, and so this is what we're doing, but we're also discovering that there may be some issues and things that the council could do to tweak this program to make it more effective for that participants in the fishery.

Now, this is different. A review of a catch share program is different than say the amendment process, because all this is doing is looking at the effectiveness of the program and how it's working. Now, you have two attachments in your briefing book. The second attachment, 11b, is an outline that we're using to develop this review, and it covers all of the topics that are going to be covered in the review, because the guidelines are pretty specific as to what we need to talk about.

That is putting the cart a little bit before the horse, at least of where we are now, and we're discovering that, because this is one of the earliest catch share programs established in the country, there are some very unique characteristics about it that are making this a little more difficult than we actually thought it would be, and most of them have to do with data collection and getting access to the data and putting all the pieces together in a meaningful way, and that's the step where we are right now.

People who participate, who are shareholders in the wreckfish fishery and are fishing shares, they actually have a separate logbook that they have to do, but all the other species that they might catch -- Now, there's not much bycatch when you're fishing specifically for wreckfish, but sometimes a trip could be combined with something else. All those other species go on the regular logbook, and so we've got those problems, the regular snapper grouper logbook, and so we're having to try to match up data for multiple sources, and it's proving to be not very easy and straightforward, and so we're still at the data level here, trying to get the data straightened out.

Then there is also the issue of confidentiality. We have got seven shareholders now, but we're looking at data going back from the 2009/2010 season up through the 2016/2017 season, and we are trying to see if what we have in the way of confidentiality -- We have to follow the rule of three, and so we have to have at least three fishermen, three dealers, and all this to be able to do analysis, but, in many cases, with the seven participants, or shareholders, that we've had in the fishery over the last several years, that is going to be very difficult to do.

What we're doing is we're going back and seeking to get confidentiality waivers from anybody who actually actively participated in the fishery from that 2009/2010 season up until now, and that is dealers as well as people who actually fished shares, and so those are the two competing things that we're working on resolving at this point.

Now, the way that this review is going to go, the timing on it, is that we're going to be spending this winter, and into spring, working on this review. The SSC has a sub-panel of social and economic folks who work in fisheries who will be meeting in February who are going to be looking at a lot of these issues, and the SSC agreed that they were the appropriate body to be reviewing what's going on, because any analysis of the program is going to need to have a lot of economic and social input into it as well as review, and so that's where we're going with that.

What we plan on doing is, at your spring meeting, you are going to see a nearly-completed document. What we've got going on is that the SSC, as well as the Snapper Grouper AP, as well as the wreckfish fishermen, will be looking at this review all around the same time, and then it's going to go to the council in June, at their June meeting, for their decision as to whether they are going to accept this review or not.

We have already met with the wreckfish fishermen. We met with them last August, when we were just beginning this process, to get their input on what they wanted to have looked at as part of this review, and it was difficult for them to keep it focused just on the review, because they were also talking about changes that they might like to see happen to the program.

Right now, for example, one of the things is that they have paper coupons that they have to fill out, and they are in 100 and 500-pound increments. Now, sometimes, based on whatever their share is, sometimes these trips can be a couple thousand pounds, and so, if you have run out of 500-pound coupons, and you have a 2,500-pound trip, you are filling out twenty-five coupons with data on it, written out by hand, and you are submitting those.

Then the poundage -- Like I said, the minimum is 100 pounds, and so you either round up or you round down on the coupons, and it gets to be a big mess, and so one of the things that they would really like to see, the people who are actively participating in it would like to see, is can we come up with an electronic way to do this, so that we can just certify the number of pounds that have been caught to the pound and use that method, and so that's the kind of things that they're talking about with this program.

I don't think there is anything controversial that's going on. Most of the fishermen are pretty happy with the way this catch share program is being run, but they just want to see some tweaks that are happening here, and so I wanted to make you all aware that this is going on. It's a snapper grouper issue, and I wanted to give you all that heads-up that this is coming back to you, and so you're going to get to see a completely-fleshed-out report next spring.

MS. MARHEFKA: Brian, just a question and then a comment. As far as the reporting in the different species, they're using a longline gear that they can only use for wreckfish, and they can't have multi-gear trips. I know they're catching blackbelly rosefish, but they can't be using bandit gear or combining trips, and so I'm confused about that.

DR. CHEUVRONT: This is part of what we're looking into, because we've got to see -- We're aware of the blackbelly rosefish, and even that is not a huge amount of bycatch when they're going after wreckfish, but, because we are having to look at the characteristics of the trip, we have to match everything together to see what other things are being caught by these fishermen and by these boats, because, if the council wants to consider changes, we have to look at what necessarily the economic impact, for example, would be to those vessels if they somehow changed the program

that would affect how many trips they would be taking for wreckfish and other things. It's a bigger issue, and so, if I said just the wreckfish trips, I misspoke, because it really is we have to look at the whole picture of what is happening to these people.

MS. MARHEFKA: I certainly hope that, as you all look at the economics of it, I would say even go beyond the dealers. I can tell you that we've been really instrumental in creating a very, very strong market, straight to the restaurants, for this species, and it is a direct replacement for grouper. Our chefs love it, and so I think it would be important to make sure that -- That has shifted, to me, over the years, maybe in the past ten years, from where the wreckfish went before, or at least how it moved before, and it's become a very important part, and so I just hope that you do bring in the dealers, and maybe even bring in the end-users, because I think you're going to see a strong economic impact.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Thanks, Kerry.

MR. COX: I agree with Kerry that it is a great fish, and they have a good yield, and it's something that we should try to get out there to the consumer. Brian, I have a couple of questions for you. Could you tell me -- If you wanted to be a participant in this, how many shares would you have to own to participate in the fishery?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, it's not just shares. I think there is a special wreckfish permit that you have to have on top of your snapper grouper permit. It's a very, very small percent that will actually get you into the fishery, so that you could actually land it, but you're going to need to have -- You need to have shares and the permit, and so you would have to basically buy the permit, but one of the things that this review is going to look at is how do we get new people into this fishery, because that was not an issue up until now, and there's been a lot of consolidation in recent years in this fishery, and a couple of these fishermen are -- I hope they're not listening, but they're getting a long-in-the-tooth here, and so we need to be thinking about how we're going to keep this fishery viable and going and getting new entrants in.

That's the kind of thing that will be in the review, and the things that could be considered by the council would be to include what does it take to get into the fishery and are they going to try to come up with some method for getting snapper grouper permit holders an ability to be able to get all the documentation and things that they need to be able to fish.

MR. COX: Thank you for that, and another quick couple of questions. What is the geographic range of where the fish are being harvested, and what is the amount of the ACL, percentage-wise, that's being harvested?

DR. CHEUVRONT: By geographic range?

MR. COX: Yes.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I have to be careful here, because we could be talking confidentiality, but what I can tell you is the geographic range is basically from the Keys to the Carolinas. It is the entire South Atlantic.

MR. COX: How much of the ACL is being met?

DR. CHEUVRONT: 100 percent on the commercial side.

MR. COX: How large is that ACL?

DR. CHEUVRONT: That commercial ACL is roughly around 200,000 pounds now. That is the total ACL. The ACL is equal to ABC, but that ACL/ABC was originally set at 250,000 pounds, and it has actually changed some over the years, and so the commercial portion of it is a little over 200,000 pounds now. Rusty, do you happen to have that number? I know you've been following this, and I don't have it right offhand.

MR. ATACK: 393,490 is what the website says.

DR. CHEUVRONT: What do you have?

MR. ATACK: The commercial, for 2017/2018, the ACL is 393,490.

MR. HUDSON: It's 393,000.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Is it that much now? I am sorry, but I was going by memory.

MR. COX: Brian, one final thing that I want to comment on, and then I will be done. I guess it's a question and a comment, but the barrellfish fishery has really ramped up in Florida, and it's -- They're catching a lot of barrellfish, and I know they catch those in deep water. I don't know if they interact with those barrellfish in the same area that they interact with the wreckfish, but why is the South Atlantic not managing barrellfish? Another question is how do we pay attention to a fishery that has really cranked up? I mean, thousands of pounds of barrellfish are being harvested a day in Florida right now, and that fishery kind of reminds me a little bit of the wreckfish fishery, just because of the depth of water they're caught in.

DR. CHEUVRONT: That one I can't answer, because the council has not discussed barrellfish increases that I can remember, but, if this is something that you want brought to the council, we can talk about that and make sure they're made aware of this.

MR. HUDSON: When you first referenced the ACL there, Brian, that was the original one that the SSC had created on the landings stream. Then, we hired the industry scientist to get involved after we had made a case about needing to let's just say improve the quota from where it had dropped from the two-million down to about the quarter-million, and then we wound up with a yield of about four-hundred-and-something-thousand pounds, collectively.

After the SSC reviewed everything, we wound up distributing 5 percent to the recreational. That was twenty-something-thousand pounds, if you remember. That was part of our discussion about total ABC versus just the commercial ACL and stuff like that, and that was something about fishing up to that.

Not every year has 100 percent been caught. I think we also had a discussion about an additional 20,000 pounds that was not caught, for whatever reason. Now, with all that said, they're not allowed to use longlines since it was first introduced back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and a

lot of shrimp boats out of the Carolinas went out there and were stringing gear. Then, when they cut them off, and then it became bandit reels of a sort that I call on steroids that they started building first in New Smyrna and then they worked their way up here.

When you look at the equipment on the boat, it's designed to fish in that 2,000 feet of water, and that's a big deal in itself. The guys catch a pretty consistent CPUE, as we know, and we need to update this, because, once we had done the industry-based science, it steps down each year, but, collectively, we haven't had a single intercept of recreational, and so 20,000 times five-dollars a pounds is \$100,000 of commercial stuff that is allocated to a group that really, to go all the way out there and do one single drop with a deep-drop and catch one fish per vessel is kind of problematic, and then run fifty or a hundred miles back, but, if you're down in the south, in the Keys, you're in a little closer range, but the shelf is a lot smaller for them to fish on, and so they're kind of beating it to death, and so then you have the other side of the coin of the leasing that goes on to some degree there and some of the other degrees up the line here.

There was some discussions about maybe how to get other new entrants in there, and so all of this is stuff they can work out into the future, but, again, the quota is being caught, basically speaking, and we need to fully utilize the entire ABC to be able to get to that point, but, again, the industry has to pay for the science, and it really comes down to those kinds of things. Just like so many other fishes, we're just having to back-burner things because we have priorities, and, year after year, we just keep on the merry-go-round of how do we deal with this. With that type of stuff, I don't know what to say about that bycatch scenario, and I never knew it was a real problem. Maybe it has to do with stuff.

Now, the last thing I want to bring up is, even though those boats have their coupons and their confidentiality and stuff like that, it's only open-access dealers, I believe. I don't see a wreckfish dealer thing on the SERO website. Correct me if I'm wrong, but any of the 422 dealers of snapper grouper permits, I guess, can somehow buy a wreckfish.

DR. CHEUVRONT: But there are very few that actually have been buying wreckfish.

MR. SNYDER: I would just echo what Kerry said. We can sell wreckfish all day long, and consumers love it, and barrelfish -- To what Jack said, that and barrelfish are both great sellers.

MR. JOHNSON: I was just going to address that 5 percent. I mean, you said there is no intercepts of any recreational-caught wreckfish, and this group did that because of the deep-dropping daytime swordfish fishery that has developed in south Florida, and these guys were claiming they were catching all these wreckfish, and it was a shame to throw them back and it was a waste and they should be able to keep them.

Maybe 20,000 is a little bit too much of an allocation. I mean, we're taking money out of these guys pockets, and, basically, we took shares that they bought and gave them to the recreational sector. I don't know. Maybe this group needs to address that. Maybe that 5 percent is too much. Maybe it should be more like 2 percent, especially considering there is not one intercept of a landing.

DR. DUVAL: In addition to Florida, there are charter captains on the Outer Banks who were encountering wreckfish as well and not being able to retain them, and I think it is going to be

difficult to have any MRIP intercepts, because it's only two months that folks are allowed to keep these fish, and so I'm not disagreeing that perhaps looking at a different allocation is something that the council should consider, but I just want to put out there that there were also other places where wreckfish were being captured.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I would like to point out, related to this, two things. One is that this AP has made a recommendation in the past that the council look at the recreational allocation, but, even when you talk to the shareholders themselves, they are not necessarily insisting or pushing for the council to remove the recreational share altogether, but they would like for the council to revisit it as well and perhaps reduce it, and that came out as part of the discussion that we had with them, but remember that none of this is -- There can be recommendations in this review as to what the council can do for actions, but, once this review is done, it's not going to do any actions itself. There will have to be another amendment that the council will have to begin to then go ahead and make those actions happen that they want to have happen.

MR. LORENZ: Brian, do the individual fishing quotas, those who have that, are they entitled to a defined amount of fish within a year? They are? Does their IFQ carry market value, if they were to sell it?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Certainly it does, because what happens is some of the shareholders lease their shares to other fishermen, and they are paid to do that. If somebody really wanted to sell their shares, and there has been some consolidation, they are paid to do that.

MR. LORENZ: So, if you wanted to increase the fishery and allow more people into it, you would essentially issue new shares, new allotments of shares, and set them at just some open bid price, like an IPO of IFQs?

DR. CHEUVRONT: That's something that the council would need to work on if they decided to do that. If you talk with the shareholders now, they are not against new shareholders coming into the fishery, but, before that happens, they want to see the ACL increased, because the current participants in it could fish the entire ACL, and they could even fish even more than what they have.

They have the capacity to do that, and so they're not against the idea of other people coming in, but they also believe that the current ACL is way too low, and there are some good meta-data reasons why those landings were down in recent years. They actually had a high-liner who participated in the fishery who passed away, and there is people who moved on to some other fisheries temporarily, because the money was really good in the other fisheries, because there is a lot of expense involved in going out after wreckfish.

There was lots of reasons, things that didn't necessarily get included into the SSC's deliberations on setting the ACL and then the following assessment and all this, and so it took -- Wreckfish is something that the council is going to have to look at harder in the future, and so will the SSC, in deciding how to set that ABC and then the ACL by the council, later on.

MR. PILAND: Hatteras charter boats did harvest some wreckfish this year during the season, but we just weren't surveyed. MRIP is a gamble, at best, in what they see, but we did catch them during the season.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, and we know that there are recreational landings going on, because you can just do a search. Even on Facebook, you can find people with pictures of their wreckfish. The problem is that MRIP just is not finely detailed enough that it can pick up some of these lower-occurrence species that occur in the recreational fisheries.

MR. HUDSON: A couple of things. With regards to the inshore version of some of the wreckfish that they catch in some 600 to 1,000 feet of water that I have heard about a couple of times through the years, that animal is definitely a younger, smaller animal, after it runs the gyre around the Atlantic and then settles back off, versus the animals that they consistently catch at a much nicer size.

With regards to the recreational, if everything stays the same, the concept of utilizing the unutilized recreational portion was a percentage difference, if you remember the suggestions, and it may be as low as a half a percent and it still would allow it. I have to caution about MRIP, because you need some dedicated system to deal with rare-event, deepwater animals, because the latest example of a big mess-up by MRIP occurred in the second wave of this year for blueline tile in state waters, supposedly, off Miami, one boat with twenty-one blueline tile, caught supposedly in state waters, and that expanded out to almost 200,000 pounds of blueline tile.

That has to stop, and if you have one intercept of a wreckfish, that could be expanded out to such a magnitude that it's just ridiculous, and so this is where the wheels are coming off of this whole recreational monitoring thing of private folks. Professional for-hire guys are in a whole different ballgame, ultimately, when we get full charter boat representation to go along with the headboats, and so, again, there was no desire to eliminate recreational utilization of wreckfish, and that I need to say straight upfront, from the shareholders, nor is there any resistance to expansion of the participation base, but one thing that they definitely want is a science that reflects the state of nature and, when you're Number 31 on the list at the Science Center for the South Atlantic Council region, it makes it pretty slow to get anything done. Thank you very much.

MR. ATTACK: On the quota, you've got a 400,000 ACL, and aren't the shares really set up to where each one of them has certain percentages? If the ACL goes up and goes down, there are no extra shares, if they've got a percentage. Then, if somebody wants to get into it, they will have to probably buy percentages of the ACL from the existing participants, and isn't that the way it would work?

DR. CHEUVRONT: You're exactly right, Jim. You own a percent of the ACL, is basically what you do, and so, to get into the fishery, you're going to have to buy your way in, or else the council has to come up with another mechanism to allow new entrants into the fishery.

MR. COX: Just one final thing on IFQs. I think that there should be a place for new entrants to be able to enter the fishery, and I don't know how you can go back and time and carve some of that ACL out of the fishery to set it aside and figure out a fair way for folks to get into the fishery, but it's important that we figure out a way to move forward.

MR. HUDSON: Which ACL? The two-million pounds that originally was put in place or the quarter-million that we wound up doing, or the four-hundred-and-some-thousand that we got when it could have and should have been even higher? There is a lot of buffering that goes on at different

levels, and so how to be able to constrain the participation to the proper utilization, that's another characteristic that has to be developed, and so it really hinges on that participation and that quota, and you're right, Jim, that you can go right to the permits and see the exact allocation to those people, down to the tenth of a percent or something like that.

That is how you have to deal with it right now. You can't go back in time. You talk about one of the best high-liners, Dix Harper, that my granddad trained, and he stepped away from his wreckfish to go over and do that red grouper fishery in the east Gulf, and he was just making money hand over fist with that, and that is some of the stuff that other people did other things too, because sometimes just to go steaming all the way up from Daytona all the way up to Blake Plateau and catch your catch and then be able to unload somewhere, it gets a little problematic and dicey. There is a lot of room for improvement for so many of our fish, and that's just another example of it.

MR. COX: To his point, if you have an increase in the stock, it's a perfect time, maybe, to think about what you would do with that, and that was kind of what I was referring to.

MR. LORENZ: Jack, funny thought I had, and that is the way to do it. If that doesn't happen, you will almost have to assign a value per pound you would be allowed to catch or land. It's almost like a stock. It's just every pound has a value, and you have an allocation of so many pounds, and that has so much value, and now you can start selling it off in small amounts or large amounts, whatever you want.

MR. JOHNSON: It's not any different than the catch share programs in the Gulf. If you want in, you have got to find somebody that is willing to sell. That's just the way it is, and I don't think that's going to change. When that quota was cut like it was, I thought, oh my gosh, some of these people actually went to the bank and borrowed money and bought into this fishery and then, with just a stroke, it was taken. They had invested a lot of money, and, all of a sudden, they just lost that money, and my heart goes out to them, and I remember asking the question of Bob Mahood of how can that happen if they own it, and he said that they don't own the fish and they just own the right to harvest. That is the danger of catch share programs.

MR. COX: Just one last thing on IFQs. I mean, there is seventeen or eighteen programs in the United States, and some of them are very successful, and so we shouldn't always look at the Gulf that is one that -- Just our permits, for instance, our commercial permits now, a corporation permit is a \$65,000-plus permit, and it's not a whole lot of difference, and people are leasing the right to use somebody else's permit by placing it on a boat, and so we've got some things that are somewhat a catch share program in our commercial fishery.

MR. BUFF: Jack is exactly correct. We are fishing in the Gulf as well, and at least there you can have a business model, because you kind of know what you can and can't do, and you also have a year-round fishery, but, to answer your question about buying this quota, from what I understood, and I haven't bought any, but it's a ten-year of what the quota is. If you take 100 pounds of quota at five-dollars times ten years, that's the going rate for what they're selling it for.

MR. HUDSON: One of the reasons for the ten years is that the permit is not for perpetuity. It's a ten-year restriction, and the council and NMFS can make a choice to just end it all, and so, whether it's no ACL or whether it's just the elimination of the entire system, but both of those are outcomes,

and now we're seeing similar scenarios with the endorsements for golden tile and black sea bass, where the price went way up and people invested and then suddenly were shut out of black sea bass for three-and-a-half years. With the bottom longline, we're looking at a million-dollar reduction this year coming up, and it's hard to have a good business model when everything is all over the map like that, and so thank you.

MR. COX: A catch share program can also be a state-by-state quota system, and I know there is somewhat support in North Carolina for going to some kind of management like this as well, and so it's not just an individual catch share program.

MR. BONURA: I was just going to copy what Jack had said about the south Florida guys are having a good amount of interaction on the wreckfish as well, commercial and recreational, and a good amount of them are floating off, just being wasted.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Obviously, a lot of people know, in south Florida, the deepwater fishery has just exploded in the last few years, and so, even though you're not getting maybe the representation through MRIP, it's happening. I have seen it. Thank you. It's just about twelve o'clock, and so we'll go ahead and break for lunch now. When we come back, we'll go over the for-hire permit moratorium. There's a couple of people that had to leave that wanted to go over that stuff before they had to leave a little bit earlier. Let's come back at 1:30.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. MOSS: If everybody could get back in and take their seats, we're going to move right along. John Hadley now is going to do a bit on the for-hire permit moratorium, and so we'll get going with that.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you. I have a couple of updates, and the first one is just an update on the for-hire moratorium and kind of where that stands. At the June 2017 meeting, the council passed a motion to start work on an amendment that would establish a moratorium on issuing snapper grouper for-hire permits to new entrants. They are very early in the process right now, and they will be reviewing an options paper for the first time at their upcoming meeting in December, and they will be looking at options such as the start date of a moratorium, and so kind of a control date, and do they want to keep the current control date or possibly set a different date, some exceptions for eligibility, transferability of permits, whether or not and how to allow new entrants and possibly time limits or sunset provisions for the moratorium.

Assuming this amendment moves forward, you will likely review it at your spring 2018 meeting, and so, like I said, there's not really even a -- The council has not had a chance to look at an options paper and kind of flesh out the different avenues that they would want to go down, and so it's very early in the process, and so that's what I have for that at the moment.

MR. MOSS: Anybody have anything? I know Richard wanted to comment on that.

MR. GOMEZ: I know this is going to be a controversial issue, but I want everyone to understand why we would fully support that. If you look at the percentage of federal permits in the Lower Keys compared to the rest of the South Atlantic, you're going to see a majority of those permits are in the Keys, the majority of that percentage, and so I consider those people with federal permits

serious fishermen. If they're going to go through the trouble of getting a permit, they are probably doing it for a living and they've been at it a while, but then you have to look a little further and know that so many people are moving down to the Keys, retirees, and then you have your locals and lots of canals and, quite frankly, lots of backyard fishermen, we call them, and it's very easy for them to enter the business.

If you look at just a handful of them, they really don't hurt our business a lot, but let's just take a number of 100 backyard fishermen with their regular charter boat license, or not, and multiply that times ten trips year, and you're looking at a huge economic impact to our fishery, and, if we're going to be talking about sustainability of not only fish, but the fishermen that are fishing as charter boats, it's putting a pretty big damper on our business down in the Keys. If you just Google "fishing in Key West", you're going to come across page after page of fishermen, some serious and many, to the majority, not so serious.

Prices are being pushed down because of the amount of people that want to do this as a part-time pastime, and so we fully support that, and, as far as we're concerned, this will be just a first step in possibly getting more serious about limiting the amount of charter boats in the Keys. I think this has been a long time coming, and we definitely would support that.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Any other comment on that? Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I will briefly, very quickly, go over my other update, and so the socioeconomic profile for the snapper grouper fishery. If you all remember, we went over an outline of this at your spring meeting, and so the council had a chance to review this at their September meeting, and the comments of the Snapper Grouper AP and the SEP, and they provided their own comments as well.

They reviewed the outline and provided guidance, additional guidance, on some of the geographic boundaries that they would like to see examined and also some of the desired outcomes from the profile report, and they specified that they would like to go back in time a little bit, to kind of see how the fishery has changed, looking at fifteen to twenty years of permits data and landings data, where we can find it and where it is available, and so that was kind of a broad overview.

That work is being undertaken by Kari MacLauchlin, who was our former Social Scientist, and she is working on that currently, and it will be done in approximately March of 2018. That is the expected completion date, and so hopefully you will be able to look at that over at your spring meeting, and so that's something to look forward to early next year.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, John, and I just wanted to give maybe just a little bit of background on what this is all about, for the benefit of the new advisory panel members who may not know how this all got started. Back in 2015, the council got started with a visioning project, and they wanted to get a lot of input from stakeholders, and so we went out and we asked the public how should the council pursue a vision for the snapper grouper fishery, and one of the things that came out was that they wanted to see a management approach that was tailored to traditional bandit boats, and these are not the day boats. They're the boats that go out and stay out longer, and so there was a good bit of interest to do that.

The council discussed it, and the other thing that came out of those discussions is that we needed a really good characterization of the commercial component of the snapper grouper fishery, and so that's how this came to be. The AP was very supportive of that, and they've been asking for this sort of a comprehensive description of the fishery for some time, and so we then got guidance from the council to begin such a characterization, and so I just wanted to make sure that everybody was on the same page and understood where this is coming from, and so it's very exciting that we have undertaken this, and, those of you who know Kari, she was really excited about the project, and so we're looking forward to having her come back and present this to you in April or May, whenever you all decide to meet in the spring.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm sorry, but I wanted to back up just one moment and ask, on the for-hire permit moratorium, is there any -- I know that they're not numbered, and is there any way that they keep track of how long people have had permits, and then you have people that have bought into the fishery, bought boats, that had permits, but then they had to transfer the permit into their name, and there is a lot of things involved in this, and have you all looked at any of that yet, because that's a big concern.

People bought businesses, charter businesses, with a permitted vessel, but then they have to change the permit into their name, and those people are concerned that they would somehow -- They made the investment, and they're already fishing, and some of these happened after the control date was set, and I just wondered if there's been any discussion along those lines.

MR. HADLEY: Not specifically. The council really hasn't had a chance to kind of get into the nuts and bolts of how the moratorium would work, but that is one of the key items, is kind of exceptions to eligibility, and that would be -- Say you bought a vessel after the control date, and how does that work out, since it was a permitted vessel, and so that's something that will be discussed, absolutely, but, as far as tracking, you can go back and you can either track a person or an entity, meaning a corporation or a business or what have you, but you can look at -- You can track the vessel, and you can track the entity or a person, based on the mailing address, and there is different ways that you can go back and look at that, but that certainly is a concern, and I'm sure there will be a lot more discussion on it.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

MR. ATACK: Is there any talk of consolidating some of the for-hire permits and the federal permits? Like, right now, you've got a snapper grouper, and there's a dolphin wahoo. There's a few for-hire federal permits, and are they planning on leaving them all the same? If we do this moratorium, are they going to make it a single that covers all those fisheries?

MR. HADLEY: There hasn't been discussion of that. You mean kind of taking the three permits and make it one kind of South Atlantic permit? No, that hasn't been discussed. Really, they are narrowing it down and focusing it just on the snapper grouper permit. In previous discussions on limiting entry into the for-hire fishery, the council has decided to just focus on snapper grouper and not include CMP or dolphin wahoo in that.

MR. ATACK: If that's the case, then those won't be a limited entry. They will still stay open entry then, I guess.

MR. HADLEY: As of now, the way the discussions have gone, that would be the case. It would just be the snapper grouper permit.

MR. MOSS: Thank you very much, John. We are going to move right into SEDAR now, moving right along.

MS. BYRD: Hi, everyone. I realized that when I came up to talk last time that I didn't introduce myself. I am Julia Byrd, and I am one of the SEDAR coordinators, and I mainly work on the South Atlantic assessments, and so I'm going to scroll up a little bit further in this overview document, and what Myra asked me to do is just to provide kind of a brief update on some of the assessments that are currently underway in the South Atlantic, and then I also wanted to talk about a couple of the assessments that will be coming up next year, and we're looking for some Snapper Grouper AP representatives to participate in those assessments.

What I am going to do is quickly kind of walk through the assessments that are underway now, and I will go over them kind of quickly. If you all have questions, just stop me and let me know, and I will do my best to answer them.

The first assessment that I wanted to mention was SEDAR 48, which was a Southeast black grouper benchmark assessment. I updated you guys a little bit on this at your spring meeting. This was going to be -- The lead analytical team was going to be Florida FWC, and, during the data workshop stage, there were a lot of different kind of data issues that were identified. Due to some of those issues, the decision was made to kind of halt this assessment, and I think I let you guys kind of know that last time, but what I wanted to make you aware of now is there is a data workshop report that kind of goes over some of the data issues in more detail, and that's available on the SEDAR website at this link right here. That is SEDAR 48, and I'm going to move through these quickly, and, again, please feel free to stop me if you have any questions.

The next assessment is SEDAR 50, which was an Atlantic blueline tilefish benchmark assessment. This assessment just was completed this fall. It was a benchmark assessment, and there were a lot of challenges with this assessment. It was reviewed by the SSC at their October meeting, and their recommendations will be going to the council in December.

One thing I will mention is that, due to some of the data limitations, there ended up being two models that were developed for this assessment. There was one for Cape Hatteras south, through the Gulf of Mexico/South Atlantic jurisdictional line, and then there was a separate model that was developed for north of Hatteras, north through the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's area, and so I know John is going to talk in a few minutes about SSC recommendations, and so I don't want to kind of steal his thunder, so to speak, but the South Atlantic SSC has a kind of ABC recommendation for the south of Hatteras model, and then representatives from the South Atlantic and the Mid-Atlantic SSC will be getting together to discuss potential ABC recommendations for the north of Hatteras model.

This was mentioned yesterday as well, but the jurisdictional line between the Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic Council is the North Carolina/Virginia state line, and so, after that ABC for the north of Hatteras model is recommended, there will also need to be some discussions on how to break that up into the Mid-Atlantic Council's jurisdiction and the South Atlantic Council's

jurisdiction, if that makes sense, and so that will take some discussions between both SSCs and both councils. Any questions on that? Okay.

Next, I want to mention the vermilion snapper assessment. This is a standard assessment, and so, like I said earlier this morning, a standard assessment is kind of in between a benchmark and an update, and so the last vermilion snapper assessment was an update assessment that was done in 2012, and so this will be updating that model and then making a few new changes to the model. There are a few new datasets that are being incorporated. Like the SERFS video index wasn't being used before, and it's being considered now.

The timeline for this assessment has been delayed a little bit, due to impacts from Hurricane Irma, and so the data deadline was right about a week after Hurricane Irma hit, and so some of the data got turned in late, and so we're working at about a month delay, but it's still due to be complete in spring of 2018, and so this assessment will be going to the SSC in the spring of next year, and then it will be going to the council in June of next year. We are kind of a little bit behind, but still moving forward. All the data has been turned in now, and the next webinar for this assessment will be the week after Thanksgiving. Any questions on that? Okay.

Next is black sea bass, and so that's another assessment that is ongoing right now. When you all met in the spring, originally this assessment was supposed to be complete in October of 2017, and so right now. There were some data delays with this assessment as well, and so what ended up happening is the assessment got delayed, and we added an additional year to the assessment, and so now this assessment will run through 2016. It will be the last year of the assessment, and so it's underway right now.

It will also be completed in the spring of 2018, and so it will go to the SSC in the spring of next year and to the council in June of next year. Kind of where we are in the timeline is our next webinar is next week. Most of the data sources have been turned in, and so, next week, we'll be talking about a few new data sources and the new discard mortality study that has come out. We're going to begin discussing that next week as well, and so, again, this one will be done in the spring.

Those are kind of the ongoing assessments, snapper grouper assessments, in the South Atlantic. The next two assessments I want to talk about are ones that will be starting up next year, and we are looking for kind of Snapper Grouper AP representatives to participate in these, or, if you guys know other fishermen who are very knowledgeable about these fisheries who you think may be willing to participate, please pass their names on to me, and I would be happy to reach out to them.

The first is SEDAR 59, and this is a South Atlantic greater amberjack standard assessment. Again, it's a standard assessment, and so they will be updating the model from last time, which was SEDAR 15, and considering some new datasets, new data sources, and some changes to the model. This will be all via webinar, and so it's going to start in March of 2018, and there will be webinars through early fall of 2018, and then it will be completed at the end of the year, in December of 2018, and so it will go to the SSC in the spring of 2019.

If you are interested in participating, it would just mean that you would need to kind of participate in five webinars. If no one has ever done a webinar before, I am happy to talk with you kind of more about what that means, and we can set up practice webinars, to make sure you are comfortable kind of using the technology, and what we're basically asking for are people who are

knowledgeable about the fishery who may be able to kind of help us interpret trends in some of the data seen over time. Again, there is not an in-person workshop. It's five webinars. Is there anyone who is interested in participating in the greater amberjack assessment. Andy? Great. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Julia, I can't do it, but I could recommend two names, and I will talk to them, also. One of them is David Grubbs, and the other would be Paul Nelson.

MS. BYRD: They both have participated in SEDARs before too, I believe.

MR. HULL: Yes, I believe so.

MS. BYRD: David was triggerfish, I think. Great. Thanks, Jimmy.

MR. HUDSON: Is Paul involved with this vermilion?

MS. BYRD: He is, and so one thing I didn't mention is, both for the black sea bass and the vermilion, we have Snapper Grouper AP representatives as well as other fishermen representatives involved in both of those.

MR. COX: I've got a question for you. When is the assessment going to be done on the red grouper? When did you say that was, the next assessment?

MS. BYRD: The red grouper assessment was just completed recently, and it was reviewed by the SSC in the spring of this year, and so John will be talking a little bit about their recommendations, as far as the kind of projections go, and so red grouper was just completed. Thank you all for volunteering for SEDAR 59.

Then now SEDAR 60 is a South Atlantic red porgy assessment, and this is another standard assessment, and so it will be updating the last assessment that was done in 2012, and, again, this is going to be a standard assessment, and so they will be updating that model. There are going to be a few new data sources considered.

The difference here is there's going to be a series of webinars and an in-person workshop for this one. It's going to start around August of 2018, and it will end in -- The last webinar, I believe, is in February of 2019. There will be an in-person workshop in December. It's December 11 through 13, 2018, and that meeting would be around the Beaufort, North Carolina area. Participating in this workshop would be coming to the in-person workshop as well as participating in the webinars. Is there anyone who is potentially interested in participating in red porgy, or, if you know any fishermen who you think would be interested, that would be good to know.

MR. JOHNSON: I am not volunteering, but if you can't find anybody else.

MS. BYRD: Thank you, Robert. One thing I will say is I think it's really very, very helpful to have fishermen participate in these workshops, and so I know the timing of these can make it hard for you guys, but I know you all know a lot of other fishermen in your area, and so, if you know of anyone who might be interested in participating, I am happy to contact them, or you can contact

them and give them my contact information, because I think it's really critical to have fishermen involved.

All of our meetings are open to the public, and so anyone can come as an observer, and I guess I will also say -- Another thing I will mention too is, if you ever just want to be on the email list, if you're interested in one of these species and you can't commit to participating in the actual assessment, but you want to be included on the mail distribution list, you can always just let me know, because we keep email distribution lists for every project. It will be a lot of emails, but, that way, you will know what's going on with the assessment.

Those are the assessments that are going on right now, and the last thing I just wanted to briefly mention is -- The other thing that I included in the overview that we thought might be helpful is just a table that has the assessments that are kind of identified as priorities or are on the schedule right now. 2017, 2018, and 2019 should be finalized, as far as species go. 2020 is still kind of preliminary, but that's just to give you guys an idea of what assessments are kind of coming down the pipeline and how -- For folks who are kind of newer to this process, how this will typically work is the councils themselves come up with a list of species priorities, and then we have a SEDAR Steering Committee that's made up of all of the councils and all of the commissions that we work with, and so then they take the council priorities, with kind of the resources we have for stock assessment in the region, together to put together the final schedule.

That is just what is coming up down the pipeline, and then the other thing I wanted to mention, because there was a fair amount of discussion on this at the spring meeting, the last time I was here, about the wreckfish assessment, and so I just wanted to let you know that the council had some limited discussion about that at their September 2017 meeting, and they approved a motion that requests the Science Center to develop a plan for updating the wreckfish assessment and to report back to the council, and that motion included language that, if there is kind of impediments to updating the existing assessment, they could consider giving kind of alternate approaches that could be used to provide the council or SSC information, and so, since that was talked about last time, I just wanted to give you an FYI on that as well.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Julia. With regards to the king mackerel benchmark, I have been involved with the 16 and then 38, and that's a whole big group of people that I'm kind of responsible for, and so have you determined what kind of time of the year, in your mind -- Are we looking more towards the end of next year before you get started on that?

MS. BYRD: The timing of that is still up in the air, but it will probably be very late, a late start next year. No data deadlines or no schedule has been developed yet. That will probably be done in the upcoming months, but I would imagine it would be a very late 2018 timeframe for getting started.

MR. HUDSON: Okay, and so I will be trying to stay tuned, but, as usual -- Like you have me on the black sea bass distribution, and I would like to be on the greater amberjack and the porgy and the vermilion. The vermilion, I don't think you had me on that, for just being able to listen in.

MS. BYRD: You want to be added to the email list? Is that what you're saying?

MR. HUDSON: Yes, because sometimes you all have got material that's pretty good to read and to have, but I am not volunteering for anything at this time. I am just wanting to pay attention. Thank you.

MR. MOSS: Thank you very much. Moving right into the SSC updates and Mr. Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The SSC met October 24 through 26, and their report is not yet complete, but we do anticipate having it available in the council's briefing book for the December meeting. What we wanted to hit on here was a couple of things they talked about relative to stock assessments, and they reviewed the red grouper.

As Julia mentioned, they looked at red grouper in the spring, and there was some question about the projections and how the council wanted to deal with the recruitment situation, because red grouper seems to be going through a period of low recruitment, and there was some question as to what would the council want to base the ABC on and how they want to evaluate that poor recruitment. Do you consider that a change that is going to be carrying through into the future, in which case you would want to estimate your benchmarks and everything assuming that low recruitment, or is this potentially a short-term situation that hopefully will work itself out, in which case the estimates of showing, on average, higher recruitment may really be more representative of what we think the stock will do over ten to twenty years, and the short-term low-recruitment scenarios may be more appropriate for the next couple of years.

One of the problems that creates, of course, is, if the low recruitment stays in place, then, really, the stock doesn't rebuild to the level that you expect it will get to given the high recruitment. The SSC and council are aware of that, but, given what the history, the recent history, of red grouper looks like, the council felt that using the short-term projections of low recruitment were a good approach forward and leaving the benchmarks in the rebuilding plan and everything based on the higher recruitment, which we expect to really achieve over the long term.

The SSC reviewed that and agreed, and they recommended setting ABCs, in the short term, using the low-recruitment projection scenarios, which they put forward. They were in the report, and then they had a document that showed what those values were, and so are there any questions on red grouper?

MR. HUDSON: I talked to Ben the other day, and, of course, he had seen those, as you know, from the SSC meeting, those red grouper post-Hurricane Irma and the fact that, when we did SEDAR 19, the reviewers had suggested separating south Florida from North Carolina and looking at that, and I don't know if that was ever done in this new assessment, but, if Irma is producing these red grouper from the east Gulf that is coming around now, and he saw some, and I think we've seen some, and I would recommend that anybody seeing any minimum size or below red groupers to kind of talk about it, because I think that sort of fits into your recruitment pattern, and, if that's the source, that's a big deal.

MR. COX: I will say, for the first time in about three years now, we did see some small recruitment on red grouper in about sixty to eighty feet of water on the east side of the shoals of Cape Lookout. We have not seen any recruitment at all in about three years, nothing, and the only fish we see coming in, and it may be every other trip, will have a fifteen to twenty-five-pound red grouper,

and so the fishery is definitely in rough shape, but that was the first good sign, and we don't know where they came from.

MR. HUDSON: We always kind of envied you all when you were getting into those red groupers for those couple of years, because, for us, we can't target them, as a normal rule. It's just incidental to whatever we are targeting in our region, but you all were able to do that. Then, if that source of recruitment is from the east Gulf Florida region, that's going to be pretty interesting, but tags and other types of methods is going to be the only way we can resolve that, ultimately, down the road.

MR. HULL: I will add to that comment. The last four bass potting trips I made right after the hurricane here, last week, we intercepted some little red groupers, the first time in a long, long time, and so there was some movement recently.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Things you hadn't seen earlier in the summer, but they have come around. I mean, that is certainly a big issue in our region, and for a number of these fish, is the potential that a lot of these stocks have much bigger populations in the Gulf of Mexico and the fish getting caught in currents and brought around to us. It is certainly a big question, and it definitely probably contributes to the sense of uncertainty that we tend to have with a lot of our long-term productivity estimates.

MR. COX: I would just like to say that I think we missed the mark on some management and some things that we did on red grouper. I think we're suffering now from some of that, but red grouper was a pretty stable fishery in North Carolina for a long time, and we harvested as many red grouper, I think, as anybody.

The years that I can remember, there were always 300 or 400-pound catches per bandit boat that was at sea for a while, and then the day boats kind of ramped up the fishery, and something happened. We had those hurricanes in the 1990s, and fishing really ramped up really good, where you could go out there in a day boat and catch 1,000 pounds of big red groupers a day in 130 feet of water, and I guess we had ten years of it, and a lot of the day boats weren't gutting their fish, and so we were buying them in the round for two-and-a-quarter, but they were so full of roe in May, when we were doing this, that I said then that this is going to come back and hurt us, and I think this is what happened.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next topic was blueline tilefish. As Julia mentioned, that assessment wrapped up, and the SSC reviewed it. They ended up doing a model for the south of Hatteras area and then doing some data-limited techniques they looked at for the Hatteras north area. They recommended a P^* based on a production model run for based on what the assessment workshop had put forth on blueline tilefish.

There was a lot of exploration at the review workshop on tilefish by the review panel, just trying to get a better handle of the uncertainties in the model and what kind of information they might be able to put forth to tease more resolution out of that kind of scant data that we have, one of the big challenges being the lack of reliable ages for the stock.

Really, in stock assessments, if you've been around this table for a while, you understand how important the age information is, because that really tells you about longevity of fish and mortality rates, and, without that, things tend to get sort of mixed up a lot more, and that has really been the

challenge with blueline tilefish, but we felt like they had a pretty good handle on what's been going on in the south of Hatteras area, which I think has probably been the case before. One of the challenges before was a concern in the prior assessment that the recent really high landings north of Hatteras were distorting the picture of what was going on with the stock south of Hatteras.

The south stock came out as not overfished and not overfishing, and the Science Center is working on some projections to give us the actual ABC values, and we hope to have those for the council meeting as well. The north stock is a little more difficult, or the north unit, I suppose, because it's considered one stock on the Atlantic.

The SSC is needing to work with the Mid-Atlantic, because the Mid-Atlantic manages blueline tilefish from the Virginia/North Carolina line northward. The South Atlantic is managing it for that unit from Cape Hatteras to the state line, and so we need some kind of cooperative effort to figure out what to do with those, and so this group is going to get together and look at those data-limited models that were used, and the data-limited stuff -- There is a lot of tools out there now, and you can run many different models. The challenge is figuring out which ones are actually telling you something informative, and that's what the workgroup is going to try to do to come up with an ABC estimate, and they're also going to have to face the challenge of how do you divide up the two councils' share of that overall pie.

We asked for that to be addressed in the stock assessment, and they tried, and they tried a lot of the common things that you would think they would look at, such as landings distributions and habitat distributions and survey data, where they have it, and just trying to get some sense of what the relative productivity breakout is between that Hatteras to the Virginia line and the Virginia line north.

At the end of the day, they really came away with not feeling, the scientists at least through the SEDAR process, not feeling like anything was really worth hanging their hat on and putting a recommendation forward for how to do it, and so that's now bouncing over into the SSC's court, and our SSC wasn't really able to come up with an acceptable answer, and so they said the best way is to probably get representatives of the Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic SSCs together and see if they can come up with some way of dividing this stock, because the councils have made it clear how they wish to manage it, and they want to manage it along the council boundaries, and so that's creating a bit of a challenge.

There will be a workgroup working on that over the next few months, and we hope to have some more information by -- The Mid-Atlantic SSC meeting, I think, is happening in March or so, or late February, sometime in the first quarter of next year, and we should have a little more information on that, and so, by your spring meeting, maybe we will have some more feedback on blueline.

MR. HUDSON: With regards to the sub-group, has that been determined if it's going to be a combination of webinars and a physical or just all webinars at this time?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't think that's been determined yet. I know they discussed it at the SSC meeting of maybe having a webinar to get everyone up to speed and plot out what they wish to do and then really having a face-to-face meeting, where they can get into those data-limited models, and so I expect that will be the case. There will probably be one face-to-face meeting, but

we have not made any progress at this point in terms of logistically setting that up and knowing when and where.

MR. HUDSON: The next question, or comment, is the four immature animals that we had, how do we augment that, and how do we determine if we're -- How do we go about that with SEFIS or whatever, MARMAP, and find that area where these immatures are at, because we had to go through this stuff with the two, four, six-year-old to full maturity or whatever, and so it's nice to lock that down, and I know that's probably a recommendation before we ever do the next thing.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and definitely a recommendation to get more information on that stock, and, like many stocks, get a better handle on the younger ages and the recruitment and get a good signal out of that.

DR. KELLISON: I was just going to note that Andy is a cooperator on I think a MARFIN proposal, and part of -- At least one of the objectives, and I haven't seen the proposal, but I have talked to the PI at Virginia Tech, but one of the objectives is to collect information on blueline juveniles, which Andy says are mixed in with the older fish on the same spots, where he fishes at least.

MR. HUDSON: One of the things about the blueline, and Andy knows a lot about the small mouth, and he's been able to see a whole lot of different things up in his region, because he has the Gulf Stream further off, and that's -- Well, it's not that much further off, but what you were talking about while we were there was pretty darned interesting, and there just really needs to be some follow-up between our roll-down that's off of St. Augustine, Ponce, and that's a twenty-mile stretch, and I don't think, after all these years, anybody has been able to do anything with that since we gave up all that kind of information and work our way north for these co-occurring situations.

Then, where you're at, you have, from there south is the co-occurring, and from there north is the stuff like Dewey and stuff was doing with the clean blueline, and so there's some stuff that needs to be done, and is this going to be --

MR. CARMICHAEL: The next one is the golden tilefish, and so the SSC reviewed an updated tilefish in 2016, and I think it was at the fall meeting, and there's been a lot of questions about tilefish since then, and one of the issues has been that there was a decrease in the overall productivity, and there is a pretty large uncertainty buffer that comes out of the tilefish assessment.

When the council's risk tolerance is applied to the assessment, it creates a very large separation, in terms of poundage, between the OFL and the ABC. That has generated a lot of discussion, a lot of back-and-forth, between the council and the SSC over the last year, to really understand what is going on.

There is some questions about the assessment being an update and what other information maybe was out there that could be included, and the council has really been interested in getting an update of that assessment, or getting a standard approach, to look at some of the other alternatives out there, such as different selectivity patterns, in particular, to maybe get a way of reducing the uncertainty in that assessment.

Due to the other workload issues and the general lack of assessment resources, they weren't able to get an update done for this year or for next year, but one thing the Center agreed to do was to look at one of the alternative ways that have been developed for fitting the model, and this is where the different algorithms that are used to determine the overall how well the model performs come into play, and there was a new method that was developed, and it seemed like it had some promise for being a better way, and better than some of the other ways that were used, and potentially better than maybe what was used in tilefish in the original update.

In June, the council asked that the Science Center apply this new method called the Dirichlet and do it as a revision and don't change any of the data and don't add new information, but apply this what is considered potentially a better fitting method to the tilefish assessment. Well, the Science Center did that, but this is a relatively new method, and sometimes with new things you haven't worked out all the bugs or found all the situations where they work well, and this fitting algorithm didn't perform well at all with regard to tilefish.

The Science Center analysts had to really go through a lot of contortions to even get the model to behave and give them estimates and reach its reasonable conclusion, and their recommendation was that it doesn't seem like this fitting algorithm really works well for tilefish at all, and the SSC agreed with that, and so the bottom line of kind of a long, drawn-out technical story is we're back to the ABCs that we had originally estimated for tilefish and with the council still remaining interested, as you see, in 2019 of getting a standard assessment of tilefish, and there is three or four things that the council really wants to see looked at for that.

It remains a concern that there is such a large uncertainty buffer for tilefish when you compare it with a number of other species, and hopefully we'll keep working on that and get to the bottom of it. One of the challenges is, of course, the prior assessment of tilefish came in at a time where there seemed to be a good year class. That didn't pan out in the recent update, and that's one of the reasons the overall productivity went down, and so I think we're again facing the original ABCs that we had for tilefish, which are pretty -- It was a bit of a reduction from what the fishery has been experiencing recently, and obviously that's going to have social and economic impacts on this fishery and continue to keep this at the forefront of things that we need to get a better handle on.

MR. HUDSON: With regards to the reality of an update, and that was kind of a thing that was sold to us a couple or four or five years ago, as you know, and we've only got four examples so far of the update being utilized, but I, in my mind, thinking about just the technique of an update is just add the extra years of information, but, in this case, you lost the recruitment signal, and you wound up having a socioeconomic impact on the level of a million dollars.

The fishery hasn't changed. There is a lot of unfished bottom, and we've been able to show that with the newer data, but the terminal year is 2014 on that, and then that's putting us in kind of a quagmire here, because how many people will trust a behind-the-door, not-being-involved update for any of our stocks, and they come out adding a couple of years, and maybe whatever little things they did they may not should have done, and then turn around and have a million-dollar impact, and we have this 25 percent that we gave to the hook-and-line component, open access for any of those folks that want to fish in that.

We had a termination of funding for MARMAP that didn't allow for some of those years of data to be gathered, and, when you add it all together, I don't think anybody is going to be happy if we take some other more popular fish also and they come back with an update and it just shuts the door on people or hurts them, and so I would suggest that, somehow, we don't get ourselves into this thing again, because I personally don't think that the -- Not the revised version, the 2017, but the 2016 should have even been accepted.

After what did we do, deliberate for five hours on red snapper, SEDAR 41, and then we threw those scientists right into golden tile, and it's like listening to crickets after that. Their brains were like -- So I just really don't think this is right, what is happening. The socioeconomic impact is unparalleled for anything that's come out of the SEDAR so far, and so thank you.

MR. BUFF: A lot of that stuff is new to me, but I think, with what Jimmy was saying yesterday about all this knee-jerk reaction to these models and stuff, you guys need to keep in mind that this is a million dollars that you're pulling out of these fisheries, and always this knee-jerk reaction -- It might not be the best way to handle it. Basically, you're sitting here telling us that they know something is wrong, but let's just change it anyway, and so there needs to be a lot of effort put into making sure that we're getting it right and not just this knee-jerk reaction just because something went up or down.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Certainly on this one, as I mentioned, the council has been talking about this for a year, more than a year, and so it's not been a case of a knee jerk, in this case, and they are well aware of the social and economic impacts. I think that's why they have asked the SSC to look at this for three meetings now, and they asked the SSC to consider if they would modify their ABC recommendation based on the concerns of the social and economic consequences and the high uncertainty buffer that this stock exhibits, and they just have not made any progress in there.

Some of those changes are overall not a big difference in terms of the number of poundage, but the council certainly understands that when you're facing a big reduction that any bit of poundage is an important issue, and I think that's kind of one of the challenges that we face in terms of SSC perspective versus the council perspective.

The council is doing an interim rule, and I think maybe Michelle was going to talk about that, but we're looking at an interim rule and some actions to try and deal with this as we move ahead, but the council is well aware of the consequences of this and has been very frustrated, I would say, for a year now with this situation.

DR. DUVAL: This is exactly why we have gone back to the SSC three times, because of the concerns about the impacts to the communities, and we have asked for different approaches, and so I believe the interim rule to reduce overfishing was published sometime last month, I think, something like that, and so the comment period is closing soon, but that is a tool that the council has used in the past, and I would also say that -- Just to Rusty's point about the impacts of this interim rule and the reduction in the ABC that's coming out of the SSC, you know we faced this with blueline tilefish as well, and, actually, that was a much greater cut.

We went from an annual catch limit that was 600,000 pounds to 35,000 pounds, split between the commercial and recreational sectors, and so we employed a similar tool, and we also requested that an interim rule be published to reduce overfishing while we tried to address some of the

concerns that we had, and so that's one of the reasons why regulations on blueline have gone up and down over the past several years, and so we hear these concerns, but, in a lot of cases, our hands are tied in terms of what we can do to end overfishing.

MR. HUDSON: To that point, the National Standard 1 revision that had come out, we've had Shepherd Grimes there at the meetings the last couple of times, and the reality is that they're still getting their minds, at General Counsel, around all of this and how to implement it, and that would have at least spread the pain out, instead of just causing this massive impact, and so the reason I mentioned the 25 percent is because, historically, we had, since the last thirty years, 10 percent of the landings of golden tile came from the hook-and-line component, and 90 percent came from the longline.

Ben and Roy and others, they went ahead and went with the idea of let's grow back some of the bandit and the handline guys, which, when you look, we're at 96 percent, and they're going to close the bandit fishery, the handline fishery, here real shortly, because they have caught their allocation again, and that's a good sign, and some of the stuff I'm hearing is that guys are making trips, whether it's North Carolina, like what Dewey was telling me the other day, and what Ben is telling me. They can go out and they can catch their trip limit, and that's a good feeling, with the values of that fish.

I really hate seeing them taking that quarter-million-dollar impact for them and the three-quarter-million dollars on the longline guys that are predominantly right there at Port Canaveral and Ponce Inlet and just fishing that same strata of bottom, and some of that bottom is protected by the original Oculina expansion out to 600 feet, as you know, and they can't go below St. Lucie Inlet, and so you've got even more stuff down there that's protected bottom, and then we did the CRP, and that data is not even in this assessment.

I see we have our standard, but it may need to be a full benchmark for this golden tile, come 2019, and it's a shame we couldn't get it earlier, but, again, I guess we've got still a lack of analysts and a lack of funding, but we've got data. That part came out at the SSC, both between the CRP that was done and the stuff that MARMAP has now been able to -- Because you don't do that with your NOAA vessels. You only do it with the MARMAP vessels, and the hundred-hook sampling. Having lost those three years with the budget cut, that hurt too, and so, collectively, I don't think the fishery has changed. I think everybody feels pretty comfortable about the fishery, but it's the science, and, as long as that target is all over the map, it's not a good day.

MR. BUFF: I don't want anybody to think that I'm sitting here pointing fingers at nobody and being defensive about what's going on, but all I am asking is, when you look at these numbers, and you go -- I am just going to use a number. We go from a half-a-million to 250,000, and then we take that 250,000 number and cut it in half, and then we cut it in half again, and are we really that wrong?

We go from catching 500,000 pounds of fish, and I don't know what those numbers were originally, but we're going to be looking at somewhere around 75,000 next year, and that's a 50 percent reduction in what we had, and so are we really that far off? Just like the blueline, and I brought this up yesterday, and we had 350,000 or 360,000, I think it said in 2013 or 2014, and then now we're down to 80,000 or 85,000. I mean, are we really off that much?

Some of these stocks are pretty -- You can look at ten years and it's pretty close, but some of this stuff you look at and we've cut it by 75 to 90 percent, and it's really hard to make that work, and that's kind of what I was getting at a while ago, and I'm not pointing fingers at nobody, but just, when we're playing and manipulating models, we need to really know what we're doing, because how do you go back and say that -- Just like what Rusty just said. I mean, how do we know what was done ten years ago even comes close to what we're doing today with a model that we're manipulating?

That was kind of my point, and, also, too, when the council is looking at this golden tile, just keep in mind that this is a long run for these guys to catch these fish at our place, and, if we're going to cut this in half for 2018, and I don't know if the trip limits are going to be adjusted or if we're going to stay at where we're at or -- Because some of this, the golden tile, the snowy, and the blueline, that kind of makes one trip when you get past that far to go catch them, and so just kind of keep all of that in mind when you're looking at that.

MR. COX: To that point, we're stuck with this for seven years, until we get a fresh assessment. It's five to seven years that we have to live under these laws and things that could be so far off, and a lot of things change in the fishery. I don't understand how the Gulf can do an assessment on red snapper every year, but we have to wait so long to do these things.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The overall number of assessments that we're getting in the South Atlantic and in the Gulf are about the same, but they are just very much prioritizing red snapper in the Gulf, and so, with tilefish, we're hoping to get another assessment in 2019. If it stays as a standard, it would be late 2019 when it's done, and so, depending on the schedule, I would guess that would probably go to the SSC in early 2020, and maybe the council, under expedited procedures, could do something in 2020, or maybe not, and so it won't be quite five to seven years, but you're exactly right about the delay that we have for a lot of our species between taking management actions and getting assessments and getting information.

That is something to keep in mind, because there will be something coming out along those lines, something else the SSC talked about, and it's not really in here, but it's this idea -- You may hear more about it, certainly, at the December council meeting, about the idea of this key stocks concept. It's something that Erik Williams and I have been working on, and it's a way to try and get more timely, more frequent information for those stocks that drive this fishery.

You guys know how many species the council manages and how many are in the snapper grouper complex, but the truth is that a lot of those species don't drive people to go fishing. They don't affect the decisions to make trips, as you mentioned. There's a couple that you know, and there are species that are really important to the fishery, in terms of guys making trips and guys deciding whether to go fishing or not to go fishing and what really drives the regulations that affect you.

The idea of this is to focus in on maybe a dozen of those species that are really the driving factors in snapper grouper and try to get regular information on those stocks, so that we aren't sitting here like we have been with years that go between these assessments and things developing in fisheries that we're not accounting for and the inability to do these assessments more often, because, the more you do them, the more you understand what is the environmental variability versus the in-the-model variability, and we have so many species that we have only assessed once or twice, and the reality is that's usually not enough to really understand what's going on.

Our hope is, with this key stocks idea, to get a good bit of our resources just devoted to keeping up-to-speed and keeping up-to-date on a key group of species, and so we will probably be coming back to you later next year, or maybe earlier next year, maybe your spring meeting, to get some feedback on what you think are the critical stocks that we should focus on for things that we want to get say information every year or every other year, probably every other year to start with, but our long-term goal is to have an assessment update with new data and at least new projections done for these stocks every year. Then we can really start accounting for what's going on in the water. If there's a new recruitment event, we can get that folded in right away.

MR. HULL: Thank you, John. Just from a fisherman observer, a comment on the SSC is the complexities of these models, they just are ever more complex, and it takes longer to do them, and there is more involved, and they take more data, and we don't have the data, and so then we get the more uncertainty and then on and on.

It seems like, at some point, we could get more assessments done if they were less complex and we went back to tried and true assessment type applications, production model type of things or data-poor type of things, where we could do them yearly and get more of a -- We could see these signals, these important signals, that you need to see, like recruitment, because the complexities, to me, are the biggest problem that we have.

It seems like the more complex they get, the more complex they get, and it's just taking us down the wrong road. That's my view and my observation as being a fisherman. I think we need to go back to something that -- As a businessman, as a fisherman, when you manage something, you have to be able to keep your eyes on it. You have to be able to see it and judge it make decisions on things. You can't just assume all of these things are happening and make these assumptions. It has to be grounded in something simpler that you can control.

As a businessman, if I can't control something, I change it. I simplify it so that I can control it, so that I know what I'm doing, and it doesn't seem like we're heading that way. We just seem to be getting more complex, but I have heard the -- I have listened in to some of the SSC meetings recently, and there was some talk of maybe we need do a few things and go to -- I think they were going to categorize some of the stocks as which type of assessments were proper for the amount of data, which you already do anyway, but there's some talk about it, but, of course, they move very slowly, for me. They need to move a little bit quicker, and we need more assessments, simpler assessments, done more often. We would get more out of it. As far as managing it, we would get a better feel of what's going on. Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: To that, and that's an excellent point. We certainly have heard that a lot, and it has been a challenge in fisheries, for sure. One little glimmer of hope is to look at the blueline tilefish. As I mentioned, the review panel explored a lot of different models and went a bit farther than what the assessment workshop had had, and there were two productions models they were looking at, one a basic production model and one an age-structured production model, and they explored both of them, and there was some discussion that, well, this one is the more complex model and it gave you more things that you could explore and more alternatives that you could evaluate and more scenarios, and it really came down to the SSC.

They went with the more simple model in blue line tilefish, and the thought was, sure, this has all that complexity, but, at the end of the day, due to the concerns with the age data and not thinking it was reliable, they just didn't feel confident putting that in there, and so they said the simple model seems to be better, and so I think that was a little glimmer of hope at the end of this, where we do have a situation where we're like, well, yes, we have this more complex thing, and it has a lot more bells and whistles, but, you know, this simpler model really makes a lot more sense, and I think that was a good step in the right direction toward what you guys are saying, and I would like to see that in your all's report, more timely, simpler information, because that fits in very well with where we're trying to head with this key stocks complex.

The idea is to get people out of the overwhelming idea -- When you look at all the stocks we manage, it can just seem overwhelming to get information for all of them, but the truth is that there's a handful that we really need to get that kind of information on.

MR. MOSS: Thank you very much. Nice and easy.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I appreciate the discussion and feedback.

MR. MOSS: All right. We're moving on to citizen science and Amber.

MS. VON HARTEN: Good afternoon, everybody. What I am going to talk to you guys about -- You guys have heard about the Citizen Science Program, but I know we have some new faces around the table, and so I just wanted to fill you in on kind of what's been going on with the council's efforts to develop a citizen science program.

All of this started back in 2016, when we held a workshop that brought close to sixty folks together, fishermen and scientists and researchers and Sea Grant folks and managers, state and federal, from across the region to talk about what a program might look like, and, since that time, we used the blueprint that came out of that, which was kind of like a framework for what a program might look like and all the different components that would be needed for a program.

We have been using that information to kind of develop the program, and, in January of this year, we really kicked it off when the council decided to go ahead and support a staff position to carry out some of the details of developing the program, and that's where I have kind of been stepping in, in that role, as the Program Manager, since January.

What have we been working on for the last eleven months? Several of you around the table have been helping with these efforts and serving on our advisory panel and action teams, and so I want to talk to you a little bit about that today. We have been working on establishing the advisory panel, developing partnerships, and also seeking some support for funding for a project, and so, like I said, we used this framework that we developed based on the workshop to kind of give us a better idea of what we needed to develop the program, and these five topical areas you see here on the screen of volunteers, projects and topics management, data management, finance and infrastructure, and communication, outreach, and education, were kind of the different program components that we needed to develop the program.

Obviously, we need help with that, and we needed expertise from those folks around the region that could contribute ideas about how the council's program might be able to do that, and so the

council decided to create a Citizen Science Advisory Panel Pool. As most of you all are familiar with the SEDAR Pool, that's exactly how this Citizen Science Advisory Panel Pool operates.

It's a pool of individuals that can then be appointed to serve on these different action teams, which is where the actual work is happening to develop recommendations for how the council will carry out the program, and so action team members are coming from the pool. Anybody can apply to the advisory panel pool. Then, as needed, we appoint members to the action teams in those five different areas that I listed earlier, and their role and their charge is to develop recommendations for how to develop the program's operating policies for carrying out projects.

Just quickly, I will walk through the different action teams, and, for those of you guys that are serving on the action teams, feel free to speak up and talk about anything you guys want to on what we've been working on. Obviously, we need to know how to work with volunteers, and so citizen scientists that are fishermen on different citizen science projects, and so everything from how to recruit volunteers, how to train them, what kind of motivates them to participate in projects, what kind of role they can play in helping the program identify citizen science research needs, and getting a better understanding of what their expectations are to participate in a project, and that's the list of A-Team members there.

For data management, we need to know how to manage citizen science data that comes into the program through different projects and how to create data standards and policies for those data coming in, and so everything to do with the data life cycle, and also developing policies on how that data can be accessed, how it can be used, any tools to collect that data that's coming in, platforms for the data, and any data standards that need to be developed for using that data, and so that is our team there.

Our Projects and Topics Management Team is working to try to figure out a way for the program to identify citizen science research needs, develop projects, solicit projects, and then, of course, manage those projects under the program, because the ultimate goal of the program is for the data that's coming in under projects of the program can actually be used in science and management, and so used in assessments, used by the council to make management decisions, and so this group has been working on trying to figure out a process for collecting input from folks like you guys, our SSC, as well as other members of the public on what is a priority for the program and what kinds of citizen science projects should the program consider or support under the program.

A lot of this is overlapping, we're learning, with some of the other action teams' work, like the volunteers' work, and so needing to know some more information about volunteers, in order to understand better what types of projects might actually be feasible based on what fishermen in the region are willing to do.

The Finance and Infrastructure A-Team is trying to figure out ways to support the program and projects, and so looking at different types of funding models, partnerships that can be developed to support the ability for the program to accept funding and/or donations, both in the short term and long term. This is our smallest A-Team. If you guys have any ideas of folks that might be interested in working on this A-Team, we would love to hear it, anybody that has like non-profit experience or working with foundations. That is the kind of folks that we need to add to this A-Team.

Then our last one is Communication, Outreach, and Education, and, of course, they are developing recommendations for all facets of how we communicate, not just about projects, but also about the program and how to promote the program as well, and so looking at things like a training plan, how to train volunteers, a feedback recognition plan, so that we're making sure that we're evaluating the program, as well as projects throughout the entire process, and then what kinds of approaches and tools are appropriate for communicating to folks about the program and projects.

How this has been working is the action teams have been meeting monthly via webinar since August. We had some initial webinars to kick it off in August, and then every month, except for late September -- A couple of the A-Teams had to be cancelled because of the hurricane, and these groups are using what we have called terms of reference, and so it's essentially just a list of tasks that the council felt like they should address when trying to develop recommendations for each of these different components of the program.

The teams have been really making a lot of progress on these tasks and working via webinar and also in between meetings to kind of hash out all that information that they need to be able to make recommendations about specific things for the program, and so we'll have a couple more meetings. We had our November meetings last week, and then we'll have our December meetings the week after the council meeting. Then, in January, we're going to have an all-hands action team meeting, and so all of the action teams will meet via webinar, and that's about forty or fifty people, and each of these action teams, I didn't mention, are led by co-chairs, who are helping kind of run the meetings and working in between meetings to make sure everybody is staying on task and getting done what needs to be done.

In January, they will have this all-hands meeting and share what they've been working on and kind of some of their draft recommendations that I will present to the council in March of 2018, and the Citizen Science Committee will review those recommendations and discuss and modify and hopefully adopt what our team members have told us of how we should design the program.

Some A-Teams will probably work further into 2018, but some are pretty close to accomplishing most of the items in their task list, and so it will just be variable based on the work that the A-Teams are accomplishing, and so stay tuned. Like I said, we will have some more webinars, and all of these are open. If anybody has an interest in learning what's been going on with the action teams and what they've been working on, you can log in, and we also have our citizen science website that has all the summaries of every meeting we've had and some of the materials that they've been working on and drafting up.

Then, also, most excitingly, we hope that, in early 2018, we're going to have our first pilot project up and running. You guys have heard about this before, but it's going to be hopefully a discard project, looking at scamp grouper, which would be developing a mobile app, a very simple, streamlined mobile app, that would be collecting some minimal data points for the first project, and hopefully it could be used in the upcoming stock assessment.

That's kind of what the team is also starting to kind of hone in on, is looking at this potential pilot project and thinking about all the different components that are going to need to be carried out to make this project successful, and so how do we recruit volunteers, what kind of team is needed to be pulled together to ensure that the data that's collected in this project can actually be used, how to communicate results to volunteers.

All the different facets of this pilot project are going to be kind of hashed out via these action teams, and so that's exciting, because we can take some of the recommendations that the action teams are making and actually apply it to our first pilot project, which hopefully will mean it's even more successful. With that, I conclude, and, if anybody has any questions, I will take them.

MR. COX: I am always curious about budget. How much money is available and what kind of projects and how many can be funded a year?

MS. VON HARTEN: We don't have any money for projects. That's the thing. We are building a program to support projects, and, as you know, and I will just reiterate this again, but the council cannot apply for grant monies, the way that we're set up under NOAA. We are not eligible to apply for those kinds of things, and so that's why the Finance and Infrastructure Team has been trying to come up with some ideas for how we can maybe develop some partnerships with folks that can accept money, that can accept donations of equipment or whatever, because, believe me, when we first started this, we had lots of folks that were coming out of the woodwork saying, oh, I want to give you descending devices, or I want to give you this, and we just don't have the mechanism in place right now to be able to do that, and so, right now, the council has decided to support a position, and we're hoping that that will continue for as long as it's viable, but, as far as projects, we're going to really have to use our partnership opportunities to make that happen.

MR. BONURA: I've got to go catch a plane, but I just want to thank everybody, and I look forward to this process, and I look forward to the next meeting, and it was nice meeting everyone.

MR. HULL: On the first proposed project, the discard reporting for scamp grouper, is there funding for that, or is it just the position that is set up to do it and we're looking for funding?

MS. VON HARTEN: We do have some partners that have come to the table that we're going to be working with to make that happen, and hopefully I will have more details about that in the next month or so and can tell you more.

MR. HUDSON: On that subject, scamp, and I take it that maybe whatever data comes from that will be going to that research track joint scamp grouper effort?

MS. VON HARTEN: Yes. John is nodding at me emphatically yes, and we have been talking with the Science Center about a way to design this project and a way that it can be used, at least the information that is a gap right now that can be used, yes.

MR. HUDSON: This January, it will be two years since we had the one and only physical meeting, and do you ever envision more physical meetings down the road?

MS. VON HARTEN: I mean, I would love to be able to pull the action teams together to have a big planning session, but we'll have to just see. We'll have to see.

MR. MANIGAULT: Throughout the marine fisheries, we've got laws in place, circle hooks and a bunch of other stuff. It's mandatory, if you own a boat, you've got to register it, and you've got to have life-preservers for everybody onboard and all that type of stuff, and I was wondering, and I am just reaching out, brainstorming, I guess, but can we make it possible to have something

written in law that anybody that fishes outside state waters that they must have a descending device? Is that possible, because I know, for the charter captains, the majority of us have them, but I am talking about for the recreational side of folks.

MS. VON HARTEN: I am going to let Chip answer that one. He is coming to the table.

DR. COLLIER: That is a consideration in Amendment 46, where they are definitely going to be considering that. They will be considering venting as well as descending devices.

MR. ATACK: What other kinds of pilot projects do you think are in the woodwork that might come forward besides this one?

MS. VON HARTEN: At the workshop, we had a whole session on project ideas, and so we actually have a handful of different types of projects that seem feasible, and that's the thing, is there is so many different types of citizen science projects that we could approach. I mean, there is even projects that would utilize crowdsourcing, where like you had images that you could maybe get volunteers to review for specific species ID or lengths or things like that, and so there's that kind of project. Obviously mobile apps are very popular in citizen science projects throughout all the disciplines, and also things like getting socioeconomic data and having a better understanding of fishing infrastructure in the region could be another type of project. That was an idea that came out of the workshop.

We are not going to be lacking ideas for citizen science projects. We hear about them a lot from fishermen. On a monthly basis, we get folks inquiring, but that's one of the things that one of the action teams is working on, is trying to develop a list of real citizen-science-related research needs that can be very specific for our program, so that it can help kind of shape the direction that we go in.

Right now, the council has a research and monitoring plan that outlines research needs that are based on recommendations from you guys and the SSC, and they also come from the SEDAR recommendations, but, for the first time ever this spring was when the council kind of looked at that research and monitoring plan and kind of flagged some ideas that they thought could be addressed through citizen science.

We think that one of the processes that we want to establish with the program is a way to get ideas from beyond the established processes that we have in place and make it a more formal kind of citizen science research needs document that can help guide the different types of projects that we could support. Does that make sense?

DR. KELLISON: Amber, if there are researchers in the Southeast, someone that was interested in developing a project that sort of was citizen science, which could be within NMFS or on the academic side, is there an impetus for them to come work through the council process to do that? One of the challenges is the funding aspect that you mentioned, but, of course, like people in academia can write their own proposals and get their funding, but is there like a carrot for people that might want to pursue like a citizen science-type project to come coordinate with the council to do that? If so, this might be part of the process that you're developing, but is there a way to sort of communicate that more broadly, so people are aware that that would be advantageous?

MS. VON HARTEN: That's a great question, and, yes, we would like for folks to come to us. I think one of the things that the Volunteers Action Team is working on is trying to -- We need to know the capacity and interest from our potential volunteers in the region, and so we're hoping that we're going to develop some kind of -- We haven't figured out what we're going to call it yet, but a volunteer interest forum that could be like somebody's first point of contact with the program to -- For us to get a better understanding of who they are, where they are located, what kind of skills and resources they may have to bring to the table, what they're willing to collect in a fisheries science type of project, and what they might be interested in learning, in terms of skills, so they could contribute to a citizen science project.

Part of that forum would also be questions geared towards scientists and researchers, so we can see maybe who has an interest in doing a project, so that maybe, down the road, the program could be maybe almost like a matchmaking service, like eFish, and being able to build project teams that can work together on specific projects and match up people's interests with each other, and so that's one role the program hopes to be able to fill, I think. We will see, but it's definitely something that several of the teams are kind of working on, and hopefully the program can be a resource for researchers or scientists that may need that connection with fishermen that they don't maybe currently have.

I have one more thing. One of the things that I would like for you all to think about that would be really helpful to us, as I mentioned, this volunteer interest form, and we're trying to get a better understanding of -- We have three questions that we want to put on this form that are tailored towards what fishermen are interested in and what types of things they are willing to do.

Those of you all that have participated in cooperative research projects or other types of citizen science types of projects, I would love to hear like what you have done, so that we can help populate some answers to those questions, so that, when people are filling out this form, they kind of can check off a list of things that they're interested in, things that they might be willing to collect, or things they might be willing to learn. Do they have an interest in learning how to collect otoliths? Do they want to do data entry or QA/QC? There is lots of different ways that a person can get involved in a project, whether it's actually out on the water or shore-side or even sitting behind a computer. We want to be able to reach all those different interests of different people.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Todd mentioned what is the carrot to get involved in this, and our thought is -- The reason we're putting so much effort into the infrastructure and the A-Teams and building this process is we want to make sure that the data that gets collected under this program is used in the council system and in the stock assessments, and so there's been a lot of discussion about the fact that what we're hoping to do and what we're hoping to get out of this has a much higher burden of proof and expectation of quality than a lot of citizen science programs that might just get started where people say just write down what you see in your backyard and they don't have any kind of regulatory framework end use in mind, but we know we're a regulatory entity.

We have regulatory use in mind, and so we would hope that one of our carrots is that, if you get associated with this and you follow the process and procedures laid out through this program, that it's going to increase the chances that the data that you do collect and the results of your project are actually used in stock assessments and in the management program and everything else. I think that's probably one of our biggest carrots that we could offer to a researcher when we get this thing functioning.

DR. KELLISON: Thanks, John, and so a follow-up. I am thinking -- Like let's say that I was interested in -- We talked a lot about -- Rusty has mentioned MRIP and the wheels coming off, I think several times, but let's say that I was interested in developing a way -- I am not, but developing a way to get a better handle on the number of uncommon species that are coming into MRIP that can -- Those are the ones that the scale-ups can be problematic, and I know how it works, and I have a really good idea about people that live near marinas or something that might be able to go out there, and so I think I have a good idea about how to do a test project to test out a way to get a better handle on the frequency of some of those rare species being landed recreationally.

In that case, I kind of know what the data needs are, and so what would be my pull to come and coordinate with the council process at that point, if I know that I can write a MARFIN proposal and get some funding for it? I think, ultimately, I would be doing that, in this hypothetical scenario, because we all want the same thing, like better management, and so I would probably want to, in that case, come and want to coordinate with you, I suppose. I am wondering if somebody feels like they already have what they need, is there a -- What is their draw to come and make sure that they're working within your process, and I don't really need an answer to that, but it might be just something to think about.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We think it's the resources. If someone wanted to do something like that, we have the connections and the relationships with people at MRIP. We could figure out what you would actually need if you were going to get a good estimate of rock hind, and what kind of sample sizes over what type of area and how many people would you need, and then I think we have that, and we also have the advisory panels and the council's relationships along the coast to say, well, we can help you get in touch with people from everywhere to be able to get that kind of information.

DR. KELLISON: So then, just following that, maybe a good way to let people to know about that would be to work with -- Like when, for example, the MARFIN and the CRP RFPs come out, like prior to that, put some information there that says, if you are interested in developing a project that involves citizen science, please coordinate with Amber or -- It might just help to make sure that, at a regional scale, we're kind of all working together on this. That's kind of my concern, or my question, is how do we make sure that -- Other people might be thinking about doing these things, and how do we make sure that they take full advantage of all the effort that's getting put into it, from a council perspective.

MR. ATACK: That kind of brings up a point when we were doing the hogfish. There were no intercepts off of South Carolina or North Carolina recreationally, and so we had trouble coming up with an ACL for the recreational sector. That's a rare species, and MRIP had no intercepts, and so how -- Down the road, I think you want that information, so that, when you do another thing down the road and look at ACLs and how much is commercial versus recreational -- If you have no landings, then how do you establish, with the ORCS, what kind of ACL you have?

The other thing is for like spiny lobster in North Carolina. I mean, there are no intercepts, and there is no landings, but we know there are landings, but we don't know how much there are, and so is there -- I guess citizen science could somehow do something like that to then feed into MRIP, so that you would then, later on, have some landings, so that you could -- If you could somehow

quantify what was going on, those groups wouldn't be cut out of the fishery later on. Is that like a good example?

MR. HULL: This is exciting stuff, and I can actually see a scenario, maybe, where like you could take a community, a coastal community, and there is a need for data for a certain species where this community depends on that stock, and the community's carrot is to get better data, which would show what they are seeing on the water, which may lead to more access to the stock, and they may come up with the funding to hire academia to help them develop the sampling program that they would volunteer to do.

If it fit into the criteria that's being set up, I could see that scenario in my mind, where the carrots are there for everybody, the fishing community, which it would take their funding together to fund the academia people to come in and help set up the sampling, and then they would do the sampling, and then it would go into the current system. I can see that possibly happening.

MR. LORENZ: I will just comment on what Jim said. Jim, I had that exact thing in mind, and I'm on the Volunteers Committee, and we very rapidly -- Someone like me got between what the volunteers do, and so I'm looking upon that as more of a skill-based group, not unlike -- I said, Amber, when you're in that area, you're going to be a lot like an HR department. You've got to accumulate people that can do things.

I thought of the hogfish project. We didn't have any data, and there would be a need to gain it. If we wanted to, how are those fish caught in North Carolina, where are they, and what size, and that would be a project that a project team might initiate or would come through from SAFMC, and then the second side would be, okay, who would participate in that project? It depends on how scientific you want to get it, but, as you and I know, when we were in the discussion of no landings intercepted for hogfish, we did in fact meet two gentlemen in our area who were out there doing all kinds of things on their own with videotaping underwater and doing experimentation on how they caught hogfish and thought they were pretty good.

They would be in the file, so to speak, not unlike a temporary help agency, where we might have known there were people that do this. They have a boat, and they video record what it is, and there are fishermen that will go out in fairly rough weather and do things, and so we would have that pool of people to be able to match with a project, and so that was thought, and I think, if you look at the five buckets, it can connect together pretty nice, with time, for this group specifically.

MR. MOSS: Thank you very much, Amber. We appreciate it. Moving on to some of the reporting things that are going on and Kathleen.

MS. VON HARTEN: Before Kathleen gets up here, I just want to introduce her. As you all probably recall, the council did get some internal funding to develop an outreach program in preparation for the potential electronic reporting requirements in the for-hire sector, and so Kathleen has come onboard with us since June to develop this outreach program, and she's going to tell you kind of what we've been doing and our approach, and then I think also even show some of the eTRIPS/mobile application, just so you can kind of see what that looks like, and I will let her take it from there. I also want to mention that Kathleen also works part-time for DNR in the MARMAP program, and so she does double duty, state and federal.

MS. HOWINGTON: You get a little bit of whiplash going back and forth, but that's fine. If you will give me one second, I am connecting my iPad, to make certain that you guys can actually see everything in real time. Like Amber said, my name is Kathleen Howington, and I am the Outreach Specialist specifically for an amendment that is focusing on for-hire electronic reporting outreach. Today, I just kind of want to go over the amendment and give a little overview and then go over the outreach project as well as the project activities and any future steps that we're hoping to be able to take.

Electronic reporting is whenever a fisherman actually self-reports their own fishing efforts via electronic devices, tablets, computers, or phones, and the reason why the council has actually created this amendment and has submitted it to NMFS is because of some concerns that we have with MRIP that we've been over today, and it's kind of been a recurring theme.

Some of the concern that we have is that MRIP only interviews about 10 percent of fishermen, and that's if the assignment actually ends up in an interview, for for-hire fishermen, and it has about a two-month wave period in between when the interviews can occur and then when the data is actually available, as well as there is some legibility issues, and there is some recall bias issues that we're concerned with.

One of the things that we're hoping will fix this is electronic reporting. Electronic reporting increases the accuracy of the data by removing the estimates. Instead of having an estimate-based management system, we will be moving to a census-based management system, as well as it allows us to have near real-time data. Instead of having that two-month wave period, we'll actually be able to get data the next day or the next week.

There are no legibility issues, because it's all electronic, and our recall bias is going to decrease, due to the quick reporting time. All of this then makes us a little bit more confident in the data that we're getting, which then can make us more confident in our management decisions based on that data.

The amendment itself outlines all charter vessel operators with a federal for-hire permit in the snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, and coastal migratory pelagic fisheries will need to report fishing data via a NMFS-certified tool on a weekly basis. Now, this amendment has not been implemented yet by NMFS. It has gone through the council process, and it's been submitted to them, but it's still under review, and then the proposed rule is going to be coming around probably in 2018, and we're anticipating its implementation in 2018.

Everything I am doing is pre-implementation, and it's all voluntary for charter fishermen to take part in. This is just a list of some of the data that we're going to be asking for, and I know it looks like a lot, but it's actually relatively simple. It's captain ID and vessel ID and then the start and end date, time, and location of the trip as well as the hours within the trip fished, to be able to help with our catch per unit effort. We're asking number of crew and anglers, your average depth, your average location, what species did you catch, did you keep it, did you release it, and then as well as the charter fee, fuel used, and cost to fuel.

We are also asking that charter fishermen actually submit a did-not-fish day, and so, like I said, we're asking this on a weekly basis, and so, if a fisherman doesn't fish for an entire week, we're asking that they turn in a did-not-fish report. However, if they turn in a report on Monday and

then they didn't fish the rest of the week, they're in compliance with our requirements, because it's on a weekly basis.

My outreach project has mostly been focusing on partnering with ACCSP, with the states, and with Harbor Lights Software to help develop a tablet-based reporting system as well as then developing a website that involves video training modules, manuals, any kind of information that a charter fisherman would need, as well as then actually going out and doing in-person sessions pre-implementation in each state and doing pre-implementation webinars.

We're also helping develop a compliance app for law enforcement officers. This is still in the works, but, once that actually goes live, I will be going around and doing quarterly webinar trainings for law enforcement officers as well.

Year two objectives, we're going to keep doing this outreach, but we're also going to be developing a 24/7 help desk for charter captains to be able to use these online reporting tools, and we're going to be developing a forum for fishermen to be able to go on and discuss charter fishing, discuss regulations, and electronic reporting. Let's take a look at this mobile app. Like I said, this is all in conjunction with ACCSP and Harbor Lights, and, as of October 23, we had 360 trips logged in our pilot project.

As you can see right here, this is the tablet that I am actually working on, and this the eTRIPS/mobile app, the two fish. If you click on that, you can actually get brought to your home page. This is what it looks like. Now, last night, I actually used this tablet to be able to do a webinar, and I discussed with the fishermen how to go through a trip, and I will do the same thing with you guys. If this goes too long, just tell me.

For fishermen, the first thing that they would do is they would go in and they would set up their favorites. That is going to make the ease of reporting just so much quicker, because they can go in and say these are the favorite species I have. Now, of course, I went in and just clicked the top five, but they can also search for bass and then you get rock sea bass and black sea bass. You can click on the favorite, and then, when they're reporting, that's going to be up at the top. They can also go to their target species, their favorite gear, favorite ports, and so they can go through and actually make it so that, when they are putting in a trip, it's not these big, long, thousands of species. It's the ten that they really like.

Let's just do a quick trip. I'm a for-hire, and I'm the SAFMC Outreach, and that's my vessel, and then it's automatically going to be associated with my permit. Right now, we're actually working with the ACCSP to create accounts. That way, your account is associated with your permit, and it's associated with your name, and so that way, like I said, we're asking for vessel ID and captain ID, and it's automatically put in there, and it's quick.

Remember how I said that last night that I put in a trip? Once you put in a trip, it automatically fills in a lot of the information, and so I picked Maryland as a port, just on a random, but it also filled out my crew count of two and my angler count of six, and then it will also automatically fill out say gallons used, the fuel price, and so, once a fisherman actually goes in and puts in a trip, then it makes it so much easier to be able to just go in and have everything filled out.

The other cool thing about this that they can actually take notes, and so charter fishermen can use these reporting tools as a record log of all of their business trips, and so these notes are just for them personally. This never comes to me, and it would never go to the ACCSP, and so, for example, if they don't like somebody and they want to make a note of who they have, they can, and they can also give the trip a name. For example, the guy's name was Roger. Well, now, a fisherman can go back and say that Roger is a bad tipper, and I don't think I'm going to take him again.

The next step is, of course, putting in gear type, gear quantity, and it's the same idea as your target species. You can also, if you see the little map icon right there, and I'm hoping it works, and so you can actually then zoom in on this and say I'm from Myrtle Beach, and I just went out for a quick trip. Ta da. That's my average location fished.

Go ahead and just imagine that there is a little red dot where I put my finger, and the people next to me can see it, and so it is on the tablet, but you can go in and say this is my average location fished and zoom in and press your finger down, and it automatically saves your location in degrees and minutes. This is also another place where you can put in notes. For example, if you're over a reef that is horrible fishing, or if you're over a reef that's really good for one specific fish, you can actually say, okay, at this latitude and longitude, this is what you're going to be able to catch. You're going to be able to use this really well for keeping records, which is great.

You can also auto-track a trip with this eTRIPS software. Now, I recognize that a lot of charter fishermen are not going to like that, of turning on a GPS and just letting it track you everywhere you go, and so you can choose to do that, but you can also choose to say no-thank-you, which I get the feeling most fishermen will. When you say that, you just say do not track the trip, and you put in your own start date and your own start time, and you can put in your hours fished.

Remember how I said if you go in through the favorites that it's going to make it a lot easier, well, right here is our favorite species, and so I went through and I just picked a random assortment. Let's do greater amberjack. That sounds good. You click on that, and it instantly says, okay, greater amberjack, and we caught two. The average length was about thirty inches, and we kept them for food. Then you look on the right and you can see general food, or you could say that I discarded due to regulations because of a closed season, or discarded due to regulations because the quota was filled.

You can go through and automatically fill out what you did with those fish, and you save, and then it goes to be a part of your trip. Once you are finished with your trip, you then click reports, right up at the top right-hand corner, and then you click to upload the trip and then you agree. Now, if you look right here, you can also see your trip data. This is your summary of your trip and all the data that you just put in. You hit to submit, and that will automatically go to the data storage unit that the working group chooses.

It's really easy, and it's quick. Once you get through that first stage of picking all your favorites and figuring it out and it automatically fills that first trip, fishermen will be able to go in, and they will be able to electronically report really easily and, like I said, if you click on the home, every single trip that I have kept, with its name, with its time, and with the permit it is associated with, is at the home page. If I ever feel like needing to go back to the trip that I did yesterday, I can then go and look at all of my notes and look at all of the information I put in there.

That has been the first big project, is working on that and making certain that it meets all of our requirements, and the second thing was working on the training toolkit, and so we have been going around and talking with captains that have been a part of this pilot, and we have actually been -- I have been trying to collect video testimonials from fishermen. These are going to be coming soon to the project webpage, as well as we have online video training modules for eTRIPS, user manuals, and other resources on our webpage, as well as we have developed a laminated tally sheet.

Now, this is actually a notecard that we're giving out to fishermen when they come to our in-person trainings. The notecard has just a basic table with all the data that's necessary on the front and back, and it's laminated, and so it will be waterproof. If fishermen don't want to take a tablet out, or they don't have internet out on the water, they can actually just take a dry-erase marker and take all their notes down, and, when they come home, they can put all the information in, and then they know that what they're putting in is accurate.

I believe my next step is to look at the website, since that's where everything is, and I apologize for forgetting that I had to have this pulled up ahead of time. That was my fault. To get to this website, to have all of the information that I am going over today, as well as any updated information on the NMFS approval process or any more electronic reporting tools, you go to the safmc.net and click on the site menu. Then click on the Electronic Reporting Projects tab. Now, this is going to be the for-hire electronic reporting, and that's what I am discussing, but also our private recreational reporting project that we're working on.

Click on the for-hire, and, as you can see here, we have our entire overview and frequently asked questions and resources and training materials, and so this is our manual, and these are our helpful videos, as well as our webinar schedule and our training session schedule.

As for the training sessions, so far, I have actually completed four webinars. Since I made this presentation, I completed one on October 25, as well as one last night, and each webinar has been a little bit different. I have had one where I had only government representatives tuned in, where it was just different state representatives or people that were on the council, and I have had one where it was only fishermen, and then, like last night, I had one that was solely one fisherman, and I actually got to chat with him about specific questions he had, and so each webinar is a little bit different.

We have also done some in-person trainings in South Carolina. We did it in Charleston and in Beaufort, and we had nine participants total. Specifically, we did Murrells Inlet, and we had eight. Then in Charleston, we had zero, and then, at our third training, we had one. That was a little bit of a disappointment. One of the lessons learned is that outreach is very important of getting the information out that these trainings actually happen. I am doing the Georgia training next week, and I actually called each charter fisherman personally to try and make certain that they knew that this was happening.

When I am coming around to each state, I am going to be talking to the state representatives, trying to get the word out there, and I have developed a few flyers that we're going to be sending out to different marinas and hopefully get those hung, trying to increase that number from eight, zero, and one to a little bit more.

Next week, like I said, we're doing Georgia, and then we'll be doing North Carolina and Florida probably in January and February. We're currently in discussions with state representatives of what dates would be good for them and when they think would be the best, as well as what locations they think would be the best.

Once we're done going through Florida, we'll then be circling back to every single state, and this is going to be continuing through 2019, and so it will be pre-implementation, and then, hopefully, once the amendment passes through the NMFS approval process in 2018, it will also be post-implementation.

The in-person trainings are going to be involving technical assistance as well as account assistance to set up eTRIPS and SAFIS as well as going over the amendment, the updates on the amendment approval, going over some reporting tools, and then, each time we go to each state, there will be a state representative there to discuss the differences for each state. For example, in South Carolina, we had Amy Dukes there, and she was actually able to talk about a reporting tool that South Carolinian fisherman can use that is specifically for them, and it's called Vessel, and so she was able to go and actually get some hands-on training with her charter fishermen as well, and so that was absolutely wonderful.

We are also bringing a bunch of tablets, to be able to allow fishermen to have hands-on training and kind of play around with these tools and see which ones they like the best. Webinars are basically the same thing, but, instead of anything hands-on or technical assistance, since I can't see their computers, it's just questions and answers.

In the future, we're going to keep doing these webinars and keep doing outreach via the webpage and via Facebook. If you have any suggestions of how to do outreach for charter captains in each state, I would absolutely love to hear any advice you can give me, as well as we are going to be developing that 24/7 help desk and the forum discussion once the amendment is implemented, and I want to emphasize that it has not been implemented yet and this is all voluntary, and so, if you are a charter fisherman and want to come and see and be a part of these trainings, I would absolutely love to see you there, and I would love to discuss with you what you think about electronic reporting and what you think about these tools. If you want to contact me, please shoot me an email or give me a phone call. I get phone calls from fishermen all the time.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Kathleen. I had a couple of questions. When I was in the for-hire charter business, we would schedule trips, but you don't get to make all of your trips, and so I didn't know if that little fact could somehow be in something like that, because, in a year's time or a couple years' time, you get an idea of what maybe the weather did to people, or maybe they had an engine break down or something like that, or the people didn't show and stood them up, et cetera.

Then the other thing that I was wondering about is you had a grid size -- Of course, the references you used showed degrees and minutes, but then I saw others with seconds, and some of these fishermen are real leery about their honey-holes and stuff like that and it going upstairs somewhere and becoming somebody else's honey-hole, and so that's a privacy issue at some point.

Right now, it sort of looks like some of this information is going to be voluntary, because you had do not track with a GPS and stuff like that, but I could envision where the government says to mandate it, and then you have to leave the tracking on full-time. You did have a thing where you had the allocation closed, and then you had the quota filled, and did you mean trip limit filled? Okay. You used the word “quota”, and so that kind of messed me up there, and so that was just a couple of little things. Thank you.

MS. HOWINGTON: To go over -- If they are able to go out on a trip, if a fisherman had a trip scheduled and then didn't go out, he doesn't need to report that he had a trip scheduled. If he doesn't go out, then that's a did-not-fish day, and, as long as -- Remember how I said it's a weekly report, and so say on Monday he has it scheduled and he goes out and he's finished for that day and he submits his report. If he doesn't fish the rest of the week, because of bad weather or the motor died or something happened, he doesn't need to submit another report for that week. He is already in compliance for the week, and so it wouldn't be an issue of scheduling at all. If they want to put in their trips ahead of time and then it gets deleted, then they can just go into the app and just delete it, and it would never be submitted to us.

MR. HUDSON: In some of our stuff, we have to put in a report that we had no activity, and it just depends on the particular government entity you're dealing with.

MR. MOSS: I think also, and Rusty kind of hit on it, and I don't know if this is what he meant, but when he said that you could differentiate why you didn't go out on a given trip, it could help some of the data collection. For instance, we haven't been offshore much for the last month, down in south Florida, and so it could differentiate why there hasn't been much of a catch of a particular species for a period of time or something like that, if the weather is dictating you not being able to go out.

MR. JOHNSON: That was going to be one of my questions too, if you wanted to try to get the weather information, because, on any given year, I cancel fifty or sixty days. I am getting ready to cancel both boats for three days, Friday and Saturday and Sunday, of this weekend, and so I didn't know if that was something that you all thought might be useful information.

The other question I had also was on hours fished. Was it total hours or actually hours fished? Is there a way to parse out how long you ran versus -- When they call and do the phone surveys, they ask that question. They want to know how much time was actually spent fishing, and so is that in there?

MS. HOWINGTON: Going back to your hours fished, I am going to, just real quick, go back here, and it should be showing up eventually, but the truth is that, yes, one of the ways that we're differentiating is that you say start time of trip and end time of trip, and then hours fished is actually a separate box, and that hours fished is going to be when you're putting the lines down and when you're pulling them up and so, if you drive two hours to a reef and put down your lines for four hours and then drive two hours back, that four hours is your hours fished.

That way, we're not taking an eight-hour trip and then you're only showing a few fish caught. That's going to mess with your catch per unit effort analysis, and we would rather know when the lines are down and be able to say, okay, for four hours of effort, this is what you caught. That's going to be able to help us out.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't have to see it. I just wanted to know the answer. Thank you.

MS. HOWINGTON: Yes, sir.

MR. ATACK: A couple of questions. Do you have gear types, or are they customizable, or are they all drill-downs, and can you have more than one gear type on a trip?

MS. HOWINGTON: You can have more than one gear type. You just have to put in multiple efforts. So, for example, if you're trolling out and then you decide to do hook-and-line, you can put in a troll and then this is what I caught and then hook-and-line and this is what I caught. You just have to go and put two efforts for that trip, and that is completely available to you.

However, that is not a requirement for reporting. We are asking for the gear that you are using the most and for your average location, and so, going back to the concern about the honey-holes, you don't have to show us everywhere you're going. Now, I would love you to. I would absolutely love it, and I will promise you that we will not try to steal your honey-holes from you. This is all going to be confidential. However, you can do it, or you can just give us the average location as well as the average gear.

MR. ATACK: All right, and the other question is, is spearfishing one of the gear types, and, also, is species customizable, or will you have every species on that list?

MS. HOWINGTON: Species is customizable as well in your favorites as well as your gear, and spear should be in the gear. Bow-and-arrow is a gear that you can use, and so there is multiple gears, and, when you're going in and setting up your favorites, you can say that I spearfish all the time and favorite it, or I handline all the time and favorite it. Then, as you're putting in your trip, that will be on the top. When you click on gear, you will have three instead of a hundred to pick from.

MR. ATACK: Right, and so will you have like spiny lobster and slipper lobster and stuff like that in there?

MS. HOWINGTON: Yes, I believe that lobster is in there.

MR. ATACK: Can you use an iPhone when you do this, or do you have to have a tablet?

MS. HOWINGTON: You have to have a tablet for now. We are working on moving it into a mobile-based application. We started with a tablet because this is based on another eTRIPS program that is currently being used in Rhode Island, and so we're starting with that, and then we're actually going to be looking for funding to move it to be mobile-based.

MR. HULL: Nice work, and it's well-thought-out. I would think it would be important, where you're reporting your number of animals caught and your measurement, and you had an estimate, but it would be important if they actually did a measurement, an actual measurement, and I think it would be important that they could note that, to say this was an actual measurement of this animal, so that they could use it for some data purposes there for length/age type of things.

MS. HOWINGTON: The app does give you the ability to do that. If you want to go in and say, for greater amberjack, I caught one, and it was exactly this length, and then you go back and you say greater amberjack, I caught another one, and it's exactly this length, and you can do that. However, because I know that we are going into states that have never reported and we're asking our federally-permitted charter guys to all of a sudden report all of this data, we're asking for average length. If they can give it to us, we would love to have that data, but I believe that the reason why the council didn't specifically go in and say we want to know every single fish you caught and every single gear you used and every single location, it's to not all of a sudden overwhelm these charter fishermen and make them really not want to report to us.

MR. ATTACK: We may have an aggregate bag limit of twenty fish per person, and so we could do like 120 measurements, right, on a trip.

MR. HUDSON: You had target species there, and, again, we had a good, long discussion today about we're going bottom fishing, and so we've got a variety of bottom fish, and trying to cull out that information is important. I mean, I'm not going to sit there and want to measure flannemouth grunts and tomtates, but if I've got chicken snappers and a couple of groupers and an amberjack and stuff, to me, that's all the bottom fish.

Then it was brought up about troll out and bottom fish and troll in, but then there's different circumstances that affect your choices. I mean, you could plan on going bottom fishing and you've got cold water, and then you're spending the whole day either trying to run further offshore or trying to save the trip or just wind up trolling, because maybe some of the animals are staying up warmer up near the surface, versus being at the bottom, and so there's a lot of things where you get down the road, once people are familiar with these tablets, a couple of two or three or four years from now, but this is trying to parse out information that I believe we're ultimately going to try to use in assessments, and using average sizes that might have variance, versus trying to get some accurate measurements, you should have a way that the person says, yes, I did a fork-length measurement and it was accurate and it's not just a guess. I could sit there and sort of estimate, but that's the type of things that could prove useful when we get to a data workshop. Thanks.

MR. MOSS: Just remember, Rusty, too that this all filled out after the fact. Even though, again, down by us, if the plan is to go offshore trolling for dolphin or something like that and you get halfway out there and you realize it's nasty weather and you want to stay in the reef and fish, you fill it out after the fact anyway, so you can have a more accurate accounting of that, and I know there were some things that you guys couldn't see.

I had the pleasure of sitting right here to be able to see it, but you can delineate out the species, or you can just, like she said, just do an average of I caught twenty yellowtails and they averaged to about fourteen inches. Like she said, you're kind of dropping, for lack of a better term, a bomb on a lot of people that haven't done this stuff before, and so, to make everybody's life a little bit easier, and then, down the road, you can fine-tune it, but it seems awesome so far.

MR. HUDSON: The last thought I had was Rick Bellavance, and was that the person out of Rhode Island that was doing some of the tablet work?

MR. PILAND: I have been on the pilot program for this, and it works good. It's easy. Once you get it set up, it's a piece of cake. I think you can do it in two minutes for your day, as long as I can

average my fish. I mean, I am pro-reporting, but, if you want to ask me to measure a hundred triggerfish, I am going the other way, and I'm going to fight it, and everybody else -- Well, most of the charter fishermen in my area will also do the same thing. Averaging is the best you're going to get for now, and I think it's still going to be a great benefit to fisheries management.

I have got a question of what's going to be done with the difference between, the potential difference between, what I report in my eTRIPS and what the dock survey shows? If I put in that I got ninety triggerfish and they count ninety-five -- Five fish in MRIP, on a lot of occasions, have made a big number, as the example of that 190,000 pounds of tilefish that were caught this year before the season opened. That's just a question of what is going to be done with the difference between what's reported on a particular catch. Another question is what does the price of fuel and my charter fee have to do with fisheries management?

MS. HOWINGTON: I am going to answer your second question first, because that's the one that I get a lot. The reason why the council has decided to ask for these economic values is because we actually do take into account socioeconomic data whenever we are taking assessments. Christine is our Social Scientist, and that's her entire job, and so, for example, right now, there currently is a study going on in Florida trying to figure out the impact of Irma on fishermen.

We don't have this economic data to be able to say that, for these days, you couldn't take a boat out, and so you lost this much money and this is going to be the economic impact on this economy, and so the reason why we need that information is to be able to make that a more robust study and be able to make our -- Know your net operating revenue and to be able to take that into account.

As for the first one, currently, MRIP is still going to be going on, and so you're still going to be getting intercepted from the MRIP representatives as well as when electronic reporting kicks in, and so what's going to be happening is we're actually going to be going through a validation period, where MRIP is still happening and where electronic reporting is still happening. That way, we can make certain that, in the future, if somebody questions the data, they are matching up. If there is not a match-up, then maybe you get a phone call from me saying what's going on, if something happens like that, but the hope is that, if you're electronic reporting and your MRIP matches up, then we can say this data is viable and it still can be validated, and so that's going to be a priority of this process.

MR. PILAND: Is there going to be an acceptable margin of error between the two?

MS. HOWINGTON: I am going to say most likely, but I am also going to bow to Chip, who is standing up right now and knows better than me.

DR. COLLIER: A lot of times, what we want, what is ideal, is to have two different data streams, and then you can compare two different data streams. Right now, let's take MRIP, and you have a very large spike in MRIP. What does that mean? Is it really there? If you see it in two different data streams, then, yes, that's probably truly there, and that means something, but, if you're seeing it in one and not in the other, that can be used to maybe down-weight these real large blips that we see. That blueline tilefish, it likely would come up, that example that you used. It would likely come up as a blip, and it may not be used to close the fishery. That is the benefit of having different data streams, and you can see the direct utility for a lot of this stuff.

As far as enforcement, I am not certain how that's going to work. They are going to be more or less enforcing, in all likelihood, your bag limit and your size limits more than they are exactly what you have reported, but, ideally, you're going to be reporting accurate information.

MR. MANIGAULT: I've been around a while, and I've been utilizing Fish Rules and all that type of stuff, but I have never heard of a chicken snapper. Can I get some clarity on that? Are we going to put that on the list?

MR. HUDSON: Gary, we had different common language, let's say, that's been around fifty years, and so a chicken snapper was usually anywhere from a pound right on up to maybe six or eight or ten pounds, and then we see it into a pony, and we get into a sow, and we get into a mule. It all had to do with sizes in our areas, and so like some people say a sow is eighteen pounds gutted, and some people say twenty pounds, but who cares? It's the idea that, when we talk chicken snappers, we're talking the smaller, younger animals. That's what that is.

MR. MANIGAULT: Is there any other jargon that I need to learn about fish that applies to certain species?

DR. DUVAL: I just want to address Andy's question a little bit more about the economic information. I mean, this is information -- I just can't emphasize how valuable having some economic information is, because it's one thing for you guys to say, hey, this regulation cost me X number of thousands of dollars a year, but we need something to anchor that to.

The commercial guys actually fill out quite a bit of economic information on their trips, the ones who have been selected to participate in that chunk of the program, and I would say that probably right now these data elements are not finalized and not necessarily set in stone, and so I have heard from other folks that maybe more heartache about the charter fee as opposed to how much fuel has been used. I mean, that's -- Fuel consumption is one thing that the headboat logbook program is required to fill out, and has been for at least a couple or three years now, I think.

It's just one thing for you to say this is how much it cost me, but it's another thing for us to be able to anchor that in some piece of reality, and so I think we recognize that folks are a little concerned about that, but it is really critical information.

MR. JOHNSON: To that point, on our commercial logbooks, we put down everything, I mean, even groceries, and so, if I was going to go anywhere with this, I would expand on the economics. I would have an area where you could put what you paid your crew and how much ice cost you and how much your bait cost you, because those are all important to somebody.

MS. HOWINGTON: Can I quote you on that?

MR. JOHNSON: There is a lot of people that don't like me. You can quote me on anything, but I am serious, because, when we do say this has an impact, it's important for people to know that it has not just an impact on Robert Johnson, but it has an impact on Mark Goodwin, my captain, and Ryan Leery, my other captain, and it has an impact on Aylesworth's Bait, who sells me my sardines and my Boston mackerel. It has an impact on the Conch House Marina, who I buy my fuel from. All of those things are affected by management decisions, every one of them, and I think it's important to get to that. If we want to sit here and say how valuable our fishery is, let's prove it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We're talking about the reporting app, but the whole reason for this is because of the council's reporting amendment, and I just want to put a little blurb out there. The Regional Office is now working on a proposed rule for implementing that amendment. We submitted it in March, and they've been looking at it. The Gulf Council submitted an amendment, and there is a group at the Regional Office that's working on implementation and developing a way of implementing these amendments.

The Gulf's is far more complicated than ours, because of VMS and reporting on a daily basis, and so ours is a bit simpler, and we're really hoping that the proposed rule is going to publish around the time of our council meeting, if not before, and so I just want to say to keep an eye out for that, and I'm sure we will send out a notice when it is published, because there will be an opportunity for you guys to comment, and that's an opportunity to comment on things like the variables that are going to be collected as well as the method in which the data is going to be collected.

If you have worked with the app and you think that it works well and you like that approach, getting those comments in with that proposed rule will certainly help make sure that that is what is ultimately chosen by the agency when they do it, and so keep posted, and keep an eye out. When you see something about the proposed rule for the for-hire reporting amendment, that's what this is all about, and it's what triggered all of this, and that's your chance to weigh-in through the agency. Now that you've weighed-into the council, in terms of what the council asked for, what really is going to matter is what does that agency do, in terms of making this happen. That will be your chance to comment.

MS. HOWINGTON: That update will also be on my website. Once the proposed rule happens, we're going to have links, and we're going to have a little graphic to show you where we are in the process, and so, once all that starts coming into play, then, on the website, we're going to be updating that, as well as emailing any charter fishermen that have contacted me. You're going to start disliking me, because I'm about to send out a lot of emails, but the website will have all of that information whenever that starts up.

MR. MOSS: Cool.

MR. COX: I will be glad when we do this for the commercial side, because those paper logbooks and discard forms are a huge pain in the ass, and, if you've got three boats, you spend two or three hours at the end of the week doing it.

MR. MOSS: All right. Thank you.

MR. HOWINGTON: I'm getting a lot of people that I can interview in here.

MR. MOSS: Thank you very much. That's awesome. Good stuff. I've been looking forward to that for a long time. Moving on to Chip and red snapper.

DR. COLLIER: I am going to go off-script a little bit from what I had presented here, but this gives you the background information that we're looking for with this mini-season voluntary reporting. As you know, last weekend was our first open weekend for red snapper in a few years,

and we had the opportunity for fishermen to report via that website that I was talking about, My Fish Count.

The reason we had that is the commercial and headboats all fill out federal logbooks. In the charter fleet, South Carolina is required to fill out logbooks. However, the rest of the states use MRIP to estimate catch from the charter fleet. In the private recreational, we use MRIP, and it's been identified by the fishing public several times, as well as issues have been identified by the SSC, that you can't always use that information in management. Sometimes it has too much uncertainty.

We recognized that, and we came up with different methods to sample red snapper during these mini-seasons, and so, for the past three years, and when I was talking about the past three years, it's 2012, 2013, and 2014, there was some dockside sampling. FWC developed a new method to estimate catch and effort for the red snapper fisheries, and they also attempted to contact 100 percent of the charter boat captains.

That was to figure out how many red snapper were caught during those time periods, and some of that information was used in the stock assessment. Georgia did a very similar process, except they didn't develop new estimates of catch and effort. They relied on some other surveys. South Carolina and North Carolina all did similar things.

What we wanted to do was develop this voluntary reporting web portal called My Fish Count, and what it requires is fishermen to sign up, and they can report the catch and release of red snapper, and they can also report if they did go and the reasons why they did not go. You can also provide a picture of a red snapper, release treatment, and area fished, and, from here, I am actually going to take you to the website, so we can actually go through an example of reporting with My Fish Count.

It's just simply myfishcount.com, and we're going to go to the member login. At this point, you have already created a user name and a password, and so I'm going to use my fake name and password. I haven't had very good success about getting out. All my trips have abandoned so far, as you can see down here. These are the four trips that I have attempted, and I haven't got out, but, today, we're going to get out fishing, and so I clicked to start a trip.

Since this practice, I put "test" up there, and that makes it nice and easy. We have an option to go to several different types of fishing, and I'm just going to go out on my own personal boat, but, if I went out on a charter boat, I could report. That information would not necessarily be attributed to any charter boat data. It can be removed from that, so it's not included.

We can pick the day we went out fishing, just in case you came back and you forgot to fill out this information and you remembered a week later. You can fill it out, or you can plan a trip. If I was going to go Sunday, if that was going to be a nice day, I could pick the 13th, if I wanted to go out that day, and so now we pick the state where we want to go fishing, and let's say South Carolina. It will modify this near a city list, and we're going to fish out of Charleston, and then what type of marina are we leaving from? It can be a private dock, private marina, public dock, public marina, or a boat ramp. Let's leave from a boat ramp.

It asks for vessel number, and then we have target fish. For this version, this is focused primarily on red snapper. In a future version of this, it's going to be for the snapper grouper fishery, and so

you're going to have different options within snapper grouper. We're going to target red snapper today, and we have three methods of fishing: primarily bottom fishing, primarily surface fishing, and primarily dive. That's just to keep it nice and simple.

We create the trip, and let's say we caught one red snapper. It's going to pull up the time and day that we caught the red snapper, and we can choose the depth that we fished, and we can choose the location where we fished if you would like to. You don't have to, but we're going to select it from a map. You just simply pull this button to the approximate location you were fishing and it's done.

MR. MOSS: Rusty, I don't know if you noticed, but, when he pulled the pin out there, and you guys couldn't see it when she was doing her presentation, but it's basically the same thing. You don't have to worry about honey-holes or anything like that. It will give you a very general location. It will pin to an exact location, but you can just touch it on a general location.

DR. COLLIER: Let's say that I took a picture of my fish, and this is actually an example that came from the fishermen. You can see, from his measuring board, and luckily it's nice and big, that that fish is about fourteen inches, and so can enter the length of that, fourteen inches, and we'll say that we kept it. We can enter in where we hooked the fish, and we can also describe which type of hook we used.

Now, if you want to enter another fish, you have met your bag limit now, and let's enter another fish real quick, and we'll just do a release option, and let's say that I don't want to provide all this other information for the released fish, and you can skip it. You can skip all of this information on hook type, and you can actually skip all of this information if you choose to, but you have the option to give us information of if you used a descending device, and you can also tell us why you released the fish.

Now these are the two fish that you caught on this day, and you have finished your trip, and you've entered all your fish, and so you go up there and click to end it. Did you take and complete your trip? We did, and we had a pretty good day. We got two fish. Your arrival date, that's automatically populated, and you can change this, similar to you did your departure date, and it asks for time away from the dock. We were away from the dock for about three hours. The fish were not sampled on the way back in, and then it gives you an option for how much of the time were the hooks in the water, and let's say 60 to 70 percent of the time.

Let's end the trip, and then it's telling you that you will not be able to make changes after this and you have completed your trip. Now you can come back, and this new trip that we just did is logged right here. You can look at the information, and you can see how well you did, and you can see the location of the fish you caught, and this is only for you to view. It's not available to anyone else. The information on where it was caught is actually presented to us, and I will show you how we're aggregating the data right now.

This is for you to go back, and you can review your catch records and see how well you did at a spot and see what fish you caught, and, like I said, this is going to be modified so you can report multiple species and not just red snapper in the future. It's also going to be an app, and so you'll be able to use this out on the water. Right now, this is a web portal, and it can only be used at the dock or where you have internet access.

What kind of information did we get from the first mini-season for red snapper in a while? The first table up there is trips, and I basically have these as abandoned trips and completed trips. Of the fishing reports we had, 45 percent were reported as abandoned, and that's information we were never able to get before. That is new information that we're getting through this app, and I think it's very beneficial.

We can get information on trip type. For this, we know that 90 percent of the fishermen that were reporting through the app were private recreational fishermen. An additional 10 percent were reporting for charter and headboat, and so, if we were looking at reporting just for the private recreational fishery, we would remove those charter and headboat data, in order to get a catch estimate for the private recreational sector.

How have they done? Based on the reports, as of yesterday around noon, we had fifty fish that were kept and 158 that were discarded, for a total of 208 fish. Some additional information that we can pull up, these are the fishermen that reported by state, and it totals -- I think it was sixty fishermen with eighty reports.

Reasons why people released fish, you can see a lot of them were being released because they were too small, 58.7 percent. For the size distribution of kept and released fish, you can see most of the kept fish were twenty to thirty inches. For released fish, they were less than twenty inches. We do have inch-specific information that is provided for this, but, for ease of viewing, we just aggregated to these broader categories.

We also have release treatment. A lot of people are actually descending fish. This could change, because we have a fairly small sample size. As more fish are entered, these numbers are going to change pretty quickly, and then we can see the distribution of where red snapper were caught, and the way I have it right now is it's percent of fish with a location reported. You can see, in North Carolina and Georgia, we have less than three people in each of those states reporting, and so we don't provide that information. For the other two states, South Carolina and Florida, we do have information, and Florida is 58 percent of the people that reported. Location, we're fishing in federal waters off of Florida.

MR. HUDSON: The three-person rule for those two states in this example, if it's the same person and he goes three trips in Georgia, it's still going to be confidential, is what I'm sort of imagining, and so you've got to get three-plus different boats. The other thing is, because you're not being specific to the fish location, and in particular the released fish and not the kept fish, that released fish, you don't know if it's inside of a hundred or you don't know if it's outside of hundred foot. It could have you in a thousand foot, and that could get really abstract when you're trying to look for that information of where were they fishing, roughly speaking.

We ran into that with some of the red snapper data, that they were out somewhere near France and stuff like that, and so that was like a problem, and we also know that our sixty foot to ninety or a hundred foot is a key area for reduced barotrauma issues and a greater tendency to have been a live release, and I'm not real sure about doing venting and descending at the same time, unless the person is really decent at venting, because that's been problematic, and, as I have said many times before, if you put venting tools on headboats, you start having a potential insurance liability, and so I like the idea of knowing if that animal was released in not only the best condition possible,

and that's why I feel better about the descending device, but being in an area that was less barotrauma, because, if you've got the persons, and I forget the percentage you had there, but they didn't bother to do anything and they just pitched it overboard.

DR. COLLIER: People do have the opportunity to report depth, and, right now, the way it's listed in there, it's fifty, 100, 150. It's not giving a range. We do have future versions that we're already working on, and it does have more defined ranges, such as fifty to seventy-five feet and seventy-five to 100, and so it's more specific. It gives fishermen a better feeling about what they're reporting, and it makes it a little bit easier when you're supplying that information. I mean, a lot of the stuff that you were talking about in future versions, as more and more people begin to use something like this, we can get better information that can be used in management for the future.

MR. ATTACK: Chip, what about the hook type? Do you have like a spear as part of a hook type on your drilldown, so if anybody is spearfishing for these that it will be recorded as such?

DR. COLLIER: I do not, but there is an other, and so I would imagine that would go under other when you pick diving as your primary gear.

MR. HUDSON: Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't we also not have powerheads allowed for red snapper during these mini-seasons or something?

DR. COLLIER: No, that was not a requirement.

MR. HULL: Just a general comment. This is exactly what is needed, and it's a whole new world for the private recreational and charter, when all this happens. It's just what we have been asking for, and you guys are making it happen, and so thank you.

DR. COLLIER: Don't be afraid to sign up. It's free, and, if you guys are working in other states and if you're on charter trips, you can report some of your information through this app. I mean, it's very beneficial to have information on abandoned trips, especially if the weekend we're having -- If you had trips planned and they're getting abandoned, this is one opportunity for you to begin to report it.

MR. ATTACK: When you fill this out, you can use a mobile phone, right? You can't probably partially fill it out as the day goes on, and you're going to have to pretty much fill it out after the trip is done?

DR. COLLIER: Correct. It has to have internet access in order to use this. Before I end, I do want to thank all of our partners that have been working with us on this, whether it's Elemental Methods, Snook & Gamefish Foundation, and they have been our primary guys in developing this web portal. It's also been a great partnership with Pew and CCA as well as ASA, in order to get the word out.

I hope you guys have been seeing information about My Fish Count through either news releases by the council or you're reading it in newspaper articles or you're getting information from local fishing clubs or different groups like that. We want as many people using this as possible. It's a great opportunity for you guys to provide information to the council. I do want to point out that

this is just three days after that, or four days after Sunday, and you guys have information presented to you. It doesn't happen that rapidly in most instances.

MR. HUDSON: I agree, because this is going to give us a little better opportunity for real-time management, if you want to put it in those terms, whereas the MRIP stuff, QA and QC and two-month waves and forty-five days and the delays this year, and there is nothing you can do with that until the following year or two, and so this is -- Like Jimmy said, this is the future now.

MR. MOSS: This is awesome stuff. Thank you very much, Chip. Thank you for all the hard work. As Jimmy said, this is what we've kind of been asking for, or at least a step in the right direction, and so anybody that knows any -- I know I will. I am going to encourage all the people that I know to start using this and put it down. Thank you. All right. Moving on, the last little bit, we will move on to Other Business.

One of the things is Charlie wanted to talk about gear requirements and circle hooks, and he had some things that he wanted to talk about with circle hooks, and so we'll let him speak on that. If anybody has anything else that they would like to discuss, obviously now is the time, any kind of motions or anything like that. I will open the floor.

MR. HUDSON: The more I think about it, with this kind of real-time reporting for the for-hire and eventually you get the privates involved and bought into this, it makes it so that our terminal year in stock assessments can be actually closer to the event than what we're doing. We're a year or two behind almost every time. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: While we wait for Charlie to get back in the room and explain to you guys what his request was for the discussion he wants to have, one thing that I wanted to do is pin down the date for the AP meeting for the spring. I was going to suggest sometime in mid-April, and, based on the response that we've had to the way that we have scheduled it, just two full days and how complicated that became for some folks, we are going to go back to the half-day, full-day, half-day, and so it's going to have to be Wednesday through Friday or Monday through Wednesday, and that seems to work out better for everybody, and it's a lot more cost-effective for the council to do it that way. If anybody can suggest or if there is any -- I don't have a calendar in front of me, but I think I was looking at mid-April, maybe the second week.

MR. MOSS: The 11th, 12th, and 13th?

MS. BROUWER: Is that okay with everybody? I know a lot of AP members want to get the meeting out of way before grouper opens up on May 1, and so we always try to schedule it sometime in April, and I know there is other conflicts. The SSC is going to meet and I believe it's in May, kind of the beginning of May, and so the second or third week in April would, I think, be best for everybody. That way, I can have enough stuff to you after the council meeting, and it also gives me enough time to prepare the report and get information from this meeting ready for the June council meeting.

MR. MOSS: On a personal level, I will opt for the 11th, 12th, and 13th, if that's okay, because, if school spring break lines up with Easter week, then I will be in trouble if I'm here during that time.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so we can pencil it in then for those dates, and I will go ahead and send you guys a save-the-date email next week sometime. Thank you.

MR. MOSS: Okay. Charlie, did you want to talk about equipment? I know you had mentioned that you wanted to talk about circle hooks and various gear types.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I'm hearing some of the guys are using the circle hooks on snapper grouper, but, if they're having to go trigger fishing or b-liner fishing, they're switching them out to j-hooks, just because they're not quick enough and they can't grind the fish, and then they tell me that when they find them, gut-hooked fish, when they find them, the j-hooks seem to be rusting out quicker, because the shanks are smaller, and I just thought if I could hear some input on what you all thought, because we're going to talk about -- One of the options, I think, in Amendment 46 was do we want to stay with circle hooks or do we want to have an option for using j-hooks, and would you think that it might be something that we would want to put in best management, instead of enforcement, because it's pretty hard to enforce it, and then we're getting the administration has directed NOAA to look at taking regulations and reducing the number of regulations, and I think they have talked to everybody about it, and so would it be something, a regulation, that we might want to start taking off the books or not?

There is a lot of moving pieces, and I would just like to hear a little bit of conversation as to what are we really getting and is it enforceable? Do we want to have regulations for something that law enforcement really has a really hard time enforcing and some things like that, and I would just like to hear that conversation, if you all would have a quick one, please.

MR. JOHNSON: I know that we got quite a benefit from the use of circle hooks in the last red snapper assessment, and I think that's important that we keep that. To your point though, for the commercial sector, you're talking about a very limited number of participants, and I don't know if you could have a regulation that applied to one sector, as far as gear type, and not another, but you're absolutely right that most of the guys are using triple-barbs for triggerfish, which is a little teeny j-hook.

Most of the commercial boats are using them. They're just breaking the law, and so I don't know. If you could look at something like that, I think that might be -- Because you're only talking about just a very small number of boats versus millions of recreational anglers, and also the commercial fishery, the way that b-liner and triggerfish and red porgy fishery is conducted, it's in the deeper water, and there is less interaction with red snapper, really. That's just my thoughts on it.

MR. BUFF: I think that, as far as the circle hooks, that most of the people that are going to be fishing for the bigger fish are going to be using them anyway. The smaller hooks for like the b-liners and the sea bass, and the triggerfish, I think there maybe ought to be half and half, and so, if we're fishing grouper or the red snapper or jacks or whatever, you're going to be using circle hooks regardless, or it's what we've always used. Those guys b-liner fishing and trigger fishing on those commercial boats, that would be deeply appreciated.

MR. LORENZ: I would just state for the recreational, but definitely the circle hooks are keeping them from swallowing the hooks in many of the smaller species, but, prior to having to use them, one that I really liked and got away from so many gut-hooked j-hooks was the kahle, and that seemed to be a wonderful hook that came almost as close to the circle hook in hooking the fish,

and you just use a real big one on many of the species, and it worked beautifully for me for years, and it became my favorite.

MR. COX: I know that we've been talking about this for a long time, and I agree with you. I just think it's a regulation that really doesn't need to be in there, because fishermen are going to do what they want to do when it comes to what hook they're going to use. You can't enforce it. All you've got to do is just have a leader hanging off the side of the boat, and you pull up to the dock and you can say that I was using the small hooks to catch pinfish or bait or something, and so I just think it's a cumbersome regulation, and I think it's -- I think we should put it under best practices and just -- I mean, we use circle hooks on groupers and amberjacks and the bigger fish, just because they seem to work a whole lot better than a j-hook, but that's just my thoughts on it.

MR. FREEMAN: My experience catching triggerfish is the circle hook -- You don't catch near as many of them per number of bites that you get. I have seen gut-hooked circle hooks that you wind up guaranteeing you're going to kill the fish getting that hook out, because you just can't get a dehooker in there and get the angle of twisting that hook back out. The sea bass, with a circle hook, you wind up breaking their jaw and jeopardizing their ability to eat in the future and stuff like that, and so I am very much opposed to the circle hook and the benefit that's there and that sort of thing.

MR. PILAND: I agree that the circle hook is better for the bigger fish, but, the triggers and snappers and bass, I think that we can do a better job of dehooking a fish with a small j-hook than we can with the circle hooks. I would like to see that done away with and let the fishermen decide which hook he needs to fish with, but have it in the best practices.

MR. JOHNSON: The circle hook rule came about to minimize dead discards in red snapper, and let's just remind ourselves of that, because that was the whole purpose of it. It wasn't for any other reason by that, and so I don't want to give up the gains we've made, and that's why I just suggested maybe for the commercial sector. I mean, on our charter boats, we use circle hooks for everything, and I catch as many triggerfish as my guys want to clean.

Now, I don't catch as many as you all do up here in North Carolina, because my guys don't want to clean that many, and I will just be honest with you, but we catch thirty or forty a trip. If we go to these twenty-fish aggregates, it's probably going to be a moot point anyway, as far as numbers, but I think -- I just know that I am constantly fussing to the guys on my commercial boat about the hooks that they use, and they swear they are using circle hooks, but, if you walk up and down the docks, you see a lot of these little teeny -- They call them triple-barbs that they're all using for b-liners and triggers, and they do it because they can use a dehooker real quick, and they catch them. I mean, I am just speaking the truth here, and so it's hard to enforce, obviously, but I just don't want to give up what we have gained.

I know, from SEDAR 41, that was really something that helped us, and I am not, myself, willing to give that up, and, if it means that the commercial guys have got to take longer to unhook a fish on my boat and on other commercial boats, I think that's where I want to go, and, as far as charters, again, we catch plenty of fish on circle hooks. A 3/0 or 4/0 circle hook will catch a triggerfish or a b-liner, and so I don't know. I have got really mixed emotions about this. I understand the pain on the commercial vessels, but I am not willing to give up the gains we have made rebuilding the red snapper, which is very dear to my heart.

MR. MOSS: I just want to throw out there that I don't like -- This is just on a personal note, but I don't like when we decide to make decisions on whether or not we think that something is enforceable or not. Again, I use the State of Florida, because that's where I am, and it's tough to enforce almost anything along the coastline of Florida. There's just way too many people and not enough law enforcement.

If we're going to make decisions on whether or not we think something is that enforceable, it's going to be the wild west. I mean, if we're going to make decisions and make laws, however you feel about this, let's just make it, and the vast majority of people are going to abide by it. There's going to be some that aren't, but they're not going to one way or the other, whether we make it a best management practice or a law one way or the other. Again, it kind of pains me sometimes when I hear that, that I don't want to make this requirement because it's unenforceable. I don't know, but that's just my personal opinion.

DR. DUVAL: I just want to emphasize a point that Robert brought up, which was that the discard mortality in SEDAR 41 went down 10 percent because of the use of circle hooks, and so that's just something to keep in mind. I think we just need to consider this issue very carefully, that's all.

MR. HULL: I think everybody has covered it pretty good, but, the circle hook requirement, we have to keep it to keep those gains, especially for snapper. On the smaller species, in the commercial sector, they are changing hooks. I mean, there is no question about it, and so I don't know what the answer is, and maybe there isn't an answer, and maybe you just keep on doing what you're doing right now and they keep on doing what they're doing. We have to have the circle hook requirement for larger animals, and we're using them, but, if you don't require it, then you may not get that 10 percent gain that if you don't have it and it was just a best management practice.

MR. COX: **With all that said then, let's just require descending devices and require venting tools and let's pick up another 20 percent on our discards, and then we're right where we need to be on vermillion.**

MR. JOHNSON: Is that a motion?

MR. COX: **Yes, I will make a motion on that.**

MR. HULL: Second.

MR. MOSS: I didn't mean a personal attack at you, Jack, when I said that, but I have heard that before, you know the let's not do that because it's tough to enforce or something like that, and, if we're going to make rules and regulations and best regards to the animals, which is what we're here to do, then that's what we've got to keep in mind and not whether or not we think the people are going to be out there handing out tickets because somebody is breaking the law.

MR. HUDSON: If we're doing a motion, back to the venting, I will reemphasize why the entire Gulf of Mexico took that mandate on venting off. If you want to have it as best practices for individuals in the fish, just like with the circle hooks versus the little teeny j-hooks and all that, that's great, but you're going to get into a liability issue, and that is not good, and so that's why we never went that way in certain NMFS final decisions on this side.

I am the guy that wound up finding certain things and making it available when it came to the venting tools, and there was some real safe stuff that could have been utilized that Bill Clinton, when he was President, had mandated the construction of these safe needles. You are talking about a syringe, and you're talking about a sixteen-gauge needle sticking into somebody, and those mates on those headboats and some charter boats never clean those things, never, and that's a problem.

MR. COX: Then maybe we ought to look at requiring the guys to take some class to learn how to use the venting tools and the descending devices and certify them.

MR. HUDSON: I have been on headboats with ninety people and six mates. You can't hardly move, and, once you're in six-foot seas and you're mandating this kind of stuff, then you've got a big problem there. Back on a little smaller level, your private boats and things like that, maybe there's plenty of room on the boat, but, again, I am trying to warn you about a liability.

MR. JOHNSON: Rusty, I understand what you're saying, but, good gosh, fishing boats are a liability. We've got lots of ways to get hurt, and we have knives, and I doubt very seriously that any of my mates or captains have cleaned the knife they cut bait with in a year, and so the only thing I will say about a venting tool is I have used them a lot in the research trips with the State of Florida, and I am very good with it, and I know that fish survive, because we have had recaptures on a lot of the fish that we released, and it's so much quicker, for me.

If you want to require descending devices and not have venting tools on there, that's not a big deal, but it would be nice to be able to have that option to use it if you wanted to. Maybe not make it a requirement, but they do work, if used properly, and I do understand that a lot of people don't know how to use them and they end up killing the fish. That happens, and I get all of that, and so I think just the original motion of requiring descending devices is fine.

MR. MOSS: Just one second, Rusty. I just want to make sure that we record the motion before -
- We can still have discussion about it, but I want to go back to Jack. If you could restate your motion, so that Myra can record it.

MR. COX: **I will restate the motion as saying we should require -- We make a motion to require that all vessels fishing for snapper grouper species have descending devices aboard the boat and leave out the sharp objects that could get somebody hurt, being the needles with the venting tool.**

MR. JOHNSON: I will second.

MR. HUDSON: I agree, and law enforcement will tell you, just like with the circle hooks, that descending devices and venting tools, they can't mandate that, unless they happen to have their spies on the boat, and so, again, it really comes down to a mindset that you're trying to create of best practices, and part of this other creation that we're doing of collecting this data that we have never collected is more best practices to improve everything for everybody, and so, like has been said, we don't want to give up the gains we've gotten from circle hooks.

It's a big deal, and what I was able to see is 90 percent, and I've had to handle forty-six of those careful handling and release protocol situations, and there is a whole menagerie of things that you

can utilize, but that doesn't mean you're going to do it, and you're not going to be able to cut something a specific length. There is certain ways you can do stuff, but best practices is what we're trying to develop as a mindset now, and it's a huge group of people to try to get that around, and it will take years to get it accomplished.

MR. HULL: I like this motion even without the venting tool, and I would support it.

MR. LORENZ: I would just have one question. That would be would we define what descending devices are? There are the classic ones that are commercial, but I have had a lot of luck with the orange crate with the diving weights upside down and sending the fish down fifty feet, and we did see something here just earlier, at this meeting, where somebody had a net type of thing that they were throwing in and working, and so there might be a need to also -- A descending device, what could be considered a descending device.

DR. COLLIER: This exact motion is likely going to be an option that's included in Amendment 46 as a best fishing practice. There is also going to be options for venting, requiring venting tools on the vessel as well, and so this is going to be discussed quite a bit by the council, just to let you guys know. Yes, they do want something like this considered, and, right now, we have been directed to include it as something for Amendment 46. Because it is just a draft options paper, we're going to see what's in there, and you guys will have it come to you at your next meeting.

MR. HUDSON: On the law enforcement end of everything, when I talked to them about descending devices, they wanted a list. They wanted to see the stuff, the elevator, the inverted nets, the different things with the enforceability of the hooks and stuff like that, and the venting tools.

I agree that all of that needs to be in your toolbox. That is back to best practices, but what you mandate that could cause a negative outcome economically and/or other types of ways, that part you need to give them some wiggle room. I definitely support this, but I also agree with law enforcement of what is that world, and, like I said, with MRIP, and I brought that up earlier, you actually have seen, each year that goes by, further improvements and further buy-in, yet I talk to people still to this day that can't even tell you what a descending device is or never have had one on their boat or in their possession, and so there is a lot of options here, and, like Chip said, Amendment 46, which is about a year-and-a-half to be completed, if the normal speed of an amendment, we're looking at 2019 for all those kind of mandates.

MR. MOSS: I think we can include, as Myra put in there, a definition of descending device, but, I think, if you wanted to go the law enforcement route and talk about that, if a law enforcement official were to pull up on a boat and just say, okay, what are you doing to do this -- I mean, we've seen demonstrated where people are even using a decent-sized j-hook, upside down and barbless, with a twelve-ounce weight tied to it and do it that way, and so, as long as you can prove some way, shape, or form that -- Even if it's a dog-and-pony show, which some people it probably is going to be, but it's that old thing, right? If you can save five fish, then that's five more than what we had before.

MR. FREEMAN: Would someone remind me again why the circle hook makes sense above 28 degrees North and not south of there, if we're getting such great benefits from it?

MR. MOSS: The major reason was yellowtail. It's pretty tough to catch. The yellowtail fishery, particularly in the Keys, it's a lot tougher to catch yellowtail.

MR. FREEMAN: I can use that same argument up our way, that it's more difficult to catch the triggerfish with the circle hooks, and so I just don't buy that as being a viable defense for them not being required south of 28 degrees.

MR. JOHNSON: The main reason is that's not really red snapper territory, but, as the stock has expanded, there is more and more of them down there, but that was the real reason they didn't require it below Cape Canaveral or below 28, was they said, hey, we don't have that many red snapper and we're not saving that many lives, and it's really going to hurt our yellowtail fishery, and so why are you doing this, and that was the reasoning behind that decision, and it didn't really have anything to do with just being easier to catch yellowtail. It had more to do with the lack of red snapper in that region.

MR. MOSS: All right. Let's put this one to a vote, unless we have anything else to say about it. **The motion is recommend that the council require all vessels fishing for snapper grouper species carry descending devices onboard. There is a suggestion to include a definition of descending device. All those in favor. It passes unanimous.**

MR. HUDSON: I am going to have to dig back, but, when I mentioned the safe needles, there were two, one that retracted the actual needle inside, so the mate could just stick it right in his pocket. The other was a shield that went right over that, and Roy loved it. As soon as he saw that, he said -- But we had some goofball in the company that wound up getting greedy, and he wound up in prison, and so end of story, but those devices are available right in Florida.

MR. MOSS: Yes, and I've seen the retractable one, and I've seen it used, and it's pretty handy. Anybody got anything else?

AP MEMBER: I wanted to know how does the council intend to expand the interest in My Fish Count?

DR. COLLIER: We are putting out more news releases, and we're talking to fishermen, and we also have this project going on for a while longer. What we're doing right now is, after we get done with this mini-season for red snapper, we're going to put all of the information together, and we are going to send questionnaires to the people that participated, that are willing to respond, and see what they thought about the app redesign or the website, and then we're going to redesign it and form it into an app and make it available.

In the upcoming years, we're also going to do a pilot of the app, once it's completed, and we're going to have fishermen test those, to make sure they like it, and then we are going to go to fishing clubs and talk to newspapers and talk to whatever media outlets we can, social media, and we're going to get the word out that way, and so, whatever way we can get the word out, we're going to do it, and so, if you have any suggestions on how we should get the word out, just let us know, and we're definitely willing to listen, and we would love to see as many people using this as possible.

AP MEMBER: What do you think the timeline is for the app?

DR. COLLIER: The timeline for the app, right now, we were hoping we could have the app prepared for this 2017 season, but it happened really quick on us, and so we weren't able to have it done. I believe the app, we are projected to have that done by December for IOS, and then Android maybe a month later, and then it's going to get tested, and so hopefully it's going to be available for the July season of next year.

MR. MOSS: All right. Anything else? Thank you very much. Thank you, everyone, for your time, and I will see you guys in April.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned on November 9, 2017.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Amanda Thomas
November 22, 2017

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL

✓ David P. Moss, Chair
212 Via Milan Terrace
Davie, FL 33325
954/214-7954 (ph)
david@smoss.com
(Recreational) 12/13*, 3/17*

✓ James G. Hull, Jr., Vice-Chair
1258 John Anderson Drive
Ormond Beach, FL 32176
386/547-1254 (ph)
386/615-9333 (f)
hullsseafood@aol.com
(Commercial/Dealer/Retail) 12/13*, 3/17*

✓ Jim Atack
111 SW 20th Street
Oak Island, NC 28465
910/520-8279
jim.atack@ADM.com
(Recreational) 9/10, 12/13*, 3/17*

✓ Vincent Bonura
800 SW 12th CT
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315
9542408615
SailRaiser25C@aol.com

✓ Richen M. "Dick" Brame
Coastal Conservation Association
517 Braddock Street
Wilmington, NC 28409
910/599-5245 (ph)
dbrame55@gmail.com
(NGO) 9/15*

✓ Scott Buff
109 SE 36th Street
Oak Island, NC 28465
910/294-1463 (ph)
Scott@buffbuilders.com
(Commercial) 9/15*

✓ Jack Cox Jr.
121 Buena Vista Drive
Newport, NC 28570
2527289548
Dayboat1965@gmail.com

James Freeman
122 Springwood Dr.
Daytona Beach, FL 32119-1402
386/882-6151 (ph)
Cfreeman23@bellsouth.net
(Commercial) 12/13*, 3/17*

✓ Robert Freeman
221 Smith Street
Atlantic Beach, NC 28512
252/726-9814 (ph)
sunrise@coastalnet.com
(Charter) 3/17*

✓ Richard Gomez
289 Leo Lane
Key West, FL 33040
9547987764
captainconch12@yahoo.com

Manuel "Manny" Herrera
707 S.W. 28th Road
Miami, FL 33129
305/951-2069 (PH)
guelsy28@gmail.com
(Commercial) 12/14*

✓ Rusty Hudson
P.O. Box 9351
Daytona Beach, FL 32120-9351
386/239-0948 (ph)
386/253-2843 (f)
DSF2009@aol.com
(Commercial Industry) 9/15*

(Continued)

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL (continued)

✓ Deidra Jeffcoat
20 South Cromwell Road
Savannah, GA 31410
912/308-5317 (ph)
912/897-3460 (f)
dcjeffcoat@comcast.net
(Charter) 3/16*

✓ Robert Johnson
804 Shore Drive
St. Augustine, FL 32086
904/794-2628 (ph)
jlffishing@bellsouth.net
(Charter/Headboat) 3/10*, 6/13*, 3/16*

✓ Robert Lorenz
1509 Meridian Terrace
Wilmington, NC 28411
910/232-4755 (ph)
blpinfisher@gmail.com
(Recreational) 12/14*

✓ Gary Manigault Sr
1299 Sand pine Rd
Ladson, South Carolina 29456
8434714637
garymanigaultsr@yahoo.com

Greg Mercurio
1211 20th Terrace
Key West, FL 33040
305/923-4401 (ph)
greg@yankeecapt.com
(Charter/Headboat) 3/17*

Wayne Mershon
1159 Palmer Place
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/421-6440 (ph)
kenyonseafood@sc.rr.com
(Commercial/Dealer) 12/14*

✓ Jim Moring
The Commonwealth Group
171 Church Street, Suite 300
Charleston, South Carolina 29401
8433435757
commonwealthjimm@prodigy.net

✓ Fentress "Red" Munden
P.O. Box 1165
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/726-9015 (h); 252/241-9541 (m)
fmunden@gmail.com
(Conservation) 9/12,9/15*

✓ Kerry O'Malley-Marhefka
P.O. Box 2343
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29465
843/452-7352 (ph)
abundantseafood@gmail.com
(Commercial/Dealer) 6/14, 9/17*

✓ J. Andrew (Andy) Piland
P.O. Box 533
Hatteras, NC 27943
252/995-6577 (ph)
andypiland@gmail.com
(Charter) 9/15*

✓ David Snyder
55 Cinema Lane
St. Simons Island, GA 31522
912/399-3813 (ph)
912/638-9163 (f)
dave@halyardsrestaurant.com
(Consumer Representative) 12/13*,3/17*

AT-LARGE

✓ Dr. Todd Kellison
Chief, Fisheries Ecosystem Branch
NOAA - Beaufort Lab
101 Pivers Island Road
Beaufort, NC 28516-9722
252/838-0810 (p); 252/728-8784 (f)
Todd.kellison@noaa.gov
(NMFS SEFSC Liaison - Non-voting)

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SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2017 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

COUNCIL CHAIR

✓ Charlie Phillips
Phillips Seafood/Sapelo Sea Farms
1418 Sapelo Avenue, N.E.
Townsend, GA 31331
912/832-4423 (ph); 912/832-6228 (f)
Ga_capt@yahoo.com

W. Chester Brewer
250 Australian Ave. South
Suite 1400
West Palm Beach, FL 33408
561/655-4777 (ph)
wcbafmc@gmail.com

VICE-CHAIR

✓ Mark Brown
3642 Pandora Drive
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29466
843/881-9735 (ph); 843/881-4446 (f)
capt.markbrown101@gmail.com

Chris Conklin
P.O. Box 972
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/543-3833
conklinsafmc@gmail.com

Robert E. Beal
Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission
1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 20001
703/842-0740 (ph); 703/842-0741 (f)
rbeal@asmfc.org

Dr. Roy Crabtree
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Region
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727/824-5301 (ph); 727/824-5320 (f)
roy.crabtree@noaa.gov

Anna Beckwith
1907 Paulette Road
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/671-3474 (ph)
AnnaBarriosBeckwith@gmail.com

✓ Dr. Michelle Duval
NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street
(PO Box 769)
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/808-8011 (ph);
252/726-0254 (f)
michelle.duval@ncdenr.gov

Mel Bell
S.C. Dept. of Natural Resources
Marine Resources Division
P.O. Box 12559
(217 Ft. Johnson Road)
Charleston, SC 29422-2559
843/953-9007 (ph)
843/953-9159 (fax)
bellm@dnr.sc.gov

Tim Griner
4446 Woodlark Lane
Charlotte, NC 28211
980/722-0918 (ph)
timgrinersafmc@gmail.com

Zack Bowen
P.O. Box 30825
Savannah, GA 31410
912/398-3733 (ph)
zackbowensafmc@gmail.com

Ben Hartig
9277 Sharon Street
Hobe Sound, FL 33455
772/546-1541 (ph)
mackattackben@att.net

(Continued)

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2017 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP (continued)

Doug Haymans
Coastal Resources Division
GA Dept. of Natural Resources
One Conservation Way, Suite 300
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687
912/264-7218 (ph); 912/262-2318 (f)
haymanssafmc@gmail.com

Dr. Wilson Laney
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Atlantic Fisheries Coordinator
P.O. Box 33683
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617
(110 Brooks Ave
237 David Clark Laboratories,
NCSU Campus
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617)
919/515-5019 (ph)
919/515-4415 (f)
Wilson.Laney@fws.gov

✓ Jessica McCawley
Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
2590 Executive Center Circle E.,
Suite 201
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850/487-0554 (ph); 850/487-4847(f)
jessica.mccawley@myfwc.com

U.S. Coast Guard
Seventh Coast Guard District
Enforcement Branch (DRE)
305/415-6788(ph); 305/710-4569(c)
Jeremy.J.Montes@uscg.mil

Deirdre Warner-Kramer
Office of Marine Conservation
OES/OMC
2201 C Street, N.W.
Department of State, Room 5806
Washington, DC 20520
202/647-3228 (ph); 202/736-7350 (f)
Warner-KramerDM@state.gov

[Go to Top](#)

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
COUNCIL STAFF

Executive Director

✓ Gregg T. Waugh
gregg.waugh@safmc.net

Deputy Director – Science & Statistics

John Carmichael
john.carmichael@safmc.net

Deputy Director - Management

✓ Dr. Brian Cheuvront
brian.cheuvront@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist

✓ Myra Brouwer
myra.brouwer@safmc.net

Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator

Cindy Chaya
cindy.chaya@safmc.net

Purchasing & Grants

✓ Kimberly Cole
kimberly.cole@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist

✓ Dr. Chip Collier
chip.collier@safmc.net

Administrative Officer

Mike Collins
mike.collins@safmc.net

Outreach Specialist

Kelsey Dick
Kelsey.dick@safmc.net

Fishery Biologist

Dr. Mike Errigo
mike.errigo@safmc.net

Fishery Economist

✓ John Hadley
john.hadley@safmc.net

Outreach Specialist

✓ Kathleen Howington
Kathleen.howington@safmc.net

Public Information Officer

✓ Kim Iverson
kim.iverson@safmc.net

Senior Fishery Biologist

Roger Pugliese
roger.pugliese@safmc.net

Outreach Specialist

✓ Cameron Rhodes
Cameron.rhodes@safmc.net

Financial Secretary

Suzanna Thomas
suzanna.thomas@safmc.net

Fishery Citizen Science Program Manager

✓ Amber Von Harten
amber.vonharten@safmc.net

Fisheries Social Scientist

✓ Christina Wiegand
Christina.wiegand@safmc.net

SEDAR Coordinators

✓ Dr. Julie Neer - julie.neer@safmc.net
Julia Byrd - julia.byrd@safmc.net

[Go to Top](#)

SAFMC SG AP Day 1 Wed

Atack	Jim	jim.atack@adm.com
Beckwith	Anna	anna@downeastguideservice.com
Bell	Mel	bellm@dnr.sc.gov
Bianchi	Alan	Alan.Bianchi@ncdenr.gov
DeVictor	Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov
Helies	Frank	frank.helies@noaa.gov
Hudson	Rusty	DSF2009@aol.com
Iverson	Kim	kim.iverson@safmc.net
Laks	Ira	captainira@att.net
MacLauchlin	Kari	kari.maclauchlin@gmail.com
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov
Smart	Tracey	smartt@dnr.sc.gov
Waugh	Gregg	gregg.waugh@safmc.net
brouwer	myra	myra.brouwer@safmc.net
Howington	Kathleen	kathleen.howington@safmc.com

SAFMC SG AP Day 2 Thursday

Bell	Mel	bellm@dnr.sc.gov
Bianchi	Alan	Alan.Bianchi@ncdenr.gov
DeVictor	Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov
Erwin	Gwen	gwen.erwin@myfwc.com
Helies	Frank	frank.helies@noaa.gov
Hudson	Rusty	DSF2009@aol.com
Laks	IRA	captainira@att.net
MacLauchlin	Kari	kari.maclauchlin@gmail.com
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov
Neer	Julie	julie.neer@safmc.net
Smart	Tracey	smartt@dnr.sc.gov
Waugh	Gregg	gregg.waugh@safmc.net
brouwer	myra	myra.brouwer@safmc.net
vara	mary	mary.vara@noaa.gov
Howington	Kathleen	kathleen.howington@safmc.com