

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL

**Hilton Garden Inn
N. Charleston, SC**

SUMMARY MINUTES

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel

Jim Atack, Chair
Wesley Covington
James Freeman
Jimmy Hull
Robert Lorenz
Wayne Mershon
Red Munden
Kerry Marhefka
Richard Stiglitz
Dr. Todd Kellison

Kenny Fex
Don DeMaria
Judy Helmey
Robert Johnson
Milton Mathis
David Moss
Scott Osborne
Rodney Smith
David Snyder

Council Members

Ben Hartig
Mel Bell
Zack Bowen
Chris Conklin

Dr. Michelle Duval
Anna Beckwith
Mark Brown
Jack Cox

Council Staff

Gregg Waugh
Roger Pugliese
Dr. Mike Errigo
Chip Collier
Julia Byrd
Julie O'Dell

Amber von Harten
Myra Brouwer
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
Dr. Brian Chevront
Mike Collins

Observers/Participants

Joey Ballenger

Dr. Will Heyman

Other Observers Attached

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Cypress Room of the Hilton Garden Inn, North Charleston, South Carolina, April 13, 2015, and was called to order at 1:30 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Jim Attack.

MR. ATACK: Good afternoon, everyone. We've got some new members here since the last meeting, so it might be good to start at one end and everybody introduce themselves.

MR. DeMARIA: Don DeMaria, commercial fisherman, Key West, Florida.

MR. JOHNSON: Robert Johnson, charter/headboat, northeast Florida, St. Augustine.

Mr. LORENZ: Bob Lorenz, Wilmington, North Carolina; recreational fisherman.

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

DR. KELLISON: Todd Kellison, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Beaufort, North Carolina.

MR. ATACK: Jim Attack, North Carolina. I do a lot of spearfishing.

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

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

MR. MATHIS: Milton Mathis, commercial fisherman, Morehead City, North Carolina.

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

MR. SNYDER: Dave Snyder, restaurant owner/chef, recreational fisherman and soon to be charter captain.

MS. HELMEY: Judy Helmey, Miss Judy Charters, Savannah, Georgia; charter fishing.

MS. MARHEFKA: Kerry Marhefka, Charleston, South Carolina, wholesale dealer and commercial fishing wife.

MR. OSBORNE: Scott Osborne, commercial fisherman, Stuart, Florida.

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

MR. ATACK: I guess the next thing we need to do is go into the agenda. Everyone has had a chance to look at the agenda; and if there are no changes, then we'll adopt the agenda. The agenda is adopted. Next is the minutes. Everybody has had a chance to look the minutes. Are there any

changes anybody has to the minutes? If not, we will accept them and adopt the minutes. The minutes are adopted. We will move into the status of amendments.

MS. BROUWER: What I'm going to do first is take you through Attachment 1 of your briefing book, which is just the status and update of recently completed amendments and amendments that we're working on. I'm going to go through this rather quickly because we're going to get into a lot more detail on a lot of these documents later today and tomorrow.

Regulatory Amendment 16 is what we're going to start off with today after I'm done with this. Brian will come up here and you'll get to hear about that. That is the amendment that addresses the black sea bass pot closure. There is also another action that deals with modifications to black sea bass pots to aid in identification of any whale entanglements. In March the council selected a preferred for Action 1 for this amendment; and we're looking at public hearings in August of this year.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 36; again, you'll hear a lot about this one at this meeting. We're going to have a workshop this evening; and then tomorrow we'll hear a lot more about it. This is the amendment that would identify spawning special management zones for protection for snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic.

It also has an action that would revise the boundary of one of the Deepwater MPAs, the Charleston Deep Reef MPA. It has an action that would address transit and anchoring provisions within any newly designated SMZ. For this one, we're going to actually have two rounds of public hearings. There is going to be a round of public hearings next week conducted through webinar; and then the council is going to get input from the public in June; and then approve the amendment for a second round of public hearings that would take place in August of this year.

We're looking at the council approving this amendment for formal review at their September 2015 meeting. If you have any questions or I'm going too fast, please stop me. Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 20 is one that was submitted recently. This one deals with snowy grouper. It establishes a rebuilding strategy and it changes the ACL based on a recent stock assessment.

The ACL goes up a little bit. One of the things with this one is it actually changed the commercial and recreational allocations. That was due to the inclusion of Monroe County landings for snowy grouper. It put in a 200 pound trip limit and it established a one snowy grouper per vessel per day in May through August for the recreational sector. Right now the comments are being taken by NMFS. The proposed rule published last week; so they're taking comments until May 8th.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 22; this is one that you're heard about over the last three years or so. We have been talking about it a lot. It is the one that the council was considering to establish a recreational tag program for the deep-water species that have a low recreational ACL. In March the council basically decided to postpone further discussion on this amendment; and so we've put this on hold for now.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 29; this is the one that adjusts the ACL for snapper grouper species that don't have stock assessments based on the only-reliable-catch methodology of the ABC

Control Rule. It also makes changes to management of gray triggerfish. We still expecting publication of the final rule. We did get a letter from NMFS indicating the amendment had been approved, but there hasn't been a final rule published yet; so I don't know when the regulations are going to be effective – hopefully, this month or next month. Yes, Kenny.

MR. FEX: Is that going to go in effect and stop the harvest of the triggerfish in time or are they going to just let this season roll forward. That is a question wants to know.

MS. BROUWER: I'm not sure about that, Kenny. I guess that depends on where we are in the ACL by the time the rule goes into place; and then they will have to compare the landings. The ACL for triggerfish is going up by a good bit, so I would think that it really wouldn't affect that; but I don't know.

Okay, Snapper Grouper Amendment 32 is the one that deals with blueline tilefish. It took blueline tilefish out of the Deepwater Complex. Recall that we had a temporary measure that was put in place to control harvest while we developed Amendment 32 because blueline tilefish was found to be overfished and undergoing overfishing. This one was recently approved.

It put in a 100-pound trip limit for blueline in the South Atlantic. It reduced the total ACL to 35,632 pounds; and it put in a one per vessel per day recreational limit from May through August for blueline tilefish. We're going to talk a little bit more about blueline tilefish tomorrow. This one became effective on March 30th.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 22 looks at gag and wreckfish; and it is one that some folks have been asking about a good bit. There is actually no proposed rule that has been published yet. The amendment was submitted to NMFS for formal review at the end of February, so we're still waiting to hear when the proposed rule is going to be published.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 33; again there is no proposed rule that has been published. It was submitted to NMFS. This one modifies what is currently allowed by recreational fishermen to bring snapper grouper fillets from The Bahamas.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 34 basically just makes all the accountability measures compatible and consistent throughout. It was submitted and there is no proposed rule on that one either. Snapper Grouper Amendment 35 would remove four species from the FMU, black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany and schoolmaster. It also includes an action to address the issue that we were having with the golden tilefish longline endorsements. We're putting the final touches on it; and we're going to show it to the council in June. It should be ready to be submitted shortly after.

We're going to talk a lot about Snapper Grouper Amendment 37, which is one that we were just given direction to begin work on; so I'm going to defer talking about that one until later this afternoon. Another one that the council gave us guidance to being work on in March was Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 23. This one would deal with golden tilefish.

Back in 2013 the council looked at potential ways to extend the longline season for the commercial guys that have the endorsements. We did some preliminary analyses. The industry had asked that

the council look specifically at doing two weeks on and two weeks off or fishing every other week to see if that would have an effect on lengthening the season. We showed those analyses to the council I believe in June of 2013; and at that time the council said, "You know what; never mind, let's not continue because the industry said that this is really not going to do a whole lot to lengthen the season."

That went away and now it has come back. Based on industry comments and requests that have come forth to the council, they're going to look again at ways to extend that season. Also, based on input from the AP, in fact, they would like to modify the start date for the fishing year for the hook-and-line sector. There is an action to do that in that amendment as well. We will talk a little bit more about that one tomorrow.

There is a series of generic amendments. Again, you're going to get updates on all these tomorrow. There is a Joint Commercial Logbook Amendment that Gregg is going to talk about. The Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 is one that has sort of been kind of sitting on the back burner for a while. It deals with bycatch. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center and the Regional Office is putting together a comprehensive bycatch reporting system for the southeast. This is the vehicle that would be utilized to implement that system. We're just waiting to see what they come up with.

There is a Joint Charterboat Logbook Amendment that we're working on and Gregg is going to give us an update about. It is pretty exciting. Recall that last year we had Francine Karp come and give the AP a demonstration. In Rhode Island they put together a pilot study using tablets to do electronic reporting.

She has actually put together, with council staff, a really nice proposal that we're going to submit to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation later this week. It would help that process along, so that is really exciting. Gregg will tell you a little bit more about that tomorrow. That is what I have in the way of kind of a round-up of what we've been up to. If there are any questions, I'd be happy to take those.

MR. ATACK: Okay, we'll move into Brian's presentation on Regulatory Amendment 16.

DR. CHEUVRONT: You have an attachment in your briefing book that is the summary document for Regulatory Amendment 16 to the snapper grouper fishery for the South Atlantic Region. I just want to give you some background on this. You've seen versions of this document a couple of time already. The last time you saw it was last October. There hadn't been any real analysis of the alternative that existed at that time.

Since then the council has worked on this document twice, in December and then again in March. The recommendation from this AP in October was to remove the closure altogether. In December the council actually removed that alternative from the alternatives under consideration. They didn't think that was a viable alternative to consider any longer.

Then they also added a considerable number of other alternatives as well. What I want to do is I'm going to give you a little bit of background leading up to where to where we got to in this

document, and then I'm going to go through the alternatives. It is going to be fairly quick because it is going to be very overwhelming when you see all these different alternatives.

What I'm going to do is explain to you in a rather short-hand way, cut to the chase, what is the difference between each of these different alternatives, so you can get a feel for what the council is dealing with. Then we can go into some discussion about the analysis of the differences between the alternatives and then you can have some discussion about what your recommendations will be to the council, if that is okay with everybody.

Then we'll go on to the second action because the council added a second action as well to this amendment. The thing that I want to sort of focus on in the history of management; you can see here in 2006 we started with Amendment 13C. Quite a bit has happened in the management of the black sea bass fishery, particularly the pot fishery, since Amendment 13C.

As you'll recall we had the step-down in what became the commercial ACL, down to 309,000 pounds by 2008. We had a couple of other requirements for the pot fishery. It requires two-inch mesh on the pots and changed the fishing year to go from June through May. That went along for several years. In 2002 the council, through Amendment 18A, reduced the participation in the pot fishery down to 32 endorsements.

Then there was a thousand pound commercial trip limit. There was now a maximum of 35 traps per vessel. The size limit was increased to 11 inches and then pots had to be brought to shore at the end of each trip. In essence what they did is created a limited day boat fishery. Then Regulatory Amendment 19, after the stock assessment, the stock has done really well, and so the commercial ACL went up from 309,000 pounds gutted weight to 780,000 pounds whole weight.

Then because of the huge increase in the ACL, there was concern that the commercial fishery was going to last much longer. In doing that, there was some concern now that there might be some interactions with North Atlantic right whales. The council was advised at that time that if they left the pot fishery open during the right whale season; that there was a good chance that it would trigger a new biological opinion; and it was going to take a while before that new ACL would then be able to be passed on to the fishermen.

The council, at that time, decided, okay, what we're going to do is we're going to put in a closure of the pot fishery from November 1 through April 30th; and we'll come back to that issue later when we have more time. The issue was they wanted to get that ACL out to the fishermen as soon as possible. That is what happened with Regulatory Amendment 19.

Then last year Regulatory Amendment 14; they changed the commercial fishing year. The commercial year is now January to December; and they put in a hook-and-line trip limit of 300 pounds during the black sea bass pot closure. That is kind of where we are. You can see a lot of things have happened.

When we got to going back to the pot fishery issue and that closure from November through April, the idea was that everybody kind of knew that once they considered reopening the pot fishery

during that November to April period, it was going to trigger another biological opinion to see what the impact would be on endangered species.

The table that I'm showing up here now shows you in some numbers here how the changes in the black sea bass pot fishery went over the years. If you look at 2002 to 2006 – this is pre-2006 the biological opinion – the number of vessels averaged over 40 vessels per year. You look at the numbers of trips, there were – now, exclude 2006 because 2006 the biological opinion went into effect in June, so that about split it in half, but the two aren't additive when you start looking at numbers of vessels because some of the same vessels participated before the biological opinion and some participated afterwards.

But when you look at it, you're looking at an average over 500 trips were taken per year easily; and there was at least 40 vessels on average participating in the fishery. After the biological opinion that came out in 2006, which said that there was no issue with black sea bass pots and northern right whales, you can see the average number of vessels went down, the average number of trips went down, and you can also see that the average number of landings went down.

If you look at the very bottom, at the average, you've got prior to the 2006 biological opinion there were 43 vessels on average; after there was 35. The average number of trips was 675 before the biological opinion and less than 400 afterwards. The average landings went down by about 100,000 pounds per year. There were some real changes that occurred.

Some people are saying so what is the concern now? If the 2006 biological opinion found out that there was no real impact between North Atlantic right whales and the black sea bass pot fishery, what is the new increased concern now? Well, there has been some additional research that has been done. There has been more sightings of whales.

They've been seen during calving periods off of the Carolinas, and there is just more information that is available. It is pretty much going to be a done deal that if the council chooses something other than status quo, which is keeping the pot fishery completely closed from November through April, that there is going to be a new biological opinion.

Now, the other thing that was news to a lot of folks is that when they start a new biological opinion, they don't go back to the last biological opinion to look at changes between what happened since the last biological opinion and now. What they do is now is the status quo; and so they're going to look at changes between what exists now and what is being proposed for the future.

All the restrictions that occurred in the black sea bass pot fishery over those years from 2006 through 2014, they're not included in terms of looking at the new biological opinion. It is going to be a whole new assessment based on the status quo now is the baseline and looking at what is being proposed for the future. That came as a surprise to a lot of folks, to say the least.

MR. FEX: I have a question on this table. Pre-2006, were some of those trips, were they all just fishing days or some of those trips multi-days, which would then affect that number; and then also wasn't there an ACL that closed the season in like '11 or '12 or whatever. There were some season closures that cut the number of trips short in certain years.

Then when the ACL was increased again, I guess that data is not up there either. So when you just look at number of trips, it really doesn't tell the whole picture because some of those trips – and landings are due to ACLs and closed seasons and the trips may have been for multiple day trips before.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, some of those trips before are multi-day trips; but that was okay because the multi-day trips – let me back up – did not go into effect until July of 2012 that it had to be a single-day trip. So the number of days per trip, almost all of those could have been multi-day trips. The thing is what this table is trying to show is that, yes, the number of trips taken and pounds landed were affected by the ACLs. What this is showing is that the fishery had been slowed down greatly over what it had been prior to 2006. Management was the reason that caused some of these issues.

MR. HULL: What was the last year that we were able to finish in the wintertime?

DR. CHEUVRONT: It was the 2008/2009 season was the last time that you went all the way through. I think in 2010 – yes, in 2009 you went through December; and after that, until last year, there was no commercial fishery in December.

MR. HULL: So the pot fishery started being restricted in 2009; not by reaching the ACL and not fishing in the winter, but I mean by regulation in 2009.

DR. CHEUVRONT: That's correct.

MR. JOHNSON: When they issue that biological opinion that is on the fishery as a whole correct? That is not just the sea bass pot fishery; that is the whole fishery?

DR. CHEUVRONT: That will be the whole snapper grouper fishery, and this will be a part of it. Okay, this purpose and need for action that is being considered by the council has been a moving target. As the council has gotten more feeling for what they are going to be able to do, they've had to modify the purpose to help them fit what their intended goal is.

Right now the purpose for action – and I will just go ahead and read it into the record and then followed by the need and discuss that if you want to talk about that at all before we get into the actual actions themselves:

The purpose of Regulatory Amendment 16 is to reconsider the annual November 1 through April 30 prohibition on the use of black sea bass pot gear and to restore the black sea bass commercial sector fishery closer to the balance between pot and other gear components that existed prior to changes in management caused by early season closures due to the commercial ACL being met. The amendment will enhance buoy line/weak link gear requirements and buoy line rope marking for black sea bass pots required by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, to help identify black sea bass pot gear used in the South Atlantic.

The need for the amendment is to reverse adverse socioeconomic impacts to black sea bass pot endorsement holders created by the existing closure implemented through Regulatory Amendment 19 and encourage the use of pot gear, which is more selective for legal-sized black sea bass and results in fewer dead discards of black sea bass, while continuing to afford protection to ESA-listed whales in the South Atlantic Region.

Now, before we have any discussion of this, one of the motions that was made by this advisory panel was that you had recommended that the council consider having separate sub-ACLs for pot fishery versus the hook-and-line fishery. You need to understand right now there is only one ACL. If the council moves as much as possible towards encouraging more pot landings of black sea bass, if the entire ACL is going to be met, it would come that there would be reduced landings therefore from the hook-and-line fishery.

Right now without a separate ACL, one would take from the other or vice versa. Right now the imbalance is a much larger percentage of the ACL is being caught by the hook-and-line fishery than used to be the case prior to the closures that occurred. It has actually been kind of reversed, and that is the situation we find ourselves in now.

MR. HULL: Just to comment on that; and there is a good reason for that, and that is because traditionally we catch our bass in the wintertime and that is when they pot up. Just quickly, while I can, the purpose and need the council has here is pretty adequate. What we need as a pot fishery is to be able to fish in the wintertime.

Now, how can we accomplish that and still protect whales? Well, I think that's the goal that we have to have is we have to be able to pot fish in the winter and still get by protected resources what we are able to do. We have to do it spatially at a certain depth where they have lots of information about where these whales are migrate and calving. I mean that ought to be the goal is we need to open the fishery so that we can utilize this stock.

DR. CHEUVRONT: You're jumping a little bit ahead of me there, Jimmy because when you look at what the council's alternative and subalternative is, you will see that was basically what their goal is or what they're trying to do. What you all need to look at, when we get to that point, is let us know whether you think that they should have chosen different alternative or subalternative or whatever if that is the goal that you think that the council should be striving for as well. Is there any question or a clarification needed about the purpose and need?

MR. ATACK: We're saying that the pot gear is more selective per legal-sized black sea bass. That is in the need for action; but doesn't pot gear also catch other fish; and isn't there discards associated with those. And isn't there also, when you have ghost pots, high bycatch mortality on lost pots?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Actually, by catch is pretty low in black sea bass pots. There is not really much else that they're catching. A lot of other species that are around there just won't go into the pot. They also have a biodegradable panel on that. The ghost fishing for a lost trap, while it might take a week or two for that panel to degrade, generally the fish do escape and the pot stops fishing.

Like I said, there are two actions here; and the first one is going to be to look at modifying that November 1 through April 30 prohibition on the use of black sea bass pot gear. As always, Alternative 1 is the no action alternative, which means that closure would remain in place. I've got maps to show you, and we'll go through all those as well.

Alternative 2 would simply have the only closure that would be in place from November 15 through April 15 would be the North Atlantic Right Whale Critical Habitat designated area. Right now it is this area off of Georgia, roughly around the Altamaha River down to 28 degrees north latitude.

Alternative 3 looks at what is probably the North Atlantic right whale calving habitat, which we now know is not exactly that same area that is shown in Alternative 2 – and also off the Carolinas that they extended the model; the right whale calving habitat area goes up as far as Cape Hatteras. There have been observed at least one or two young calves south of Cape Fear. What they did is they just extended from Cape Fear up to Cape Hatteras the same bathymetric depth; so you can see this proposed closed area.

MR. LORENZ: Just one question to understand this a little better. What made the definition of the critical habitat and we can then calving habitat? When I first read this, I kind of felt that the calving is critical.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I think the critical habitat was established a number of years ago, and there has been additional research done with whales that have shown that whales actually appear to be doing some calving outside of that critical habitat area. This area shown in Alternative 3 up through Cape Fear, which is where I'm pointing to right now, that is shown to be areas where it is likely that calving could occur. Some of it has been observed; so it basically went further north.

Alternative 4 basically represents 25 meters or shallower from Cape Canaveral to Savannah and then from about 30 meters or shallower from the Georgia/South Carolina Border to Cape Hatteras. You can see how much further we're getting offshore here. These are closed areas where it is thought that perhaps whales might be coming through.

Alternative 5; the closure is based on information received from NGOs about where likely the whales are to be, and this represents the 75th percentile of sightings, which is 91 percent historical sightings. Let's look down at this one; and you can see all of these areas that we're talking about now up to this point are areas that would under these alternatives remain closed from November through April.

Alternative 6 is the last one of these that does that; it would stay closed throughout the entire period. Basically what you could do is you could fish further out. Of course, the issue is that if you know the black sea bass pot fishery; in the wintertime the fish tend to come in closer to shore. The further you go offshore, the far less likely you're to be encountering these fish and being able to get them in traps in the wintertime.

This Alternative 6 is a modification based on comments received from some environmental groups that was proposed as a potential reasonable alternative. You can see there are some modifications.

It is a little closer inshore between Cape Lookout and Cape Hatteras; but you can see it is pretty much a straight line at this point between 18 and 19, cutting off basically Georgia and much of North Florida.

Now, what happens, though, is when we start getting to Alternative 7 we start getting to not just area closures but time closures, trying to look at making this a little less shotgun approach and a little more surgical. The idea is let's try to have some alternatives that allows fishing when the whales are not likely to be present even though there is that November to April time period.

If you look at Subalternative 7A, basically it says that, okay, this area on this map that I'm going to show you is Subalternative 7A says we're going to close it from November 1 through 15 and March 15 through April 30. The rest of the time when there are few whales going through, we're likely to leave that open.

7B is for the area off North and South Carolina. The pot closure is from November 1 through December 15 and March 15 through April 30; and for off of Georgia and Florida it is going to apply November 15 through April 15; the reason being is that the whales hang out off of Georgia and Florida, that northern Florida and Georgia area.

7C is for North Carolina and South Carolina; the closure applies from February 15 through April 30; and off of Georgia and Florida, it closes from November 15 through April 30; the idea being that only February 15 to April 30, that likely when calves are present. Obviously, before that, if they're swimming down to the calving grounds, they're not likely to have had the calves yet.

When you count all the alternatives and subalternatives, there are 14 alternatives; so this is why it is so complicated. Here is the area that we're looking at. You can see off of the Carolinas we're looking at about a 25 meter depth closure; and down here off of Georgia and Florida, you can see the closure there.

Alternative 8 looks at closures off of North Carolina at 25 meters; and there is a closure – let's see, the closure for off of Florida and Georgia matches what was in Alternative 5, I believe. Subalternative 8A is looking at the closure from November 1 to April 15. Subalternative 8B off of the Carolinas is November 1 through December 15 when whales are likely to be passing through; and then again February 15 through April 30 when they're heading back north. For the area off of Georgia and Florida it would go from November 15 to April 15. You can see here closures here; and that is at the 25 meter depth there.

Okay, now we getting to the council's preferred alternative and subalternative. What this would be is that the black sea bass pot closure applies to an area annually from November 1 through April 15. They're going to say let's apply it for the entire period. Alternative 9B was a closure from November 15 to December 15 and then February 15 through 30 off the Carolinas and then the closure from November 15 to April 15 off of Georgia and Florida.

This would basically set the closure at 20 meters; and here is the map of that; so you can see where the 20 meter depth is off these different areas. Then the last alternative got to be really rather

complicated. It is a combination partially of 8 and 9; and what it would do is that it considered allowing fishing to occur closer to shore at the 20 meter depth during the winter months.

The fish do tend to school up closer to shore in the winter months; and so it would look at having a 20 meter depth for the winter months, so the idea of November 1 through December 15; and then from February 15 to April 30 it would be a 25 meter depth. That would be off the Carolinas. The Florida closure would stay the same as it was before, and so I can show you here.

There is actually two maps for this alternative because there was the first one showing the 20 meter closure and then the 25 meter closure later in the year when the calves are coming back. That is all the alternatives and there is a lot. What the council has chosen is the one that they think is going to allow fishing to be able to occur during some of the winter months while still providing some protection to the North Atlantic right whale.

Now, we also need to make sure we all understand that there has never been a documented interaction between black sea bass pot gear and North Atlantic right whales; but that does not mean it has never happened. It just means that whatever gear was found could not be linked to that fishery; so there is some uncertainty there, but there has been anything that was documented. The council's approach at this point is let's be cautious but do what we can to try to allow some fishing to occur.

Now, if you want to, you could talk about some of these alternatives now, but there is some additional analysis that we can show about what the different impacts of the different alternatives would be. Mr. Chairman, I'll leave it to you decide how you want to go with that.

MR. ATACK: Well, down in the document there are the landings and dollar amount for the different alternatives, right?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, there are.

MR. ATACK: And you've got Alternatives 1 through 10; and it looks like no matter what alternative you pick, you're going to be within 5 or 6 percent of the economic value, right?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Roughly, yes. The big difference is the different alternatives will allow the shifting of some of those landings perhaps from the hook-and-line sector now to be more into the pot sector or something like that. What the council has chosen as Subalternative 9A will allow for an increase percentage of the overall ACL to be caught by the pot sector.

On this table that I'm showing you now, unless you really want to get into all the nitty-gritty of the estimates that were derived, there were several scenarios that had to be used to make some estimates here; because it has been since 2009 since we've had a fishery that ran all year long that was unrestricted in terms of hook and line and pot landings.

We had to try to figure out different ways to estimate how the fishery is going to behave in the future. There are two different types of scenarios. There were pot location scenarios where the

fishermen actually fished the pots; and then there were catch rate scenarios by pot because they weren't same always over time.

These four scenarios are looking at different individual pot catch rates. When I did the analyses for the economic analysis, I only used one of the pot locations scenarios. The other two scenarios were based on where pots were placed in the 2008/2009 season or based on where they were placed from June to October of 2013.

The one that I used was the average number of pots from the 2006/2007 season to the 2008/2009 season. Basically instead of using just one year, I used the average years to determine where those pots might be, assuming that fishermen could fish pots where they wanted to, those who had the endorsements, that they would probably fall somewhere within an average would be a better estimate as opposed to a single year where they actually put them.

That is the way that analysis was done. If you look at this table here that I've got, it shows the estimated dates when the ACL is expected to be caught based on the different characteristics. The council's preferred, Subalternative 9A, right now basically has the ACL probably being caught up some time in October to early November. Anyway, I just wanted to put that out there and that is what we're looking at there.

MR. ATACK: The other thing is depending on how big the biomass is will affect your landings, right? Like if you went out there now with pots versus back in 2010 or whatever year it was when it was overfished and overfishing was occurring, your landings per trip would be a lot different.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, that's true; that is part of the whole thing. The problems that we had was how are we going to estimate now? We've got an ACL that is probably twice as high as what they were fishing on before; and there are only 32 endorsement holders that can participate in this pot fishery. Before there was no restriction on anybody. As long as they had a snapper grouper endorsement, they could fish pots in this fishery. Well, that's not the case anymore. It is just these 32 endorsement holders.

MR. JOHNSON: So there was no discussion at all in any of these alternatives about a separate hook-and-line allocation like was done in the golden tilefish fishery?

DR. CHEUVRONT: That has been mentioned briefly. It came up at the last council meeting; and I'm not sure if the council is going to want to pursue that; and if so, when they do that. I don't think there was just any total opposition or anything to the idea. I think the concept is not as well defined by the council at this point as it is to deal with this pot closure issue.

MR. JOHNSON: But we're talking about 32 vessels and we're talking about a very large ACL; and you talk about lifting these restrictions to allow them to fish during the best time of the year to fish, which they're going to catch them. I used to pot fish. As most you know, I lost my endorsement – we didn't have endorsements. I lost my right to do that.

Just speaking for hook-and-line guys, I have an issue of just opening everything up just for 32 boats; nothing against pot fishermen. I have some friends that are pot fishermen. I don't understand why it wasn't discussed more.

DR. DUVAL: Robert, we have talked about it briefly on and off at the council level. I think, as Brian said, we've been so sort of consumed with putting together this document and what our options might be in terms of modifying the closure that we have right now that is EEZ wide and prohibits part of the fishery from just participating at all.

This may be going out on a limb; I don't think anyone is adverse to discussing having a specific allocation for the hook-and-line sector should this be modified. I think we're just in such a holding pattern of uncertainty right now that we don't know what is going to forward. I certainly think it would be fair given what we've done with the golden filefish fishery.

MR. MUNDEN: A couple of comments and then I have a question or two for Brian. In my other half of my semi-retired marine biologist life, I represent North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries on the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team as well as three other marine mammal take reduction teams.

Currently the National Marine Fisheries Service has a proposal out to increase the critical habitat for North Atlantic right whales up to Cape Fear. All of these options, other than number two, extend the closed areas all the way up to Cape Hatteras. My question for Brian is did the staff consider cutting off the designation of this critical habitat the Cape Fear Boundary rather than going all the way up to Cape Hatteras?

DR. CHEUVRONT: The council did not give us any direction to cut it off at Cape Fear; so there was no consideration given to alternatives that would cut it off at Cape Fear. If you look at the proposed expansion of the critical habitat area, in many of these alternatives – I don't know that I've looked at specifically for Subalternative 9A – the proposed area pretty much lines up with a lot of these that we have here.

However, if the proposed area is expanded, that does not mean that there is automatically going to be changes to any of these alternatives. Even if Alternative 2 was chosen by the council as their preferred alternative, just because that critical habitat area got expanded; that does not mean that the allowable fishing areas for black sea bass pots would change at that time. It would take additional action.

MR. MUNDEN: And as a follow-up comment, the proposed rules set to expand the critical habitat specifically states that there are no new restrictions included for commercial fishing. However, as a take reduction team, we are very concerned about the area all the way from New England down to the calving area as a migration route; so, surely, if, indeed, pots were prohibited all the way up to Cape Hatteras during certain times of the year, that would have an impact on the protection of the migration corridor. However, again, I think it is ironic that what is being proposed by the National Marine Fisheries Service doesn't extend the critical habitat any further than Cape Fear. I'm just curious as to whether or not that was taken into consideration, but you did answer my question.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I think as far as Cape Fear, it was because – and Mike Errigo has come to the table to probably elaborate on this – is I think that there was one whale that has actually calved I think twice near the Cape Fear area, and that is part of the reason why it was extended up that far.

DR. ERRIGO: Here is what is going on. It is rather complicated. The critical area that is being designated is not right whale migration critical habitat. It is right whale calving critical habitat; so that's why it doesn't extend further than Cape Fear. It is designated based on a model that was created, a statistical model that used aerial survey data and things like that and sightings of whales to figure out where they might be calving.

There is a lot that is going on over there and I won't bother you with the details of that. What the council has to consider is that when they do their biological opinion they're not just going to look at where right whales are calving but also migration and things like that; so are they going to interact with right whales even when they're passing through and not when they're calving.

That is why they're considering the whole area and not just where critical habitat is. That is where that is coming in. If anyone is interested in all the modeling and craziness that is going on with the new critical habitat, I'd be more than happy to talk with you about it, but I won't bog down your discussions here.

MR. LORENZ: Just from living up in the Cape Fear area, near Wrightsville Beach, I cannot remember in the past thirteen years any calving occurring, but there have been two incidents and one quite public, 2006 or 2009, where a very small calf was right off our Johnnie Mercer Pier there. It wasn't more than a quarter mile from the beach. I believe this year if you'd look around mid-February, another female showed up with a calf, so they do occur.

An interesting thought to me would be I believe with these new weak lines and weak linkages, just thinking logically that's probably maybe not as much an issue. I think that would really help out the very large whales as far as going into the other areas like New England, but I guess we'd have to figure would they be still adequate with calves; therefore, making that determination of critical habitat something very important to think about even with the weak links and lines.

MR. ATACK: One question I had on the alternatives, if there is only a 5 or 6 percent difference in the monetary amount, which alternative offers the most protection since you're only talking about a 5 or 6 percent difference in dollar value?

DR. CHEUVRONT: You have to remember that when you're talking about the 5 or 6 percent different dollar value is that which gear group is that going to go to. Is that going to go to the hook-and-line or to the pot sector? Right now the council's purpose and need is that they want to try to shift more of it over to the pot sector to get it back closer to what the historical proportion had been.

There is this table that I've got up now that is taken from the document that shows potential overlap of pot-fishing gear, location and right whale observations for the Action 1 alternatives. Obviously,

when you're looking here, there is numbers one through fourteen and there is a few that are tied. If you're looking at one, it means that there is the least amount of chance of there being pot gear in the water when a right whale is being observed; the fourteen being the most likely, which is Alternative 2 which is currently the only critical habitat area closed.

You will see that right now the council's current preferred subalternative falls in that number seven, which is right in the middle. It is the idea that what they wanted to do is provide adequate protection for the ESA-listed whales while also allowing some pot fishing to occur in the wintertime. I'm not going to speak for what was going through council members' minds, but I think part of what was the logic here was they were looking for a balance between those two issues specifically in choosing the preferred alternative that they did.

MR. HULL: Jim, you're referring to the table that he had up there that was showing the economic analysis in the time of closure. I would just comment that things have changed so drastically in the fishery that most of that information I don't believe that we should give a whole lot of weight to in the snapper grouper fishery overall.

In all fisheries things have changed for fishermen so drastically in the last few years with regulations on different species that looking at the black sea bass pot landings over years of time before all these regulatory changes and looking at when they closed and when they didn't and all the different things that you'd have to look at, it would be pretty tough to come to something that I think that you could hang your hat on.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Jimmy, I think you're absolutely right. One of the issues that made this whole analysis so difficult was it has been a number of years since we've had a year-long fishery in black sea bass on the commercial side; and the other thing is that not only has it been a number of years, management has changed greatly over that time.

The best thing that we were able to do is to give our best guesstimate of what we think could happen in the future based on what has happened in the past. That is better than just an outright guess, but the accuracy of that I would have to say is probably much lower than, say, a modification of a fishery that had been fishing all year long for the last couple of years under unfettered conditions and now we're changing a few things, and we're going to try to predict what is going to happen next, because that fishery wouldn't be changing so much.

It is very, very difficult; and so in doing this analysis – and I did the economic analysis; and I'll you it was a real struggle trying to figure out exactly the best guesstimate of what we think could happen. There are some things that we do know pretty certainly; and I'd like to show you another few more graphics here.

One of the graphics here that I do want to show you in terms of the economics – and this is a key point in the economics is this one here that looked at how did we determine ex-vessel value price per pound of black sea bass was month by month. I've got two different estimates that I used at the time. One looked at the average price per pound – and I turned these all into 2013 dollars, so we're talking all the dollars match – by month for 2000 through 2013; and then again I did it for 2011 through 2013.

You see much more volatility in the blue line, that 2011 through 2013; and you can see that in the winter months the prices were way up high; but also remember there was not much fishing for black sea bass going on at that time so we had very small numbers that these were estimated on. No matter which version I used, they each had some weaknesses in it; so all the calculations that were done on the economics were done based on these basic core values.

MR. ATACK: A comment on that, if you go back to that graph for second, the other thing the AP recommended a couple of years ago was a change in the minimum size on black sea bass up to 12 inches. If your pots were changed and you only caught fish that was 12 inches or bigger, your dollar value will go from \$2.50 per pound to \$3.50 per pound just on the size of the fish. If you do have an ACL that is being met; that's another factor that would help them get more money at dockside for their landings.

DR. CHEUVRONT: This is one thing I wanted to show you historically, the percentage of black sea bass that were landed in each month. This takes data from June 2000 through May of 2009. I looked at the overall landings for a given year and then averaged for those ten years what percentage of the annual landings for that year were landed in each month.

If you look at November, December and January particularly, you find the highest percentages of the pot fishery being caught during those months. What happened is that the low ACL and the start of the fishing year in June 1 and the derby fishery that existed forced the vast majority of fish from 2009 through 2012 to be caught in this time period when traditionally the landings have been quite low.

One of the things that happened during that time period is that with so many fish getting into the market, the prices were depressed; and so when they were able to get the fish later in the season, the prices were higher. Here is some of the stuff that Jim was talking about when we talked about numbers.

Jimmy said take them with a grain salt, and I agree completely, but this is a very, very complicated table that looks at all four of those different catch rate scenarios, using the different ways of calculating price per pound and then figuring out what the best guesstimate would be of the value of the fishery based on how long the fishery would last and then what the dollar amount is for all of the different alternatives.

That's why we basically have this here; and it generally runs just under \$1.6 million up to almost \$2 million. This graphic here I wanted to show you; it may look a little confusing, but this is the value over here on this side and this looks at Scenario 1. If you look at the legend over here on the right-hand side, it will show you in comparison the value of the fishery, compared all the different alternatives compared to each other.

This one right here; that is status quo. As you can see, in almost every case status quo, which is keeping the fishery closed, appears to be quite a bit away from the rest of the other alternatives in terms of the value of the fishery. However, if you keep looking over here, this one case of Alternative 10, the reason why that's the case is because what this would be expected to do is to

have a higher percentage of the fish actually caught earlier in the year than is currently the case when the prices are lower. While the ACL would still be caught, they would actually be caught primarily when the price per pound of fish is lower.

MR. ATACK: So in all these scenarios, you're assuming the ACL is going to be met; is that what you're looking at?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, in almost all of the scenarios the ACL is expected to be met. There is another table up here that shows there are a few scenarios under Scenario 4 where there is no closure expected.

MR. ATACK: So really the dollar amount difference is the market value change?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes.

MR. ATACK: The price per pound?

DR. CHEUVRONT: The price per pound accounts for most of it. Most of these scenarios, except for Alternative 1, where there is no closure, at least 99 percent of the ACL is expected to be caught. I would say that is within the margin of error saying that the fishery basically would last all year long and practically all of the ACL would be likely to be caught based on our current estimates, except for Alternative 1. Alternative 1 only estimates that about 97 percent of the ACL would be caught.

That is kind of where we are with this. This I believe is the table that Jim was referring to about looking at the percentage of difference. It is roughly 5 to 6 percent between the dollar value, but the issue really is we can shift some of the dollar value from the hook-and-line fishery to the pot fishery. There is room for the council to have some wiggle room on how they want to see those landings occur.

MR. JOHNSON: Personally, I would like to see that allocation before we got this step simply because I think it got fairly close to being caught this year even with the sea bass pot. I don't know what it was, but in 2014 what was the final number; how close were we?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, remember they changed the fishing year; so the last year before that, it actually got up to 99 percent and change; so they did almost get it before, but there wasn't the total closure of the pot fishery I think at that time.

MR. JOHNSON: But that was under the restriction of 35 pots?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: So those were in place. I think we can assume that if it is opened up during the wintertime, the ACL is going to be met and it is going to be met mainly because of the pot fishery, which historically used to catch the bulk of it. I get that, but there is nothing going on historically like it used to be historically. Let's just face that; the fishery is changing.

I don't think we can constantly be trying to take a fishery back to how it used to be historically. I think everybody in this room would love to do that with red snapper and a lot of other species, but we can't do that. Again, nothing against sea bass pot fishermen, but I'd like to see the hook-and-line guys who make up the bulk of the participants in the fishery have something other than just basically – I'm getting off track; I'm sorry.

MR. ATACK: Yes, plus if you do that, then if it closes earlier you've got more bycatch at the end of the year by the hook-and-line guys bandit fishing. The other question I had was right now when is the spawning season for black sea bass? Isn't that like February, March and April? Right now if you change this and you do a lot more pot fishing in January through, you're going to take some of that spawning mass out, which is going to affect your MSY.

DR. CHEUVRONT: The spawning season for black sea bass I believe is one of those ones that is a rolling thing. The further north you go, the later the season starts. I think by the time you're getting up to North Carolina it is really well into late February/March before you're starting to see the spawning season occur in North Carolina.

MR. FEX: Peak spawning is February through April.

MR. ATACK: I know we were out there in March and they were all loaded up. I had a biologist on the boat. They were spawning; they were marked up. We had 16-inch sea bass that were full of roe, so it was a good time of year that it is kind of nice that they're not being taken out at that time.

DR. BALLENGER: Joey Ballenger, SCDNR MARMAP. I just wanted to speak to the spawning season question a little bit. We have shown through our sampling pretty much what you guys are saying. They peak somewhere late January through late March, maybe early April, depending on the region, but it is pretty much peaking coastwide during that point in time.

MR. HULL: A question for you, Joey; when do black sea bass become mature and have their first spawning season?

DR. BALLENGER: I believe at the most recent SEDAR, females are mature by age one and pretty much are spawning the following spring; so 50 percent maturity and 100 percent by age three, I believe.

MR. HULL: And the spawning season, we talked about the peak; but how long would you estimate the spawning season would be?

DR. BALLENGER: I don't remember that off the top of my head. I would have to look back the SEDAR documents.

MR. HULL: Months?

DR. BALLENGER: It is months; it is a couple or three months.

MR. FEX: Robert, would you like to make a motion on the allocation separation?

MR. JOHNSON: I don't think that is necessary. We've already made that motion to the council before as an AP; so for the sake of the council members present, I just wanted them to hear my concerns; because I think if we're going to open this thing up during the wintertime, we need to set aside something for the hook-and-line guys because they're not going to have any fish. It is going to be caught. I used to pot fish; they're effective. I know what they do, especially in the winter you catch them.

DR. CHEUVRONT: What I've got up here now is the motion that you made in October; and it was that you recommend that the council consider a separate ACL for the commercial hook-and-line sector for black sea bass if the current closure on black sea bass pots is removed. That is what you passed in October.

MR. LORENZ: I just might want to say I'm new to this; but with that motion, it looks to me like with the black sea bass, a lot would be changed with all these alternatives changing perhaps where you allow fishing or not, the concern with the ACL; but if you're going through all these changes, I'd like to go with what Jim said. Would there not be one more you could throw in there?

Is it not possible that the pot fishermen could have a different minimum size limit if such would be effective; and they can release those fish as not dead regulatory discards? Because then fewer fish, if they get more money per pound, it may actually make some sense and still stay within the ACL.

MR. HULL: If I could comment on that; I'm an active fisherman. Right now we have a gear that is very effective at grading out undersized fish at a two-inch square mesh. If you increased the size limit – and I know that Tom is working on this and some other guys are working on some experimental mesh – we're not overall opposed to a size increase, but we need to figure a way to catch them with our pots so we don't have a bunch of regulatory discards.

That we do not want to have. Right now we went to the two-inch mesh, and it was absolutely perfect for a 10-inch fish. So now we went to an 11 and we do have a little bit of discard now at the 11 with the two-inch square. If we were to go bigger, we're going to be kicking back an awful lot of 11-inch fish and a lot of those are going to die and they're going to be counted against us.

That is something that I personally am really opposed to is wasting fish. The gear we have now does a great job with the size limit that we have. If we go messing with the size limit, which I'm not opposed to, but we need to develop gear that is going to be able to do that in a good fashion.

MR. ATACK: I know Tom has been working on that. It has been three or four years ago and he has been doing research on it. It is a matter of going to a 2-3/8th or 2.5 inch mesh size; he has got it and then the pots can be phased out. I agree; we don't want to really change that size without changing the mesh size because we don't want the mortality. They should be pretty close to saying it has got to 2-3/8th or 2.5 inch, and then we can change the regulations and then it would be great. We get more dollars for our fish, less discards.

MR. HULL: I would caution saying they're pretty close to anything in any of this; but it seems like we've been talking about a lot of this for a long, long time.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Mr. Chairman, that's really all that I have for this action; so if you guys want to have more discussion or motions or anything, this is probably a good time to deal with that.

MR. JOHNSON: I just have one more question. Do all of these alternatives – would they all trigger a biological opinion other than the no action?

DR. CHEUVRONT: It is thought that, yes, that is probably the case. It is not definite but probably most any of them would trigger a biological opinion.

MR. ATACK: My one question earlier was of the alternatives, which one gave the most protection there for the – because really you're saying 5 to 6 percent difference in sales. It is really all based on dollars per pound because you're saying you're going to catch the ACL no matter what.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Here it is. In essence, basically, the lower the number, the less likelihood you're going to have overlap between the presence of black sea bass pots and North Atlantic right whales.

MR. ATACK: So what you're looking at is Alternatives 4, 5 and 6 I guess would give you your most protection; is that what you're saying?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, if you're looking off of – yes, basically 4, 5 and 6 would – if you're looking at 4 and 6; off of Florida and South Carolina provide about the same amount of protection; whereas, Alternative 6 off of North Carolina would provide almost the same amount of protection as Alternative 1, which is the complete closure.

MR. HULL: With the options you have with the alternatives, some alternatives deal with spatial – it is all depth contours that we're dealing with here and where you get these different protections. As far as the calving, the calves, they need to be on the shoreline. They need to be in shallower water to survive; they're delicate.

As you push us offshore, it becomes harder for us to fish, but there are possibilities that we can still adapt and fish further offshore if need be; but we should be able to have a give and take here with Protected Resources. There should be a compromise as to – and I think that is what the council tried to do with their preferred is they tried to find some compromise and working with it.

There were a couple of those alternatives, one in particular that pushed us so far offshore that we couldn't fish at all. It put us out there; we're going to be highly migratory species fishing out there. There is no way you can – we traditionally pot fish in 80 to 100 feet of water. That is where all the landings come from, and that is where we would like to be. We could be pushed off a little further. We could get out to a hundred feet and possibly be able to manage it.

If that is what it takes in the long run, that's what it takes, but it looks like we're a long ways from ever getting any final decisions on this. We're talking biological opinions and on and on. It just

goes on and on and on; so anything that we decide here today is likely to change very shortly with some more new information.

MR. JOHNSON: Can you put the council's preferred up there?

DR. CHEUVRONT: You want to see the actual alternative?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I just want to show you the words here first because it is the same map. The council's preferred alternative is that this area on this map applies from November 1 through April 15th as opposed to Subalternative 9B, which would only put this closure in for part of that November to April period.

MR. ATACK: And what depth is it?

DR. CHEUVRONT: It is about 20 meters off of the Carolinas. You can see where my pointer is up here between marks 10 and 11; that's the 30 meter; that's 25 meter; and that's 20 meter depths. You can see how the lines pretty much follow that 20 meter depth contour along here; and when you get down here, this follows the closure that was proposed in Alternative 5 off of Georgia and North Florida. Now, I don't think there is any black sea bass pot endorsements in Georgia. Most of the fishing that occurs off of Florida occurs outside of this area, anyway; am I not right, Jimmy?

MR. HULL: Right.

DR. CHEUVRONT: What this is doing is basically helping the guys off of the Carolinas. Up here in this area between basically Points 9 and 12 is probably a big part of the North Carolina fishery; and you've got more coming out of that Little River area off of South Carolina particularly. They're having to go out that far, anyway, for the most part get these black sea bass.

The idea here is that this allows the North Carolina and South Carolina fishermen to get some access to some of the fish with pots as well as providing protection for the whales, because the whales do like to come in closer to shore. Now, I also wanted to point out you'll notice on every single one of these maps there is a little white band all the way along the coast. That is the state waters. The only thing that the council can control is what happens in federal waters in the EEZ.

Whatever the council decides that they're going to do, the states will be asked to enact similar regulations to cover the waters as well, but there is no guarantee that any of the states will do that. I don't think there is too much black sea bass pot fishing that is happening within three miles of shore. I may be wrong in that. There may be some areas where that could happen, but I don't think it is a whole lot. I think we looked at the numbers with it included in there and it was a very, very small percentage of black sea bass coming from pots in state waters.

MR. JOHNSON: I know the council has put a lot of work into this; so I would like to make a motion that we accept their preferred alternative.

DR. CHEUVRONT: This was a really, really long summary document. I apologize for that, but there was so much that had to go into this. Let me put a motion up there, Robert, and you let me know whether you think that this is what you mean. You probably need to read it into the record.

MR. JOHNSON: The Snapper Grouper AP supports the council's chosen Preferred Alternative 9, Subalternative 9A.

MR. ATACK: Red Munden seconded it. Any discussion?

MR. FREEMAN: We don't go off the old biological opinion; so how long does it take to create the new biological opinion?

DR. CHEUVRONT: That's a really good question. I'm glad you asked that because I think what is going to happen is the council has chosen a preferred alternative, but I think the biological opinion is going to wait to start until after the SSC reviews the document, which is later this month; and then I believe Protected Resources is supposed to start working biological opinion update at that point. Gregg, they have, what, about six months or something that they do that in?

MR. WAUGH: Approximately.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, approximately six months or so that it is supposed to be done by.

MR. ATACK: Any other discussion? I guess we'll go ahead and vote. **All in favor of the motion; all opposed, one opposed. Motion approved.**

DR. CHEUVRONT: Are you ready for me to go on to Action 2?

MR. ATACK: Yes.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I promise you Action 2 will not take us nearly as long. Action 2 is to enhance the existing buoy line/weak link gear requirements and buoy line rope-marking for black sea bass pots. Alternative 1 is what is currently in existence. Much of this is taken from the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan.

From November 15th through April 15th the breaking strength of buoy lines must not exceed 2,200 pounds in federal waters off of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina. The breaking strength of weak links must not exceed 600 pounds in federal waters off of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.

There is existing rope-marking requirements for buoy line for black sea bass that are required. The line has to be marked in three different places and each mark must be 12 inches in length. At certain times of the year buoy line rope-markings must be green and orange for federal waters in the southeast restricted area, black for offshore trap/pot areas and orange for southern nearshore trap/pot areas.

The issue here is, though, it is not identified by specific fishery; so the council's consideration here is they would like to know – if a gear is recovered from a whale, they would like to be able to have it identified as to whether it actually came from the black sea bass pot fishery. Right now there really isn't any real distinct way of knowing for certain whether it came from that fishery or not.

That has led the council to come up with a couple of alternatives that can help to enhance the likelihood of knowing whether gear recovered from a whale, if it happens in the future, actually comes from the black sea bass pot fishery. Right now, as we said, there has never been a documented interaction, and partially it is because we have no way of really truly knowing whether it has occurred or not.

The council has not chosen a preferred alternative or alternatives here yet. They would like a little bit of input from you, if you could help give them some on one of the alternatives. The first one retains the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan gear restriction, but then those restrictions that apply to Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, apply them also to North Carolina, because apparently North Carolina is not included in that.

Alternative 2 would be the line-breaking strength must not exceed 2,200 pounds, but they want to look off of North Carolina and have a weak link of not greater than 400 pounds for black sea bass off of all four states. Then the two subalternatives; one would be just to apply them just November through April, and the other subalternative just put them on there all year long.

When we get to these, if you guys have any recommendations of what you think council ought to consider here, I know the council would very much like to hear that. Alternative 3 is in addition to the gear-marking requirements, instead of just the three 12-inch color marks at the top, midway and bottom of the buoy line; that they would add a two-inch wide colored band to be required to each of the 12-inch colored marks; and the total mark would be 14 inches in length.

There is a bit of an issue with this; because some of the identification of gear is not actually physically taken off a whale. Sometimes it is actually observed from the air or something like that; and there was some concern whether a two-inch wide band might be too small for somebody observing from a distance to be able to see whether it was black sea bass pot gear or not.

This might need to be modified so if you have some input on that, the council would like to hear that as well. Again, the subalternatives are either just November through April or all year long. The fourth alternative is to look at other buoy line strength requirements. The council talked about this some at the last meeting, but they kind of got – they didn't get very far with it because they couldn't quite figure out what was the proper way to describe this.

One way was to have a breaking strength that didn't exceed 1,200 pounds, which some folks thought was plausible, that they could still catch black sea bass and it would not create a hardship in terms of losing gear; but then they didn't know whether to put it in terms of breaking strength of the line or stating it in terms of diameter of the line, whatever.

The council gave direction to staff that knowing that we're having this AP meeting and the SSC and all that; they wanted some input from other groups on what you thought, especially those of you who know this fishery and how operates, if you have some ideas of what could be put in there.

MR. HULL: There has been a lot of talk I know on the Large Atlantic Whale Take Reduction Team with Tom and I know Red is on there. They have been working on a lot of stuff here recently. Personally I think that the pot fishery should have our own specific color, and it should be a big enough mark than the three spots on the line so that they can actually see it from the air.

There is be no doubt that is a black sea bass pot vertical line if it is and so there could be no confusion. I feel confident that our fishery is, for lack of a better word, a clean fishery in regards to whale interactions, especially the way it is being prosecuted now. As far as the breaking strength of the main vertical line, there needs to be some gear research and some evaluation of, okay, so if I've got a black sea bass pot and it is slap full of bass and I'm hauling it back in the current, how much pull is on that?

We need to know those kinds of things so that we can bring it down to the very minimum for increased whale protection. It is going to take a little research and it wouldn't really take a lot of energy to do that. It would just take some. As far as the breaking strength on the weak link, to go from 600 to 400, that could be plausible, too, but again we need to know what the pull is on a full pot in the most extreme conditions.

Obviously, if you hang a pot up in a rock and you're going to be working around it and tightening up the line and going back up in the current and then finally trying to pull it out of there without breaking it off, there is a potential of breaking it off, but there is an awful big panel on those pots with jute that is going to – it is an escape panel.

It is a great thing to have if you do lose your gear, because the lighter weight we go on the gear, the more potential there is that you are going to lose some gear. It going to take some good common sense and some good research to come to that fine – you know, to massage it down to a small as you can possibly go for the benefit of whale protection and still being able to use the gear.

I don't know of anybody in the fishery that's opposed to it. We want to be able to fish. It is like Robert said nothing is back the way it used to be; this is the future. We have to adapt and make changes; but a specific color for the pot fishery would be really important, I do believe, and it would set us free as to ever being identified when we shouldn't be; and then the other items that I mentioned, too.

MR. ATACK: Jimmy Hull; are you guys hand-pulling these or are you using like a winch thing?

MR. HULL: No, just a regular pot hauler. You can pull them by hand, but it will wear you out very shortly; but just even a little side-winder, just even the smallest pot hauler will work on them. As I said, we're generally fishing in 80 to 100 feet of water.

MR. MUNDEN: A question for Jimmy; how do you envision that you would mark the lines; that's the number one question?

MR. HULL: Well, currently I'm spray painting. I'm using Osprey; and so we use number eight Osprey. We just spray paint it with orange spray paint in the three spots. You do have to paint it again periodically. You're constantly handling your gear. You've got to bring it back with you every day; so you have paint handy and you paint it if it starts to fade. I would say, to answer your question specifically, the same way I'm doing it now, but it would be a different color than the orange or any of the other colors that have already been assigned. Whatever color that they would decide just specifically for the pot fishery; that is what we would paint it with.

MR. MUNDEN: The take reduction team has spent days discussing line markings. They looked at weaving different kinds of twine into your line; also putting some type of insert in the line that could be identified like barcodes. The real problem with entanglements with large whales and gear is that when an animal is trailing gear, it oftentimes picks up more gear.

You may have a whale that ends up off of Cape Hatteras, as an example, that is entangled. It may have gillnet gear or lobster pot gear to the point that oftentimes that gear will just anchor the whale in place and whale becomes exhausted as he is struggling against that massive gear that it is dragging along. My question, though, was whether or you could find a paint to be effective, because that is one of the things that the team has looked at numerous times.

MR. HULL: I found it to be very effective. After maybe 30 to 60 days you have to reapply it, but you're talking about – I mean we fish 25 pots. We don't even fish the full 35 pots. You're talking about it is very easy to handle and take care of 25 pots.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I have talked with other pot fishermen who don't actually paint their lines, but they weave into the line surveyor's tape that is of the proper color. What they're actually able to do is that if that tape gets damaged as they're pulling the pot, they stop the pot puller and they weave it right back in right then and there, and they can do it.

I think right now the idea is to allow the individual fisherman to figure out whether they want to paint it or weave it or whatever, but the gear would just need to be marked in a way that would satisfy the federal requirements for gear marking. I think we pretty much know that a two-inch mark is not going to cut it, so it may end up being having to add another 12-inch mark in addition to the one that is already required.

There has been some discussion with the gear-marking folks – with the Atlantic large whale take reduction folks about how this would work. I apologize because I've not been the one who has been doing all that talking with them; but I think that there is some agreement that something could be worked out. We're not quite sure what it is.

It was actually suggested that the additional color might be purple because that happens to be a color of surveyor's tape that is not already part of the color scheme that is used in the gear-marking requirements required by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan. The idea was let's hurry up and our request for our color in so we can have our color and then figure out how it has to go in and then people can work out whether we're going to paint it or weave it or however they want to do it. I think the mechanics of how it would work are not necessarily so much what we need to

focus on as much as the idea of having the additional marking, looking at the buoy line breaking strength, the weak link strength and things like that.

MR. ATACK: The question I had is the pots have tags on them with your permit number on them; and do we have to put those on the buoys, too?

MR. HULL: Just your documentation number or your FL number – your vessel – is on the buoy. The National Marine Fisheries Service actually has – it has that on the tag also with the tag number on the tag, and they're just little plastic tags. Yes, you have to have your vessel number on the buoy.

DR. CHEUVRONT: My question to you is do you want to make a formal recommendation to the council as to what you think they ought to do in terms of modifying gear for black sea bass traps?

MR. HULL: Yes; I'd go ahead and make a motion that the AP would recommend that the council requires that black sea bass pot gear vertical line marking be a separate color than any other vertical line fishery that is in the same region year round.

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second.

MR. ATACK: Okay, the motion is that the AP recommends the council require black sea bass pot gear marking be a separate color from any other vertical line fishery in the region year round. Any discussion? Red.

MR. MUNDEN: A question for the staff; are there any other pot or trap fisheries managed by the South Atlantic Council?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Spiny lobster in southern Florida; golden crab, which is primarily in Florida.

MR. MUNDEN: The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan doesn't separate pots out to black sea bass pots. They refer to them as pot/trap. I know this is the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, but the council should consider making the same requirement for all of the gear. Well, I don't know, though, because then you get into you're trying to identify the black sea bass pots; so probably the motion is good as it stands.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes; and just for the other fisheries, the golden crab fishery is so far offshore and so deep water that it is not likely that there is ever going to be an encounter down south with pot gear. The spiny lobster fishery is primarily just South Florida; and I'm not aware of endangered species issues with mammals and stuff down there. Ben might correct me here. Thank you, Ben. That's right, golden crab doesn't have a buoy line; I forgot about that. It is a trawl. What they do is they mark the ends of the trawls is all they do. They have a couple of miles sometimes worth of trawls, and they just have the end trap with a line.

MR. ATACK: Any other discussion? All right, we'll go ahead and vote on this motion. All approve, raise your hand; any opposed. The motion passes unanimously.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Does the AP want to make any recommendation about how you think that the council should handle things like buoy line and weak link strengths?

MR. HULL: Yes; I think there needs to be some more information on this before the council can really make a good judgment on what would be proper to use; so basically just a motion to do some research on which vertical line strength is necessary and what is the load that we need to have to adequately use this gear.

There needs to be some research, as I said, on actually here is a pot, here is what it takes to pull the load in the current. And also on the weak link the same scenario; we need to have some type of research done. There may be some that has already been started. As I say, Tom has done some stuff that he and I have talked about, but I don't know how far along they got with that. I think it needs to be something that we have some more information before we can really make a motion as to saying, oh, we need to go to this strength. Maybe you could go to something smaller. You just don't know; you'd just be guessing.

MR. ATACK: Yes; I agree. There is dynamic load, static load. You may have to have a link that has some spring to it to take up some of the shock when you first grab that pot; so I agree.

MR. HULL: So with that said, I don't know if it is proper to make a motion to ask for – okay, the AP recommends be done to determine proper vertical line and weak link strength for the black sea bass pot fishery in the South Atlantic to be make further recommendations – to be used in future recommendations as to vertical line strength.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Jimmy, you're, I guess, the maker of this motion; and so if you could go ahead – I think this gets across the points that you were making; so if you want to read this final into the record and we'll see if we can get a second on it and go from there.

MR. HULL: The Snapper Grouper AP recommends research be done to determine proper vertical line and weak link strength for the black sea bass pot fishery in the South Atlantic in order to make future recommendations.

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second it.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion?

DR. KELLISON: Jimmy, how would you determine the appropriate strength?

MR. HULL: If you gave me this task; how would I do this? I would get a scale that I could insert in my vertical line that would record the pull on it. Then I would just gather information on how many fish I had the pot or how much pull it was so that I'd have something to work with. Just give me some information to work with here; the current conditions, how big the pot was, how much iron was on the pot, what kind of line I'm using and then start recording the pull that it takes to pull this gear back to the boat; just some basic information using a scale that you could insert into the line. I assume it would be a pretty simple procedure.

DR. KELLISON: So that would give you for a given breaking strength of the line; you would know roughly when you would lose your gear. It is already known from guidance from Protected Species what the breaking strength needs to be to protect the mammals, the whales?

MR. ATACK: No, my question was going to be how much force can a calf exert; because if a calf can only exert 300 pounds and we need 900 to retrieve our pot, we've kind of got a problem.

DR. ERRIGO: No; they really don't have much of an idea of what – they don't have any idea if the weak links that they have in place are working. They really have very little idea of what the breaking strength needs to be in order for a whale to safely break through a line. It also has a lot to do with how the whale becomes entangled or encounters a line. The only information that they currently have really is one study that was being done where they were towing a whale-shaped mass that they constructed under a boat into a buoy line. I haven't really seen any of the information from that.

The other one was they collected all the information on lines that was taken off of whales that was broken; so the line that the whale was able to break free from and if the whale was critically harmed by it or not, and they measured the breaking strength of the line, but that is also not the best way to determine what the actual breaking strength should be.

MR. ATACK: And these links are at the bottom or at the top or do you need one at both ends?

DR. ERRIGO: They're at the buoy so that when the whale hits, the idea is that the line will pull down like this, the whale will hit the buoy, and it will pop off and the whale can continue to swim.

MR. ATACK: Well, if the link is at the top, can't you get it in the boat before you put all the load on it?

MR. HULL: Yes, you could as long as there is not so much current that it is already sucking it down and you're having to reach down with a grapple and get it, which can happen, too. There are a lot of things that can happen. Like right now I use Osprey and I use hog rings as my weak links underneath the buoy.

You just fold it over and you hog ring it and that's how you get your weak link. There is something I read that in the northeast they do have some studies on lobster traps, single vertical line lobster traps, and the pull on that. There is a start with something that I know it is much heavier gear, but it is a single trap with a single vertical line, and they have done some research; so maybe we could figure out how they started to get their information. We're dealing with lightweight gear here. This is lightweight gear, but I think currently I could go to a weaker main line and I could go a weaker – that's me. That's where I fish and how I conduct the fishery. In North Carolina it may be a different story.

MR. LORENZ: Just one question I have for anybody knowledgeable on whales and whales that have gotten entangled in lines is we know none have been ever documented in pot gear. Listening to what is going on, the most effective pot fishing for sea bass is going to be somewhere around 75 to 125 feet, so that may not be a lot of line. My question would be when lines are found on

whales perhaps from the lobster fishery; how much line is there? I'm just trying to think you could get a lot more tangled having 400 feet of line than you might 125.

MR. COLLIER: I looked into some of this information on the black sea bass pots. The scope of the line varies amongst fishermen; so actually getting down to the true length of the line, it is going to vary amongst fishermen unless it is regulated by the South Atlantic Council. I don't know if that's an issue that you guys really want to get into. It is just what a guy feels comfortable with fishing and that is generally what he uses. He might use that gear for fishing in different areas or different fisheries; I'm not sure. It is unlikely but fishermen do different things in different areas.

MR. ATACK: Okay, we have a motion up there. Anymore discussion? Do you want to vote on it? **Everybody in favor of the motion raise your hand; anybody opposed. Motion passes unanimously.**

DR. CHEUVRONT: Mr. Chairman, that's all I have for this amendment unless there is anything else.

MR. ATACK: If somebody wanted to make a recommendation for looking at different mesh sizes on the pots; would that go in this amendment?

DR. CHEUVRONT: You can make a motion to look at something like that. Whether it gets into this amendment or not; that is up to the council to decide.

MR. ATACK: Anybody want to make a motion or are we done with this?

MR. DeMARIA: Just for discussion sake, **I will go ahead and make a motion that the council looks at different mesh sizes of the black sea bass fishery.**

MR. SMITH: I'll second that.

MR. JOHNSON: I think the issue that been raised before about this. I don't have a problem with the motion, but the issue is I've heard that there is nothing out there in the industry to address the increase. Now, if that's not true, that's the argument the fishermen give. I would say that if something like this was implemented, I would assume it would be over a period of time. It would give them time, because it would be very expensive to require them to go buy all new pot gear.

MR. ATACK: Yes; I agree, and Tom has been working with the mesh people is there different size mesh that they can get and would make for them; so that is an option that wouldn't make it non-doable. Yes; I would think you'd phase it in so that they could change their pots over a certain period of time, so they don't have to go out and change all their pots in one year. That is what we looked at a couple of years ago was phasing it over time.

MR. COX: I would just like to say I think it was some time before we went to the two-inch mesh where it was an inch and a half. Then we went to the two inch; so if you were to suggest something like this, I think you could probably set the requirement by maybe just one panel size. It would certainly keep costs down in the industry and satisfy the requirement.

MR. ATACK: Anymore discussion?

DR. CHEUVRONT: I think you need to have somebody read the motion.

MR. ATACK: I will read the motion. The motion is recommend the council research different mesh sizes for black sea bass pots. **All right, all in favor of the motion raise your hand; any opposed; one abstention. The motion carries.** Anything else on this from anybody? Let's do a 10-minute recess.

MS. BROUWER: On Friday I sent you a revised version of this options paper. It is not in the first briefing book you received. It should be dated April 10, 2015, and it is a good bit different than what went out in the first briefing book. I will tell you how this amendment came to be. The council gave us guidance to begin work on this amendment at the March meeting. We had several options for hogfish management that originally were going to be included in the Joint South Florida Management Issues Amendment that the council is working with jointly with the Gulf Council.

Then it was decided that perhaps hogfish should not be included in that amendment because of timing issues. The stock assessment for hogfish was done through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. It was not an assessment that was done through the SEDAR process. That assessment found the stock of hogfish that is off of East Florida and the Florida Keys is undergoing overfishing.

So the council, when that happens, after they get notification that a stock is undergoing overfishing, they have two years during which to enact management measures to correct that. There were some timing concerns if hogfish remained in the other amendment; so the council said, "Okay, well, let's begin work on Amendment 37." Then on top of that there were several other actions that they wanted to include.

They had talked about possibly including any short-term items coming out of the visioning project in this amendment, but then there were some timing changes with that one as well. There was a workshop that was originally scheduled for July that is now going to take place in October where the council is going to meet and prioritize some of the items that have come out of the visioning for the snapper grouper fishery. All that stuff is going to have to end up in a different amendment.

That just left the other handful of actions that the council had talked about in December and in previous meetings; and so all those ended up in this amendment. What I'm going to do is walk you through this. Another update is that since the March meeting we had a conference call with the Interdisciplinary Planning Team.

We call it the IPT, which is the council staff and regional office staff. We get together and we put these amendments together. We did have a call with the IPT regarding this amendment. The IPT is going to suggest to the council that we keep all the hogfish actions in Amendment 37 but we remove the rest and put them in a different amendment, in a regulatory amendment.

That has not yet been approved by the council, but it is just so you know that is what we're going to recommend. Rather than splitting out everything into two separate documents, for purposes of your discussion I just left everything in this options paper. As I said, hogfish was recently assessed. One of the things that came out of that stock assessment is that there is genetic evidence to support the existence of two different stocks in the Atlantic.

Now we have what we're calling the North Carolina through Georgia stock of hogfish and then the East Florida through the Florida Keys stock; and then, of course, there is one in the Gulf. There are three genetically different stocks of hogfish; and the council needs to specify the boundaries for the two stocks that are within the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction so they can apply appropriate management to each of those.

The stock that is off of Georgia through the Carolinas is going to be managed – or the ABC is going to be determined through just basically catch history – historic landings I guess is what I'm trying to say – applying the only reliable catch history stock approach that is Level 4 of the ABC Control Rule. The SSC already gave the council a recommendation for that ABC.

The other stock of hogfish, the one off of East Florida and the Florida Keys, there are going to be some projections that need to be done. The projections were requested from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center based on some criteria that the council discussed in March; and I'll walk through all this stuff with you. We don't yet have ABC recommendations for that stock; so that is still pending. The council will see those numbers in June.

The SSC is going to get to review them when they meet at the end of this month and then give the council their advice. There is an action dealing with the Jacks Complex. This is something that the council had been talking about for a while; so in the document, it goes back to why these discussions started.

Basically, it ended up being that the council directed staff to look at potentially putting in place a commercial trip limit for almacos; so that is one of the things that they want the AP to talk about and give them recommendations on. Then maybe disaggregating the Jacks Complex. Currently what is included in there is lesser amberjack, almaco jack and banded rudderfish.

Because of the productivity of some of these stocks, some council members thought that maybe it would be best if they had their own ACL. Well, they do have their own ACL, but they're not being tracked at the individual species level. They're tracked together as the Jacks Complex. We'll talk about that.

Then there is going to be an action to remove size limits for three deep-water species obviously to minimize discards. That is pretty straightforward. There has also been discussions about adjusting the spawning season closure for shallow-water groupers. One of the things that came out of the port meetings in North Carolina was that apparently the red grouper are in spawning condition when they're allowed to be harvested at the beginning of May.

Fishermen were concerned that the current spawning season closure isn't quite capturing when these fish need to be protected. Again, because the red grouper is under a rebuilding schedule and

landings have been declining in recent years, the council is also looking at maybe making some changes to the size limit as that is something that could help that situation.

Then finally there is an action to possibly adjust the recreational bag limit for black sea bass. Again, as you know, you have been talking about black sea bass all afternoon. The ACL has gone up substantially; and so there seems to be room to increase that bag limit for the recreational sector. Getting into the actions, the first few deal with hogfish.

As I said, the first action would be to go ahead and modify the management unit for this species and create these boundaries that are going to define the North Carolina/Georgia stock and the East Florida/Florida Keys stock. There are currently three alternatives. The reason it is all weird with the strike-through in yellow is because the council already approved inclusion of this action at the March meeting; and so any wording changes that we make to things that the council has already approved, we make sure that they're clear so then the council can approve those changes at their next meeting. That is why it looks that way.

Alternative 2 would modify the FMU to specify Georgia/North Carolina stock of hogfish from the North Carolina/Virginia Border to the Georgia/Florida Border. Then Alternative 3 is the one that would deal with the other stock, East Florida/Florida Keys. The issue with this one is that some of that stock actually goes around into the jurisdiction of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

Both councils need to agree on an appropriate boundary that would then give the appropriate portion of the Monroe County landings to the South Atlantic and the rest to the Gulf of Mexico. What has been suggested is this Subalternative C, which is Shark Point on the Florida southwest coast. It is kind of hard to see, but it is right here; and then there has just been line drawn straight across from it.

From what I understand, this is an area that was suggested by mainly I think law enforcement who said that fishermen who are fishing north of that line typically don't come very close to it and vice-versa; so it would be a really good way to define the two fishing areas.

MR. ATACK: Which boundary do they have?

MS. BROUWER: There is no boundary. Well, the current boundary is the jurisdictional boundary of the two councils; so our council goes through the Florida Keys and then the Gulf Council is from the Florida Keys around. Anyway, below that you see some discussion and preliminary analysis. I don't know what to call these things anymore, but basically it just gives you a little bit of background as to why this is here and why it is being considered and where it came from.

I don't know if the AP at this point – it is very early in the process of developing this. This has not even been approved for scoping. That is what the council is going to do in June. At this point I don't know that the AP, unless you want to, needs to be giving any recommendations as far as preferreds or anything like that because it is still early in the process. If you have ideas of other things that maybe the council might want to consider within these actions, then that would be

certainly appropriate at this point. I don't know if the AP has anything to say or any questions that you may have on this action.

MR. ATACK: I guess one question I have is really where do the two stocks separate? The only data we have is I think South Carolina and North Carolina DNA and you've got some in the Keys, but does the North Carolina/South Carolina go down to Miami; does it go down to St. Augustine; where does that real stock reside? If we draw the line at the Georgia/North Florida Line, we're really not managing then that stock the way it resides. This is one question I've got.

MS. BROUWER: The stock assessment includes all the background information on the genetics and why these three stocks have been delineated the way they have been based on genetic evidence. This is the recommendation that came straight out of that stock assessment, which as you know has undergone a peer review process and all that. I think the way that the stock assessment is recommending the stocks be divided matches the biological structure of the stock.

MR. ATACK: Well, yes and no, but there is a big gap in data. There is no data between Murrells Inlet and Key West; so we really don't know where that stock resides.

MS. BROUWER: I was not part of the stock assessment team, but I think they have enough information that made them comfortable making the recommendation for having the three distinct stocks, but I couldn't tell you the specifics.

MR. DeMARIA: I think Subalternative C makes the most sense to me and not only for hogfish but for snapper and grouper and a lot of other things rather than the confusing line that goes down US 1, maybe, but some people say it is south of US 1 and winds around Marquesas and Tortugas. It is incredibly confusing, but that simple; it makes sense. I wish we could do it for everything other than just hogfish.

MS. BROUWER: One thing I forgot to mention is when we had the IPT call last week, one thing that came up was, well, okay, so this is a good way to delineate a boundary; but as far as how the landings are going to be apportioned, there needs to be a more detailed explanation of how that is going to be handled. That has been recognized and the analysts are coming up with some language that is going to describe how the landings are going to be apportioned. We're taking care of that, but right now I have more details for you. Here comes Mike.

DR. ERRIGO: Just so you guys know, I know a little bit about how the recreational landings are done. I can tell you that regardless of whether you choose the Shark Point or the Monroe/Collier County Line, the recreational landings are going to be broken probably at the county line boundary. Apparently from what we heard, there isn't a lot of fishing that goes on between the Shark Point line and the county line; but the landings are probably just going to go from the county line down. Because of how the MRIP survey is conducted, it is aggregated on that county level. Commercially it is a lot easier to do, but recreationally it is much, much more difficult.

MR. STIGLITZ: What is the difference between Shark Point and the Collier County Line? I believe the Collier County Line is pretty close to that Shark Point.

MS. BROUWER: Richard, like I said, these subalternatives came over from a different amendment, so I wasn't part of the conversation when they were hatched out, so to speak. Up here it says Subalternative 3B uses the Monroe County/Collier County Line, but I think the law enforcement issues would persist if that was used as the boundary.

The law enforcement folks came forward and said that as far as law enforcement was concerned they would prefer this Shark Point Boundary. I think this was just a way to compromise and find a way that would be appropriate for law enforcement as well as divvying up the landings in way that was going to be fair.

Moving on to Action 2, Action 2 looks at partial delegation of management measures for the East Florida/Florida Keys stock to the state of Florida. Again, this is something that migrated over from the Joint South Florida Issues. Basically what this would do is the council would continue to retain management authority over hogfish; but if there were to be certain items that the state of Florida wanted to change, they would have the authority to do that.

The way that I understand it would work is the FWC would come up with some kind of a detailed proposal of what they are intending to do and then present that to the council and the council would go ahead and approve it. Under the various alternatives they could choose to just delegate size limit authority or just seasons or bag limits; so you see it is broken out to give as much flexibility to the council as possible in what they could choose to delegate to Florida.

Any comments or questions on this one? This is also so that you know – and Gregg will go over the Joint South Florida Amendment tomorrow; but this is also being considered for other stocks that are specific to South Florida like mutton snapper and black grouper. The actions are being crafted so that they are consistent and it is going to be the same for all those species.

One of the things I added to the revised document here is this table that shows you commercial landings of hogfish by state for the South Atlantic and Gulf with what percent of those total landings are in Florida. This was put together basically just to illustrate that hogfish is a Florida species. Some of this had to be aggregated to maintain confidentiality.

Then, of course, other states here indicate that these are Gulf states. This was something that was put together by regional staff to inform the Gulf Council's discussions on hogfish; and because of timing they have just passed that on to me and I put it here for you. Eventually we'll have more information on the percent of commercial landings in the South Atlantic states, which obviously is what is missing from this table, but I currently don't have that broken down for you.

MR. ATACK: And the other thing that would be good would be the east versus west Florida; because I guess the Florida landings are the whole state and not what was landed in the South Atlantic, right?

MS. BROUWER: I assume that is the case. Then Table 2 shows you the recreational landings again for South Atlantic and Gulf, but this one does include landings broken down by South Atlantic states. There are some, obviously, in South Carolina and a lot more in North Carolina, which we already knew that was the case. Then you've got your percent for Florida.

MR. ATACK: True; and then like other tables, Florida is the whole state, the Gulf and Atlantic, so it kind of shows a very small percentage for the large numbers that are landed in the Gulf, I think.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, moving on to Action 3, this would establish the ACLs for the two different stocks. The ABC, as you know, comes from recommendations made to the council by the SSC after they apply their ABC Control Rule. Then the council accepts those recommendations and then it is up to them to determine where the ACL is going to be placed; if it is going to be at the same level as the ABC or if they want to create a buffer.

That is what you see up here. Alternative 2 would establish the ACL for the Georgia/North Carolina stock. Now this is the one that I explained to you that would have to be done with that Level 4 of the ABC Control Rule, which is for species that only have reliable catch history. The SSC has already applied that portion of the control rule and recommended an ABC for that stock, which is 28,161 whole weight.

One of the things that differs again from the document that you received earlier is we had originally applied the existing allocations to each of the two stocks separately. Then it was pointed out that what needed to happen was that because there has been differential landings, commercial and recreational, along the jurisdiction of the council; that we needed to sort of regroup the landings and then apply the allocation so that they would be more reflective of the true distribution of the landings for each area.

When we did that, the allocations changed a good bit so that 81.9 percent would be to the commercial sector and 18.1 percent to the recreational sector. That more closely reflects what the distribution of landings was during the years that are used for the allocation formula, which as you know it is based on average landings, 50 percent for historical landings, which goes I think from 1986 through 2006; and then the other 50 percent comes from the recent landings, which looks only at 2006 through 2008. You've got here several subalternatives that step the ACL down from the ABC by certain percentages.

This is consistent for how the council has done or has analyzed other similar actions for other species. You can see that your recreational ACLs are going to be very, very minimal for that stock. Then Alternative 3 would establish the ACL again based on the projections that we're still awaiting from FWRI. Again, you would still have that same step-down for the ACL down from the ABC.

Then for that portion of the stock, that East Florida/Florida Keys stock, the allocations would change to 24.3 percent commercial and 75.7 percent recreational. Any questions on this one? Action 4 is going to modify the ACT for hogfish, which, as you know, all the managed stocks have recreational annual catch targets.

The alternatives have been constructed to be consistent with how the council has approached ACTs for other stocks. Currently for other stocks the ACT is established at using this formula where you have the ACL times one minus the percent standard error or half of the ACL, whichever is greater. This is done to incorporate the uncertainty in the recreational data.

Then you also have subalternatives that would step down the ACT by 15 percent and 25 percent from the recreational ACL. These tables will eventually get filled in with the appropriate numbers when we have those projections. Then we will have the table showing the PSEs that were used; and what the council has done in the past is averaged the PSEs for the last five years, and that is what gets plugged into that formula that I just showed you.

Okay, the same thing for the East Florida/Florida Keys stock. Then, of course, you have to apply it to the different ACL alternatives, so these tables just keep getting kind of bigger. When you have to put in a rebuilding plan for a species and when there has been a stock assessment, you typically have to adjust other fishing levels like the MSY, the minimum stock size threshold.

There will likely need to be more actions added to this amendment that will take care of that; a rebuilding strategy, a rebuilding schedule and then whatever management measures are necessary to reduce harvest to whatever level we need to end overfishing. There is probably going to be at least four or five more actions that need to get added to this amendment; and that is one of the reasons we recommended that it just be dealt with separately.

Then I put on here as well some of the motions that you guys have approved. In previous years there have been several recommendations by this AP to look at modifications to the size limit. So just to illustrate where we are and where AP has come from as far as hogfish management, those were included.

The latest you recommended that the council consider increasing the size limit and look at a range between 14 and 18 inches. Recall at that time, I think that was something that was supposed to be included in Regulatory Amendment 14, but then a stock assessment was being done and the council said let's just wait to do anything with hogfish until after the stock assessment has been completed; so that's why they didn't consider it any further. Any questions?

MR. ATACK: Back in your Action 2 you've got your alternatives you're looking at for the East Florida/Keys stock with size limits, seasons, bag limits; do you know what I mean? The same thing on recreational and commercial, but I don't see any of that verbiage down in the other stock, the North Carolina/South Carolina/Georgia stock. Will the council be looking at those things, too?

MS. BROUWER: No; I don't believe so. This is something that, as I said, came out of discussions with the FWC and the Gulf Council when they tried to address the issue of maybe a different management strategy for South Florida stock this AP has recommended many times; and so they said, okay, well, if South Florida species need to be managed differently, then the FWC has requested to have – I don't want to say more authority but to have the option to alter management quickly to be more adaptive, I guess, and there has not been a similar request from the other states other than Florida.

MR. FEX: I want you to scroll down to the landings. I'm looking at these poundages and they seem really low for North Carolina. The reason I'm saying that, in 1994 it is 706 pounds of hogfish, I believe. In '96 I caught 450 pounds of hogfish –

MR. ATAK: It is all recreational.

MR. FEX: Recreational; okay, I apologize. I guess my concern is looking at the recreational landings, too, is in how they get those numbers. You're looking at a very small ACL. You're talking 5,000 pounds a year for those three states. I guess we've got see some more data and see what the landings were and what they're projected to be. I would think you'd have to be looking at bag limits and size limits and trip limits for the commercial and the recreational to not go through the ACLs.

MR. WAUGH: One question for the AP is for a species with that low of an ACL, you could look at bag limits, trip limits and lots of other things. We've got a bag limit now. Is your recommendation just to let the ACL close when it closes?

MR. FEX: Well, from a recreational standpoint, it takes so long to get that data, you won't know until the next year; so that hasn't worked on the recreational side, right?

MR. WAUGH: Well, you could do projections and determine when you think it would close. We're starting to do that for black sea bass. I just wanted to get some input on whether you all thought this is a species, the landings are so low now; is it worth going through all of that with modifying the bag limits and trip limits or just let it close. If you think we should still look at that, then we'll look at it.

MR. JOHNSON: I think you do both. I think that you close when it is projected to be closed, but I think you do have to modify the bag limits, size limits, all of those things because the recreational anglers want longer seasons. They want to be able to fish, so I think that is the ultimate goal of most recreational fishermen.

MR. ATACK: Yes; I would agree. Right now I think hogfish is a five fish per person bag limit; and if you're looking at such small ACLs, people would certainly want to look at two or three as a bag limit versus closing the season. I'm sure they'd rather have a longer season. I think part of the landings are probably so low is just the data. Who is surveying those states up there for hogfish landings on the recreational side? Then if we step up the surveying and get all these extra landings we didn't know about and then it shuts down sooner; that can be a problem, too.

MR. DeMARIA: In the Keys it is a fish that is taken in fairly shallow water where there is no embolism problems or anything like that some people would think. It is a speared fish; so it is not going to be released if it is caught in one foot of water. Spearfishing doesn't make for a good catch-and-release fishery. Fish tend to look bigger under water.

For whatever reason, in shallow water they look even bigger; and if the water is dirty, they look even bigger. Most of these fish are taken in fairly shallow water in the Keys where it is pretty turbid these days by recreational anglers. If you've got a 12-inch size limit, there are a lot of 10- and 11-inch ones being taken, too, and it is not like they can release them.

I really think that an increase to at least 14 inches in maybe higher increments is warranted if we're going to do anything with these fish. Also, I think one of the purposes of this advisory panel is to

be proactive and make recommendations to kind of head off problems. Jim and I especially have tried to bring this hogfish issue up for years now, and we keep getting told, no, you've got to wait until there is a stock assessment.

Well, we wanted to raise the size limit or do something before there was a problem. Now, of course, they're overfished and there is a problem and we've got to really react now. It is kind of discouraging whenever we make a recommendation like this and we just get kind of get it thrown back at us that you've got wait until there is a stock assessment. This one has been discouraging for me. We know what needs to be done. It is ridiculous just taking 12-inch hogfish.

DR. ERRIGO: Hogfish on the recreational side, of course, are surveyed by MRIP. They are a fairly low encounter so they suffer from the same kinds of issues that things like the deep-water groupers suffer from. You only encounter them once in a great while, so you have these wild ups and downs or things like that.

Down in the Keys, especially now that we will ratcheting down the ACLs, it is probably going to become a big issue because of the effort expansion down there is going to cause some interesting effects. Up in the Georgia to North Carolina area, they're encountered even less; and now with the lower ACL, you're going to have years where they never see them and you see, oh, there was zero landings.

Then you're going to have years when you suddenly have these thousands of pounds of landings. It is one of those fish that is going to be interesting to track. One thing I would say is that the faster people can catch them, the harder it will be for MRIP to track them in a timely manner and be able to close or project a closing. However, the less people are landing them, the less frequently they'll be encountered. It is kind of a Catch-22.

MR. ATACK: Would anybody like to make a motion or anymore discussion? I could see making a motion that the council consider bag limits, size, trip limits in the northern fishery.

MR. LORENZ: Just one thought with hogfish; here in North Carolina you're not going to see very many 12 to 14 I think on hooks and lines. With this sort of fish, for fisheries that are discretionary for selecting them – and that could be if there are commercial divers who spear them or those of us that are recreational – this fish is almost something to start looking at even a slot for both sides. The bigger ones end up being males – and any scientists here could explain this – so you're going to start really depleting the gene pool as we like save smaller ones and keep continually going towards larger ones. I think at some point with this species you may want to be actually looking at protecting the largest within the fishery.

MR. SMITH: I certainly would support that type of motion.

MR. FEX: Yes; I would agree with that; but there is also a fact that they have found that the sneaker males that are in the hogfish that actually were smaller, and they come in – they're not the big ones, but they help produce the larvae or the genetics to help fertilize the females. That was one of the arguments not to increase the size limit is because there actually are smaller males that do what you're saying.

MR. ATACK: We're talking about a hogfish that the 12-inch size limit, they get to be 36 inches long. They can be 20 pounds. A 12-inch fish is like four pounds. They haven't grown large enough for most of them to have spawned yet or mated.

The way the hierarchy works is you have mostly females; the larger ones turn to males and they help reproduce. By changing the size from 14 to 16 or 18, that should really do nothing but help the fishery.

MR. DeMARIA: Are we talking about just making recommendations for the northern ones or all of them in the South Atlantic?

MR. ATACK: There already is action items for the Florida ones. There are no – I think it would be good to have the same alternatives looked at in scoping and all for the North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia ones.

MR. JOHNSON: Just a question; you don't really encounter those smaller fish up in the Carolinas, do you? You do; okay. I would like to make a motion that the council does consider minimum size limits and bag limits for the stock from Georgia to North Carolina.

MR. SMITH: I'll second that.

MR. JOHNSON: And bag limits. There already is a trip limit commercially, right?

MR. ATACK: On the trip limits, North Carolina has imposed a trip limit. None of the other states have. I know some commercial divers in North Carolina that would like to see that trip limit be in the whole South Atlantic. They think it would help.

MR. JOHNSON: You can add "and trip limits for the commercial sector" to that.

MR. ATACK: So you're looking at minimum sizes for recreation and commercial; you're looking at bag limits and then trip limits, right?

MR. FREEMAN: What is North Carolina's current trip limit?

MR. ATACK: The current trip limit is 150 pounds per day; successive days it goes to 100; so I think on a two-day trip it is 250 and on a three-day trip it is 350 I think are the maximum; 750 if you're out for enough days.

MR. MOSS: Will we have to do a separate motion then to put minimum size and bag limits on the Florida stock as well?

MS. BROUWER: Okay, everybody is confused. What Action 2 does is delegate authority to Florida to possibly change any size limit, bag limit, seasons, trip limit; but we don't yet have options to establish any management measures because we don't know what the reduction in harvest is going to need to be in order to stop overfishing. Until we have the projections and we

know the council has a better idea for how much harvest needs to go down; that is when we're going to start looking at what needs to be done for that portion of the stock. Currently we don't have any options for that.

MR. HULL: Just one question; would you say that over 90 percent of the fishery, both recreational and commercial, is prosecuted by diving or more than 90 percent? How much of it is hook and line?

MR. FEX: I wouldn't say that; I would say it is probably about 75 percent diver. I have high landings in hogfish; up to 900 pounds in some years.

MR. MOSS: I don't have any science to back this up, but the vast majority from the recreational side is going to be shooting them. It is rare that you're going to catch them on hook and line. It is done inshore; but the vast majority of them, you will see guys go out there and just slam them. They're not the elusive fish once you see them when you're diving.

MR. LORENZ: And with that said, that is why I would like a consideration – I would include size limits as a potential maximum also.

MR. ATACK: We can make that like a different motion. Anymore discussion on this motion? I will read the motion and we can vote on it. **Council should consider minimum size limits and bag limits for the North Carolina/Georgia stock and trip limits for the commercial sector. All in favor of this motion raise your hand; all opposed. The motion carries unanimously.** Any other motions somebody wants to make?

MR. LORENZ: **I would also like the council to consider a sensible size for hogfish, particularly with a focus on commercial diving, recreational diving and recreational angling.**

MR. JOHNSON: I just was curious and I asked Todd and maybe somebody else knows how do they react to barotrauma? I can see in the dive fishery somebody would be able to identify this as a large fish and not shooting it; but if you've got some angler on a partyboat in North Carolina and he catches a 20-something-pound hog snapper; is it just going to die? Has there anything been done, any studies done on barotrauma on hogfish?

MR. COLLIER: They're not captured all that often on recreational or commercial hook-and-line gear; and therefore studies on barotrauma haven't really been done on hogfish.

MR. DeMARIA: The ones I've seen come up in traps don't do very well. They embolize pretty badly.

MR. ATACK: Red Munden seconded. I guess I see if you try to do this, some people have a hard time making sure the fish is big enough to shoot it; and now you're going to say, okay, if it has got to be 26 inches or longer, I can't shoot it – it is much easier to say, okay, I know that fish is big enough because it is bigger than this. Red drum is different. You can catch and release it. You can measure a red drum. It has got to be between 18 and 26 or whatever it is, but I don't know how successful that will be.

MR. DeMARIA: I think you're right, Jim, slot sizes really don't work very well for spear fishing. It is much easier to avoid the smaller ones; but say if an upper size limit was 26 inches or so, it is very difficult to tell the difference between a 25-inch or 27-inch hogfish and 26-inch one. You're going to be throwing back a lot of big, mature fish. I'd rather see it done some other way. Again, we don't have the option of releasing these speared fish. They're just dead.

MR. FEX: Yes; I see your point, Robert, on your motion; but I wouldn't agree with it. Hook and line; they do come up a little frazzled. Their scales will actually kind of shoot out like the skin has gotten swelled up and their swim bladder will fill up. I wouldn't go with going with a maximum size limit. They don't take well to being brought up too fast.

MR. LORENZ: My only interest with fish is to start the mentality for this and other fish and when we get to groupers and some day we end up talking about the large groupers down in the Keys and all. With spear fishing it is a very effective way to go in wrecks and get these very large fish; so I was just looking at getting a control on that some day and not just with these but eventually with some of the grouper species. How we start to think and address that; I don't know so that is why I just want to put it on the table and get some thinking about it.

MR. ATACK: Any other comments. I'll read the motion. **Council should consider a maximum size limit for hogfish. All in favor raise your hand, 4; all opposed. The motion doesn't carry.** Any other motions on this? Did you want to repeat the same motion for Florida since there is really not an action on the size limits and bag limits and stuff?

MR. JOHNSON: Sure; we could have just put Florida as well in that motion. I thought they already had some language. I think the state of Florida is going to handle that stock, so it is really not going to matter what kind of motion we make

MR. ATACK: Well, that is only true if it gets delegated to them. If the alternative doesn't go and it stays in the South Atlantic, then – right?

MS. BROUWER: No; that is not right either. We're not looking to delegate management to Florida. That is why it is a partial delegation. What they want to do is have the flexibility to quickly change size limits or seasons or whatever needs to be done; but it is still going to be under federal management. That is not changing.

MR. JOHNSON: **Yes; I will make a motion, whatever that one was – council should consider a maximum size limit for – I mean minimum size limits and bag limits for the Florida stock and trip limits for the commercial sector.**

MR. SMITH: I'll second that.

MR. STIGLITZ: What is the difference in the stock from the Georgia/North Carolina one to the East Florida one to the Gulf one? Is it a different fish; is it just some genetics in it? Snook on the east coast of Florida is a different fish than the west coast of Florida. Is this two different fish? What is the difference in them?

MS. BROUWER: Richard, it is not that it is two different fish. I think what they have found is that the populations are not mixing. They're sort of staying within their area and reproducing among themselves. They're not crossing over and so that is why the genetic evidence shows that they are different sub-populations. I think that might be a good way to put it, but it is still the same fish. It is just isolated not by a physical boundary but just for some other reason, but I don't know why that is.

MR. ATACK: When I read the report, there is a pool in the Gulf and then there is like the Keys and that DNA – some of the Gulf fish move to the Keys, I think, is what they were showing, but it was primarily like not they were mixing. It is not like they go back and forth. The ones up in South Carolina and North Carolina were also like that; not saying they were a different species but just in the DNA markers on it they weren't showing cross-populating.

MR. MERSHON: I know this is going into a whole different realm; but if these fish are down there spawning, are their larvae just like the larvae that is in the special management zones way down there. Aren't their larvae traveling up here, also? Isn't that what these SMZs are going to be about, about the travel of the larvae from way down south all the way up off the Carolinas?

I watched the presentation and they showed the special management zone down there and they said that the eggs and larvae were coming all the way off the Carolinas. Now, is that not the same thing as those fish are breeding down there; isn't their larvae coming up this way when you start talking about different species? I'm not trying to bring up confusion; I'm just trying to clarify my confusion.

MR. WAUGH: That's an excellent point, Wayne. For whatever reason, the hogfish stocks, there is not enough mixing. Either those larvae are moving up too quickly; they're not surviving when they get there. For whatever reason, there is not enough mixing of those stocks for those fish that are spawning in the Keys stock/South Florida stock to populate the areas up north of Georgia.

That is something that needs to be studied more and see why that is. But, yes, you're absolutely right, that is part of the premise, and we'll be talking that at the workshop tonight. There are some species that that movement works for and they're settling out and they're managed as one stock. Hogfish, for whatever reason, aren't. There is sufficient genetic differences that they need to be managed separately.

MR. ATACK: Yes; and I think it depends on what fish it is and where they spawn and where they go. Hogfish I think spawn several times a year. They don't really congregate in one area to then spawn. I think on gag grouper; those larvae do a circle back up in the Long Bay or whatever; so it really depends on what fish it is and how they move and how long do they float before they hunker down or whatever.

MR. SMITH: This motion is up there, though, because we've got a fish that is being overfished and experiencing overfishing. If we don't do some things quick – because we've been trying to do something since I have been on this AP. If we don't do something quick, if we're going in the

wrong direction, we might have a fish that gets closed down completely. That is the last thing we want.

MR. DeMARIA: Just a point of interest on the hogfish; this is a fish that is suffering a lot because of the grouper four-month closure; and where we help one species out, we're hurting another. There are several groups especially out of the Key West area with snapper grouper permits that just go out and target hogfish. They'll load their boat up with these young kids that want to dive.

They don't care what they make. They just want to go out and spearfish all day; and they just spear these small hogfish all day, day after day. It is having an impact on these fish certainly down there. I've seen a dramatic reduction not only in the number of the fish that I see on the reef but the size of them also.

MR. STIGLITZ: When do they spawn? When I've caught hogfish, I don't think I ever remember seeing one with roe in it; I don't know.

MR. FEX: December through March. After I make that comment to yours, Wayne, the currents might be affecting how their larvae is traveling. In that time of year it might not push up inshore. It might go farther offshore or vice versa. I know that makes a big difference in how the eggs travel.

MR. ATACK: If there is no further discussion, we will vote on the motion. **Council should consider minimum size limits and bag limits for East Florida/Florida Keys stock and trip limits for the commercial sector. All in favor raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion passes unanimously.**

One other point on this is I know I've seen in the fish houses that hogfish is imported from Mexico. Those fish that come in are pretty small, too. I know in the lobster business they've got minimum size limits for imports. I think it would be good for the council to consider creating a minimum size limit for the imports; because what is happening is they're doing the same thing down in Mexico that are affecting the Gulf fishery. I can't make a motion.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't know about the legalities of all that kind of stuff. You're talking about free trade and everything. I don't know; I'm not sure how that would work.

MR. ATACK: Well, my suggestion is they consider it and look at it. I know they did it in lobster tails coming in.

MR. DeMARIA: I could certainly make a motion to consider minimum size limits on imported hogfish.

MR. ATACK: Anybody second it?

MR. STIGLITZ: Before you get a second on it, why don't you make it for all snapper groupers instead of just hogfish? They bring red groupers over here that are that big. If you're going to go there, do it the whole way.

MR. DeMARIA: If you want to amend the motion, go ahead.

MR. STIGLITZ: It hasn't been seconded; you can do whatever you want.

MR. DeMARIA: Okay, minimum size limit on all imported fish.

MR. JOHNSON: I would like to hear from maybe a seafood dealer about this one.

DR. ERRIGO: Just real quick, I didn't get up fast enough; someone had asked about the differences between the stocks. Just really quick, there is a size difference in the landed hogfish. Hook-and-line-landed hogfish off the Georgia/North Carolina stock have an average weight of about nine pounds whereas off Southern Florida their average weight is more like two and a half to three pounds. For speared fish it is like seven and a half to eight pounds of the Georgia/North Carolina stock; and it is four pounds off East Florida/Florida Keys.

MR. HULL: On the idea of trying to impose minimum size limits on imported snapper groupers from other countries into our country; I have to go back to one size doesn't fit all as far as spatially where the size of their hogfish – you know, he just described the difference in size of fish just in our region from North Carolina to the Keys.

Well, I don't know what it is and I don't even know where all the hogfish are coming from if we're just talking hogfish imports. For us to tell them what should be proper for their area and their stock of fish, I don't think that we should be doing that unless we have a really good understanding of their fishery and the area where they conduct and prosecute it and the status of their stock in their area.

MR. SNYDER: From a restaurant point of view, fine-dining restaurants would love this; because fine-dining restaurants have to compete on a price point and imported fish are generally smaller and smaller a lot less expensive. However, the restaurants that want to charge only eight or nine dollars for a grouper sandwich, they want to be able to access less expensive fish. If we take that away from them, we're taking away how they make money.

MR. ATACK: Anybody want to second it? It fails because of a lack of a second.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, moving on to Action 5; this one would modify the composition of the Jacks Complex. What you have here is your no action alternative; the Jacks Complex, the ACL is at 189,000 pounds. You've got your recreational ACL and ACT in the second column; your total ACL; and then whatever allocation has been put in place.

It is broken down by the individual species that comprise the Jacks Complex. However, that is not the way that the landings are tracked. They are tracked at a complex level. Alternative 2 would remove almaco from the complex and track the ACLs for almaco separately; and that is what those would be.

Then you have the table of what would be left and what the ACL for the Jacks Complex would be without almaco included. Alternative 3 would completely disaggregate the complex so that each species would be tracked separately. I've showed here what would be in place for almaco, banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack.

When we talked about this at the IPT level, we were reminded that when the species complexes were put in place, which if you recall was during the development of the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, the SSC was very supportive of the formation of the Jacks Complex because mainly due species' identification issues. They saw that they was a good way to track landings for three species.

We're just making sure that the council has all the information in front of them when they go to discuss this in June; so I pulled up the rationale for designating the Jacks Complex. Other things that the IPT brought up were that landings for lesser amberjack are very low; so disaggregating them from the complex would not be advisable.

Also, we have been going over the Jacks ACL in the last few years; and then the weekly dealer reporting amendment became effective August 7th of last year. The question came up now that we have this weekly dealer reporting, how come we keep going up? Well, unfortunately, last year the ACL was met a month before that weekly dealer reporting requirement went into place.

We have requested from the regional office that they in June provide us some reasoning for how come we keep blowing this particular ACL; what exactly is going on? They have said that they're going to pull something together for us to show the council. Also, other issues; changing the composition of the species' complex can't currently be done through the existing framework that we have in place, which is the procedure that we use for regulatory amendments.

There are only certain things that you can address through a regulatory amendment. The regulatory amendment basically is just a shortened version of what a plan amendment is. Unfortunately, changing a complex can't be done through a regulatory amendment, so we would have to take this action out, put it back in Amendment 37 along with hogfish if the council wanted to continue looking at this.

If the Jacks Complex was left intact and what the council did instead is put in place a trip limit for the whole complex instead of just almaco, like they have asked, then we could address that action in the regulatory amendment. That's why we went ahead and looked at what a trip limit could be if maybe we did it just for the Jacks Complex or maybe included greater amberjack in there as well. Here are the landings. I just pulled these out of the SERO website.

The complex has closed early in the last three years since the Comprehensive ACL Amendment went into place. Here is your closure dates. There are some figures that I was going to show you. These two actions kind of go hand in hand. The next one deals with just the commercial trip limits for almaco jack.

Like I said, we're going to suggest that the council maybe consider those other two options; a trip limit for the entire complex or a trip limit with greater amberjack included. This is what the

regional office analysts were able to pull together on short notice. They just basically broke the landings, the catch per trip for the Jacks Complex for 2013 and the mean of 2009 through 2013. That's the two figures there, A and B.

Of course, the majority of trips are landing 500 pounds or less for the Jacks Complex for those two time series. Then we looked at the Jacks Complex and greater amberjack together; so there is a little bit more of a spread there. You can see for 2013 there is a very small percentage of trips that caught in excess of 500 pounds and the same thing for the average of 2009 through 2013. Then what the council wanted originally to look at was just a trip limit for almacos; and again everything falls out below 500 pounds for that species.

This is just a rough preliminary thing that we just put together on the fly. We will go back to the council in June and see how they want to proceed and certainly what recommendations or comments the AP has on this whole thing.

MR. JOHNSON: I know that in Florida there is a strong desire to have almacos be a stand-alone species. I think a strong desire is probably an underestimate of how it has been expressed. There is a ton of those fish out there, and it is probably a fishery that hasn't been utilized. It probably early on suffered from misidentification. Now, I would agree with the lesser amberjack. I don't know what you would do with those because they look like a cross between an amberjack and an almaco jack. I catch two or three a year on average. They're not very common; but almacos definitely something needs to be done.

MR. ATACK: What is making it close down? Are you saying that there is more banded rudderfish being caught, which shuts it down so the almacos aren't able to be caught?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, that's part of it. I think the fact is the ACL is probably way too low; and I don't think we're ever going to really know anything until we sort of separate them out and do a stock assessment on them. They're just sort of lumped together for lack of a better way of handling them at the time. This is step one is to get them out of the Jacks Complex and then step two would be to actually do a stock assessment on them at some point in the future.

MR. ATACK: I guess we know the landings for the almaco jacks by themselves, right, each year they're tracked?

MS. BROUWER: No.

MR. ATACK: It is just the total poundage that is tracked?

MR. JOHNSON: I think the dealers write them down as almaco jacks but they're included in the Jacks Complex; so I'm not sure how that is parsed out.

MR. ATACK: So they have the information and they could go back and pull it out and see what the annual landings are by year of the almaco jacks?

MR. OSBORNE: All three of these need to be separated. This is like mixing gag, black and red groupers for ACLs. We harvest big amounts of rudderfish, big amounts of amberjack, big amounts of almacos at different times; not as many in one year as the other, but to have one shut down the other fisheries – there are years we catch rudderfish and never even get to catch jacks because it is already closed. It is ridiculous. The identification thing is ridiculous, too.

They're very easy to identify. I have been catching jacks for 30 years and I still don't know what a lesser amberjack is or if there even is such a thing. We catch a jack that looks like a crossbreed between an almaco and an amberjack; and like you said, one or two a year. There is no such thing as a lesser amberjack.

MS. BROUWER: So then at this point these are alternatives that we've come up with. The council hasn't looked at any of this. They just said to come up with some alternatives for the Jacks Complex. Does the AP have any recommendations for any particular one or are there some other ways that we could present this to the council? Just any kind of recommendations that you have that is going to allow them to give us the guidance we need to go and do the right analyses would be really good at this point.

MR. OSBORNE: Well, the fishermen in my area are severely frustrated with this. This needs to be separated out and managed separately and not as a complex. **I will make a motion for that; that the Jacks Complex be managed separately, however you want to – okay, I support Alternative 3.**

MR. SMITH: I'll second that.

MR. ATACK: Any other discussion while she is typing this?

MR. HULL: And make a recommendation that stock assessments are conducted as soon as possible.

MR. JOHNSON: I guess to understand this right; this could be painful at first. If you look at separating these species out, I guess they're going to go on landings and try to figure out an ACL for each of these species or will they go to ORCS?

MR. ATACK: Yes, until the ACLs are changed; they're already there. Once you separate it out; whenever that ACL is met, that fishery is going to be shut down.

MR. JOHNSON: And what is the ACL for almaco at present?

MS. BROUWER: The total ACL for almaco jack is 302,517 pounds whole weight. The allocations are 48 percent commercial/51 percent recreational. For rudderfish the total ACL is 145,434 pounds. Then for lesser amberjack, which is the one that would be more problematic from what I understand, 9,270 pounds.

MR. JOHNSON: So that is the total ACL?

MR. ATACK: Commercial on the almaco is 147,322 and banded is 37,829.

MR. JOHNSON: That seems extremely low for almaco jack. There is a guy that lives south of me; I don't know how many he catches, but, by golly, I bet he catches half the ACL himself, one guy.

MR. HULL: Just looking at what Kenny has got here; right now the commercial ACL for the Jacks Complex, all three is 189,422. The jacks part of that, which is just inclusive now, but if it was separated, the current number is 147,322; so roughly a 40,000 pounds difference there. But look at the banded rudderfish compared to the whole complex ACL; it is 37,829, which is really small compared to the total complex.

I would be more inclined to just taking the almaco out at this time than all of it just as discussion to that motion. Banded rudderfish has become a pretty important fishery for a lot of people from North Carolina down through Florida. It has become a fish of the day in many instances because of everything else being closed. If you pull it out of there and it has a stand-alone commercial ACL of 37,800, that is not going to stay open very long; where the almaco, yes, there is roughly a 42,000 pound difference, but it is a lot closer to deal with. Anyway, that is my comment on it.

MR. ATACK: Anymore discussion on this? I will read the motion. **The AP supports Alternative 3 to disaggregate the Jacks Complex and track ACLs individually. All in favor of this motion raise your hand; all opposed. It carries unanimously.** Action 6 has got trip limits in there; so does anybody want to talk about trip limits or make suggestions?

MR. FEX: Noting what we had up there earlier, the chart where most the vessels weren't catching 500 pounds, I would entertain the idea of a 500-pound trip limit. There may be some other subalternatives that anybody else wants to bring up.

MS. BROUWER: Is that a motion?

MR. FEX: Yes, a motion, please; consider 3, 4 and 500 pounds.

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second it but I have a comment, too. I'm not aware that there is any recreational bag limits or anything on almaco jack I think anywhere in the South Atlantic EEZ. If you want to add that to this motion or maybe we make a separate motion.

MR. ATACK: The motion has been seconded by Robert. Any other comments or discussion?

MR. DeMARIA: I think Robert might be right on the jacks. I don't know if there is any kind of real limits on them in Florida; is there? Is it 20; okay.

MR. ATACK: Is there any aggregate bag limit is what they said – of 20. Any other discussion on this?

MR. JOHNSON: We have a range of 300 to 500 pounds?

MR. STIGLITZ: We don't catch almacos down there by us. If we do, it is not very many that I know of. What would a 500-pound trip limit do to the commercial guys?

MR. JOHNSON: I think it needs to be 500 pounds because I am hopeful that a stock assessment will be done and they're find out that this stock is in really, really good shape and just really hasn't been utilized. There is a lot of almaco jacks off northeast Florida and I'm assuming there probably is up off the Carolinas as well.

MR. HULL: I think it is going to depend on where you're fishing. If you're fishing trip boat out of North Carolina, 500 pounds might not be enough of a catch a long trip; but off of our area, off Ponce Inlet, St. Augustine, in that area, we're running day trips for our jacks. We're mostly targeting amberjacks but we catch a lot of almaco jacks. But with the trip limit on amberjacks, this could be reasonable for us, but I don't know – that is speaking for our area and I don't know what it would be off of North Carolina, if it is reasonable or not. They would need to chime in on that.

MR. STIGLITZ: Scottie, I'd like to hear from you. What would 500 pounds do for you in your area?

MR. OSBORNE: 500 pounds of almacos is fine for me; but up in the north, I don't know. I don't know how many almacos those guys catch. We used to catch pretty heavy loads of jacks; and then we went to the thousand pound trip limit and then the almaco another way to get a few more fish. I don't know that we've ever caught a lot more than that, but it has got to be right there somewhere. Yes, 500; but you've have to get more than 300.

MR. MATHIS: We've got a lot of almaco jacks off North Carolina; I mean, a lot. Everywhere you go you catch them. Mr. Jack Cox here, he will tell you I come in the other day – while you're catching B-liners, you're catching almaco jacks. There are millions of them and a 500-pound trip limit; that is not much. To me a 500-pound trip limit doesn't mean nothing.

MR. FEX: The point of the trip limit is to try to get the season to last throughout the year best as we can. I understand we can catch more than 500 and whatever, but I'm just trying to be fair. The analyses show that not many people are catching more than 500. If we keep it at status quo, we meet the season halfway through the year; so I'm just trying to get the season extended throughout the year. That is the intent of it; I ain't trying to slow nobody down. We've all got to be restricted one way or another, though.

MS. MARHEFKA: Kenny kind of made my point. I was trying to get Myra's attention if she could go back to the graphic before, I think it shows how few people are catching more than 500 pounds and how few people would be affected. I think that is what your point was, right, Kenny?

MR. FEX: Right; and the point is if you don't make it less than 500 points, for that mean, 95 percent of the trips were less than 500 pounds. You're not going to do anything to your season unless you do a 400 pound or a 300 pound; but they would need to run the numbers. They could estimate when the season would close and then they could decide on what trip limit size to go with.

This is just a recommendation to look at a range of trip limits to evaluate what it might do to the season based on the current ACL.

DR. ERRIGO: While you guys were talking, I was doing a preliminary look at breaking out the Jacks Complex, looking at the commercial landings and comparing each of the species' commercial landings to the species' ACLs to see how much was caught of each one and how much over the individual ACLs each individual species was in each of the given years.

It looks like almaco jack is the main culprit in most of the years. The commercial sector is catching more almaco than anything else and it is busting individual ACLs by more than each of the other species. Some years banded rudderfish is right on par with it. Then there are several years where banded and almaco are right up to it and lesser amberjack went over, but those are the years where we came very, very close to the ACL.

It is looks like it is almaco jack that is getting most of the fishing pressure and it is the one that – almaco and banded are the ones that are causing the overages, mostly almaco. The take-home message is if you broke almaco out, I don't think it will help – you won't get more. You won't get more time or fish.

MR. ATACK: Okay, I'm going to read the motion. **Recommend the council consider commercial trip limits of 300 to 500 pounds for almaco jack. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. Three opposed; the motion carries.**

MS. BROUWER: Action 7 would remove minimum size limits for deep-water snapper grouper species. The three species in question are queen snapper, silk snapper and blackfin snapper each have a 12-inch total length minimum size limit. Those are broken out as different alternatives so the council can have the choice of just eliminating it for one or all. I think there is pretty much consistency in that 12-inch size limit between state waters and federal waters. I think it is a pretty straightforward action. Any recommendations here?

MR. JOHNSON: I'll make a motion that they should remove the minimum size limit for all three species.

MR. DeMARIA: I'll second it.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion on this? I will read the motion. **The AP recommends removing the minimum size limit for all three species. All in favor raise your hand; any opposed. The motion carries unanimously.**

MR. JOHNSON: I hate to do this, Jim, but I really feel like we need to back up and do something about the recreational bag limit of almaco, because I don't believe there is one. **I would like to make a motion that the council look at establishing a recreational bag limit of one fish per person for almaco jacks.**

MR. ATACK: Anybody want to second that one?

MR. FEX: I will second that one.

MR. STIGLITZ: How big are they? We don't catch them.

MR. JOHNSON: We catch them up to 30 pounds. My logic here is we have a one-fish bag limit on amberjacks recreationally. If we start really tracking these landings, we're going to bust the almaco ACL recreationally and we're not going to be able to keep any. I'm just trying to make sure I can keep one per person rather than none per person.

MR. HULL: I would just question is there anybody here on the AP that is a headboat operator; operates a headboat? I know the headboat that docks next to me would be really opposed to that. Well, yes, total on the boat, but they pack them on there. I know just the other day he got into little almacos and they had stringers full of little almacos. Anyway, I just wanted to make that point that there is nobody here representing all the sectors on that.

MR. MATHIS: I was going to second his motion is for one fish.

MR. ATACK: Okay, it has been seconded. Anymore discussion?

MR. DeMARIA: I would just like to address what Richard said. We catch them in the Keys, but they're offshore. We used to catch them on the Wilkes Barre, which is in 200 and something feet. It is always an offshore fish. Like a lot of the fish you get up here closer to shore, we get deeper like the red snappers and all that stuff. We used to catch almacos in the Tortugas and the deeper wrecks, but there is always a deeper place. There is not a lot of them; not like up here. There are some, but I don't know of anyone that has ever caught 500 pounds on a trip in the Keys.

MR. STIGLITZ: Don, I agree with you. I know we catch some down there but no great amount of them. What about a size limit for them, too?

MR. JOHNSON: We catch several jack species, and there is one that is real little that I'm not sure it is an almaco jack. It might be a barjack or something else, and I would be a little bit hesitant to try to start making – and I also think, Jimmy, that is what you're referring to. I don't really think those are almaco jacks. It would probably take a fisheries' biologist to be able to tell the difference, though. I don't think we want to burden fishermen with trying to identify the difference between a barjack and an almaco jack.

MS. HELMEY: To me there is a very distinct difference between the two. We don't catch a whole bunch of them, but I'm serious you can tell the difference. It is easy to identify.

MR. DeMARIA: I agree with Richard; I think there ought to be some sort of size limit on them. They're not that difficult to tell apart. It is a higher profile fish. A lot of times it has a more gray color. It is pretty easy to distinguish. I think there ought to be a size limit. Catching the little ones; you catch them around the Sargassum off the Keys in the deeper water; and there is no sense keeping a little almaco like that. They could get very big.

MR. ATACK: Okay, that would likely be another motion after we vote on this one, then. If there is no more discussion on this, let's go ahead and vote on this motion. **Recommend the council consider a recreational bag limit of one fish per person for almaco jack. All in favor of this motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion carries with two opposed.** Is there another motion that someone wants to make?

MR. DeMARIA: I would make a motion to establish some sort of minimum size limit. I wouldn't want to recommend a size but some sort of a minimum size limit I think is justified for almacos.

MR. FEX: Second.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion on this? Okay, if there is no discussion, I'll read the motion. **Recommend the council consider establishing a minimum size limit for almaco jack. All in favor of this motion raise your hand; any opposed. Three opposed; the motion carries.** Now we're back down to Action 8, right?

MS. BROUWER: Action 8 looks at adjusting the spawning season closure that has been in place for shallow-water grouper. That closure is an annual closure from January 1st through the end of April for all the shallow-water groupers, including gag. Alternative 2 would extend the spawning season closure for red grouper by one month.

This would be to address, as I said earlier, the concern primarily off North Carolina that the spawning closure is not matching when the red grouper are spawning at that latitude. The commercial and the recreational harvest of red grouper would be prohibited annually from January 1st through May 31st. Then Alternative 3 would be to remove the closure for all affected grouper species in the South Atlantic. This alternative came over from the Joint South Florida Issues Amendment.

However, I believe the Gulf Reef Fish Committee at the Gulf Council meeting a couple of weeks ago voted to put this alternative in the considered by rejected appendix. I don't know exactly where that leaves us. This is one that we're going to really request a lot more guidance from the council as far as what they want to do.

Do they want to consider each sector separately; do they want to consider rolling closures? This is something that we heard over and over during the port meetings. Do they want separate alternatives for gag or black grouper or not? Here is average commercial landings in pounds whole weight for shallow-water groupers.

I believe January through April landings were backfilled using the mean ratio of landings January through April from '86 through 1990 to see when the landings – if there was no closure when the landings would be the highest; and it looks like they would peak in May. Then here are the average recreational landings; the same sort of thing; and those landings were highest in Wave 2, which is during the closure.

Basically this just shows you that based on historical landings, if you just remove the closure, this is when you would expect to have the highest landings. The 2014 data doesn't have headboat in

them because we don't have those data yet. This is just very quickly back of the envelope sort of thing to quickly illustrate and help you guys come up with any recommendations if you so choose.

MR. FEX: Trying to extend the red grouper closure into May is going to do nothing but create dead discards. There is nothing in this amendment that says we have to reduce the landings; so I would not support making that spawning closure go into May, because even red grouper start spawning in December.

I was involved with gutted research for two years in North Carolina so I know this for a fact; that they start in December and they do spawn into May. The original four-month spawning closure was put in effect because we put grouper in an aggregation and the numbers would have worked out right; and they did work out right for the first couple of years. We pretty much met our ACL towards the end of the year. I really wouldn't support getting rid of the spawning closure either. I figure I would throw that point out.

MR. DeMARIA: I think the council needs to figure out which way it wants to go on this. If we're going to have special management zones to protect spawning fish; do we need seasonal closures; and if we're going to have seasonal closures, do we need special management zones? I think it ought to be one or the other. I'm not sure how you could have both and then still have a functioning fishery at hand.

MR. FEX: Well, your special management zones, I really ain't in favor of because they're keeping the commercial sector out of them but then you're letting the recreational do whatever they want in them. I don't think that is going to be a solution.

MR. FEX: I don't think any SMZ has a no fishery for the recreational sector.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't know about that, but I would agree with Don's point. I think if you're going to establish these SMZs and that has been consistently the message from Day 1 about that kind of management is it may allow for some of this other stuff to change. I think fishermen buy into that. If you can establish SMZs and then maybe look at the spawning closures of those months and then remove them, then that might work. I think he is exactly right; you have to have one or the other. I don't know if we need both.

MR. BOWEN: It is of my opinion that the council is considering removing some of the seasonal spawning closures for the recreational side because we're not meeting the ACL on gag grouper. I think you were speaking of commercial, and I just wanted to clarify what the council's intent is on the recreational side.

MR. LORENZ: With respect to red grouper, if it is considering increasing the spawning closure for red grouper, here in North Carolina they tend to be basically pretty deep and they're out near the stream. I'm with Kenny there; that I don't feel it would be really necessary at this point because I would also wonder what could be the possible infiltration of larvae from other areas out there where we tend to have considerable current. I don't think we gain much with the all the complications that would occur like dead discards.

MR. HULL: Just to add to the discussion of what has been presented, the option of rolling closures, spatially and regionally fish spawn different times off of our coast in Florida then they do up there up off North Carolina, and we know that. One size doesn't fit all. The possibility of the council adjusting these spawning closures spatially I think would be something to pursue.

MR. ATACK: I guess the question I have is there is no data showing landings of red grouper by month. If you were looking at doing something, it would be good to see the data as to what that really means. With the red grouper, a lot of it is in deeper water. Some of them aren't; some of them are in 80 to 100 feet. But the deeper water ones, you're right, you have to stop fishing that area not to have those discards.

MR. HARTIG: That's a good observation, Jim, and I agree with you to look at what bang for your buck can you get for closing the month. To say extending the spawning closure for red grouper is the only option we have I think would be misleading you. Red grouper has a pretty finite spawning season. From what I've seen, it is more like April, May and into June at times, depending on where you are. In the south it could go into June.

I think you could get away on red grouper with a two-month closure. You have to remember that some of this stuff, as we've gone through management, we've done this stuff over time. Red grouper had that four-month closure primarily because we were overfishing red grouper and we had to clamp down, and we added it to that four months because that was a way to reduce mortality and to keep us within our rebuilding plan; so you've got that to consider.

With red grouper, the status of the catches now, there is a lot of concern on the council about the direction of red grouper catches. The assessment; I can't remember when we're on the assessment schedule. Myra, I don't know if you know when that is.

MS. BROUWER: I think it is coming up next year; I'm not sure.

MR. HARTIG: There is a number of things with these groupers that we've done over time; and as we've added ACLs to the picture and as some of these stocks are getting better – like gag is getting better incrementally, but it is getting better. We see the aggregations reforming where I am again, which is great news, because we lost them before the Carolinas did.

These aggregations are persisting now all the way down into Miami again. That is great information that these fish are making that long-term migration that they had for years and years, and that has reformed again. That is really good; but I think for some of these species – and Don mentioned it – you talk about how are you going to handle each individual species.

You may want to handle each species differently. Like gag; you're probably going to have to leave the time/area closure – the time closure in place; and you may adjust it somewhat based on the north versus south, and you may have different regulations. I don't think it needs to be four months for gag. I think we can shorten it to three; but I think you may want to have a different month opened in North Carolina than you do in South Florida.

Somewhere you may have different options based on how the fish spawn differentially in the southern latitudes versus the northern area where you guys fish. There is a lot to think about with the groupers. There is a lot of individual spawning characteristics that are different for each one; and I think if we put all those together, we could look at each species and get a handle on when the spawning closure could be in effect.

We talked about these SMZs, and Don has another good point, and he talks about it the same way with MPAs. It even goes down in the Keys which has a much broader closed area. Hogfish is one and you're talking about doing a lot for hogfish, but you have a relatively large area of closed areas in the Keys where a number of these fish are being protected.

I think you could kind of take that into your management as well. SMZs; I mean if you want to go to that concept as your spawning – your main spawning concept, I think you could do it, and you may be able to get rid of some of the time closures if you closed the right places. I'm convinced with Riley's Hump, what we've seen there, that if you get those right places closed, you could probably do away with some of these regulations that we've had long term for the council.

This would take a monumental group to work developing with fishermen these special places. Now, having said that, I think in our area, if you took a couple of spots for gag grouper, you could open up the rest of the area, because most of them go to these spots when they're spawning in our areas. That would be a more long-term way to maybe change the regulations. It is a lot to think about with the groupers, and certainly for some you're going to have different ways to manage them. I just wanted to put that out there.

MR. ATACK: I think we're going to have to recess due to time. We'll pick up here tomorrow morning at 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 5:35 o'clock p.m., April 13, 2015.)

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened in the Cypress Room of the Hilton Garden Inn, North Charleston, South Carolina, April 14, 2015, and was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Jim Atack.

MR. ATACK: Let's come to order. We're going to restart where we left off yesterday on Action 8 for Amendment 37. We were discussing adjustments to annual spawning season closures, if we wanted to look at those alternatives. Does anybody want to start off where we left off yesterday? The council is looking for input from us to look at closing maybe sectors separately or rolling closures or other alternatives.

MR. FEX: A comment to the rolling closures; I don't think that would be very productive. We will have effort shifts from one area to the next. We already see that from the Florida vessels wanting to move into North Carolina. Then if you open one area first and they got a shot at the quota, that would most likely affect the other areas. If you did open it, then we're already having problems with gag grouper. We're already meeting the quota on it; so if you opened another month earlier, then we're going to meet the quota even sooner. We will be losing more fish at the end of the year like we have the last couple of years.

MR. JOHNSON: Is this for both sectors; for all sectors or is it just for the commercial?

MS. BROUWER: Well, the council hasn't specified. This is just something that came up, and that's why those questions are there. Those are questions that came up from the IPT discussion; so we don't really know where the council is coming from as far as that goes.

MR. DeMARIA: I agree with Kenny; this rolling closure thing doesn't make sense. It takes many, many years for these aggregations to form and build up. After Riley's was closed, it was a good ten years before it really built up to what it is today. The first few years there was not much of anything, but it takes years and years for these fish to build up.

It is very specific places they aggregate. It doesn't make any sense to close them and then shift them and open them. It is not like growing tomatoes and rotating crops. That is what some people have tried to compare it to, but the fish are much different. We just need I think to set specific areas aside that are historical spawning sites if we can identify them and then leave alone.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just want to go on record of saying I agree with Don. I think we leave the current closures in place, maybe adjusting for red grouper if that is biologically appropriate. In the meantime start identifying sites – if these spawning SMZs are going to move further inshore, identify appropriate sites and hope at one point we find enough sites that we can protect that are site-specific and then possibly look at opening the month-long closure. I personally – and I can speak for Mark – don't see any point in lifting these until we have a better biological replacement.

MR. JOHNSON: I agree with her completely. I'm not sure – if we were going to talk about an increase in the ACL, then I could see maybe where we might want to do something, but we're not talking about that. I'm not sure what we'd achieve other than closing a fishery down even sooner than it does already.

MR. ATACK: So does somebody want to make a motion then like the preferred alternative is Alternative 1, no action, or what do you guys want to do?

MR. FEX: I'll make a motion Alternative 1 be the preferred by the AP.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'll second.

MR. ATACK: Anymore discussion? The motion reads the AP recommends Alternative 1, no action, on removing the spawning season closure for shallow-water grouper.

MS. HELMEY: I'm in favor for changing it if it – I don't know if they're going to separate it from commercial to recreational. If they are going to separate it, I would be for opening it 30 days sooner. I know their reasoning behind it is they don't want to reach their quota sooner, but in my case I would want it. It would help us a lot in the charterboat business.

MR. DeMARIA: I don't have a paper with that on it. Could we look at Alternative 1 and the other ones for a minute on there?

MS. BROUWER: And I'll remind you, as I said yesterday, these alternatives the council has not yet had a chance to see them; so if the AP wants to recommend a completely different alternative than what I have up there, that's also appropriate.

MR. JOHNSON: Why did we not choose Alternative 2? Isn't that the same as Alternative 1 but just extends the red grouper closure. Wasn't there some discussion about red grouper numbers declining and there is some proof that they actually spawn later? I don't know if there is anybody that can answer that question for me.

MR. FEX: Yes; we did think about that; but any extension of that closure would just leave the dead discards of red grouper because of the post-catch mortality rate. As for the red grouper, that is my backyard; and I've caught a lot of them through the history. I did see a decline a little bit in them, but effort has decreased on trying to catch grouper in my area.

You've got a season that opens in May. I fished one month. Once the triggerfish closed, I made one more trip and then I waited until July. When July opened, I targeted B-liners mainly, and that is what has happened. Most of the fishermen are targeting B-liners at that time; so your effort towards them at that time is low or minimal.

Then when the season closed, I fished one time in October and then I took the rest of the year off because it wasn't productive to just target one fish when I'm out there killing all these fish trying to catch this one type of fish. I would actually look at effort. I know CPUE is based on people going fishing and then if you catch one grouper on a trip, then that is catch-per-unit effort on that trip.

That vessel in Florida – I'm just making the comment – that went 17 trips and caught a thousand pounds every trip; if he caught one grouper every trip, then that's part of the CPUE so it looks bad, well, the grouper is in trouble because we've got all this effort. But it is not always just directed at the grouper; so I would really question that just for that fact.

And when I fish, I have to weed through triggerfish in my area to get my baits down to them groupers, so it really hard to catch grouper when the triggerfish are closed. I used to actually weed through triggerfish to catch grouper; so now that the triggerfish are closed during most of the grouper season, it is not very productive for me in my area to even target them. I think a lot of effort has been reduced on grouper just for that fact. The dive boats are doing good. I talked to a dive boat guy at the last trip, and he bought a longline endorsement so he did real good last year. I would look at how their landings are going to see how well the groupers are doing.

MR. MUNDEN: I have a question for staff as to where the suggestion came from that the red grouper season be extended by one month in North Carolina. I attended the meeting in Morehead City, North Carolina, the vision committee meeting, and I think there was a recreational fisherman who spoke in favor of a longer closure. Captain Terry Gould was there with me and I don't believe he spoke against it or spoke in favor of it. Did this come from the southern part of the state of North Carolina or did I miss something in Morehead City?

MS. BROUWER: What I remember was the meeting in Sneads Ferry there were some folks that came and they were indicating that every time they started fishing for grouper, come May 1st for red grouper, they were all in spawning condition. We have the notes from all those port meetings, and I'm quite sure that was Sneads Ferry and there may have been another meeting in North Carolina where folks said, yes, the spawning season closure is not matching up. They're spawning into May and the council ought to look at extending it.

MR. STIGLITZ: I support the motion. I wouldn't support Alternative 2 because where we're at red grouper spawn in February and March. By the end of April our red grouper are spawned out, so we would just lose another month of fishing. With Judy's thing, if you're going to open it for the recreational, I think it ought to open for the commercial and keep it all at the same time.

MR. DeMARIA: I'm going to support Kerry's motion, but I'd like to make a motion at some time – and I'm not sure how to do it – that once the council does – if they do move ahead with spawning area closures; that they consider removing a lot of these closed seasons. I'm not sure how to do that, but we shouldn't have both. Some species it might make sense to have a seasonal closure; the ones that don't aggregate like hogfish. Red grouper don't aggregate either. To have both for everything is a bit too much, I think.

MR. SMITH: I agree with Don. I think that we're just kind of looking at the map of what we're going to get, and I think that is a point that needs to be continued to be made because it will help other people get along with the process of protecting the spawning areas, the high relief, if there is a carrot down there. Those are the kinds of things that we need to do, but I think we've got a long ways to go before we know exactly in Richard's backyard where those red grouper are spawning and how we better protect them. We've got a ways to go, but I agree with you.

MS. MARHEFKA: Would it make sense is what we're saying as an AP that we do recommend the council look for specific spawning areas for these species, to possibly close the special management zones and as part of that process, when those are found and are successful, then the AP would recommend the council look at removing the overall spawning season closure? Is that where we're all at on that page? Are we saying we'd like to find the spawning areas and possibly protect them?

MR. DeMARIA: That's where I'm at.

MR. ATACK: Well, we've got this motion the table and it would be good to kind of wrap it up and then go to the next motion if that is what you want to do, I think. Is there more discussion before we vote on this versus the next motion?

MR. FEX: One other thing I want to make a point is if we do take away the spawning closure and we open up in January, when do you think the grouper is going to close?

DR. KELLISON: To my knowledge just with regard to red grouper, there is not any information that suggests that when they produce; that they migrate to specific areas. As Don mentioned, they're not known to be aggregate spawners.

MR. LORENZ: I agree with just about every comment that is made here. As the special management zones come forward, I think for public acceptance and to initially start to get folks enrolled in the process, we're going to do a little bit of horse-trading. Leaving this alone as status quo reminds me as kind of one of those things and then we're not going to throw something new at them that they're going to look at further restricting fishing.

MR. ATACK: Okay, we're going to vote on the motion. **The AP recommends Alternative 1, no action, on removing the spawning season closure for shallow-water grouper. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. Two opposed; the motion carries.** Is there another motion somebody wanted to make right now?

MS. BROUWER: I don't want you to get stuck because you don't want to make motions about these things, but you can certainly provide recommendations or clarification or some kind of rationale for where you're coming from with this motion. Don't feel like you need to make a motion every time you recommend something.

MS. MARHEFKA: In this case, just because it tends to be something that's semi-controversial and not everyone has had a chance to speak on it, maybe it is worth making a motion just to say that maybe the AP recommends the council consider looking for the appropriate species' spawning SMZs for shallow-water grouper.

MS. BROUWER: Are you making a motion?

MS. MARHEFKA: That is made in the form of a motion – and where biologically appropriate; so if it is not appropriate for red grouper, it is not appropriate for red grouper, but for those that do aggregate to spawn. **The AP recommends the council move forward with identifying spawning areas for shallow-water grouper that may at some point be appropriate to designate as special spawning SMZs.**

MR. HARTIG: While she is writing that down; that was what I really needed to know; that you wanted us to look at the shallow-water groupers as well because everything else that we've done so far has been focused on the deep.

That is a game-changer because I see that evolving into something that Don has talked about and a number of you have talked about something that we could horse-trade down that we could actually lift some of the time closures if we had some specific area closures. I think that would work.

MR. ATACK: Okay, we have a motion; does anybody want to second that motion? Don DeMaria seconded,

MR. STIGLITZ: Would this be to take place of the spawning season closures or both; I mean, have the SMZs plus the spawning season closures or would you add to replace the spawning season closures in there?

MS. MARHEFKA: I think the intent that I'm hearing around the table is that we keep the spawning season closures in place until the sites are identified and able to be protected with the idea and the intent that the AP thinks the council down the road, when that is taken care of, we would expect to see the spawning season closures removed, if appropriate. What you're trading is a big, huge four-month closure that is protecting everything for small closures that protect what really need to be protected. Yes, in my perfect world I would envision the spawning season closure going away once the sites were protected. Does that answer your question?

MR. STIGLITZ: Yes; I just wanted to see that in the motion. I believe they just modified it.

MR. COVINGTON: I was going to echo the same thing from Ms. Marhefka's motion that we need to be very careful in how that is crafted. In my mind's eye and what I think this committee would prefer is to replace that seasonal broad, geographic, four-state-wide closure for spawning for shallow-water grouper, end up replacing that with these targeted special management zones to protect spawning activity only for these time periods when we know that those species are indeed spawning.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just want to say one more thing and then I'll stop. I think what the council needs to hear from us and what they're trying to get at – correct me if I'm wrong – is that as an advisory panel are we comfortable moving forward with this different way of managing, which is closing site-specific areas.

We're talking closed areas versus these other forms of management we have been using all these years. I feel like if we gave them – even if it is like Myra said, it is not a motion; but they understood does the AP support that shift. Is that something the AP is comfortable with; then it seems to me that would help them a lot, because I feel like we are recommending is a shift in how things have been happen in the past to a new way of managing.

MR. JOHNSON: I support it. I do know for like red grouper it probably wouldn't work because they do spawn everywhere. I do like the idea. I just wanted to make that point. Also, shallow-water grouper, they spawn on the shelf edge, so I struggle with calling them shallow-water grouper because that is 180 feet. To me shallow water is 80 feet.

MR. SMITH: I'm looking at Riley's Hump and I'm thinking about Riley's Hump and the mutton snapper. While we know that we're seeing more mutton snapper in Brevard County and being caught at Sebastian Inlet in the fall than we ever did before; and I'd like to think that it has a lot to do with what happened at Riley's.

I'm hoping that's true, but then again we're seeing other species moving north in bigger numbers, too, and we're talking birds and mangroves and everything like that. With climate change, we have more mangroves and it has been documented they're moving further north. You would like to think – and I like the way you said that; yes, we need to let the council know that this is a way to replace the old guard and bring in the new guard; you know, protect spawning habitat. I agree with it and I would vote for it, but I think this is just a transformation that is going to take time.

MR. MUNDEN: First, I have a procedural question. Has this motion been seconded?

MR. ATACK: Yes.

MR. MUNDEN: And my comments are I understand where a lot of the AP members are coming from, but I think this is placing the cart before the horse. I would rather that we focus on the deep-water spawning management zones and see if that flies. Then if it does, to go ahead and move to protect the shallow-water species. We already have protection for the shallow-water grouper in place. I'd say let's leave this alone and let's move ahead with the deep water first and see what happens.

MR. FREEMAN: If you'll make that a motion, I second on that.

MS. MARHEFKA: We have a motion.

MR. FREEMAN: I totally agree with Red.

MR. WAUGH: Just one point of clarification on timing; the way I read that motion where it says "that may be appropriate at some point", I don't view that as going into this round of spawning SMZs. Okay, I just wanted to get that clarification.

MR. MARHEFKA: For the record, this absolutely means after the deep water – this would be the next phase; that the council knows from us it is okay at some point in the next phase to look at not in the deep-water realm.

MR. ATACK: Okay, I'm going to read the motion and I think we can go ahead and vote on it. **The AP recommends the council move forward with identifying spawning areas for shallow-water grouper that may be appropriate at some point to designate as spawning SMZs. The intent is to eventually remove spawning season closures once spawning areas are identified and protected. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed. Two opposed; the motion carries.**

MR. DeMARIA: I just want to say something before we move on from the shallow-water spawning areas. This seems to be a thought with a lot of people that this is something driven by the NGOs and environmental groups as just a way to take away from fishermen, but I don't think it is. Certainly, they support it but there are a lot of fishermen that support it, too.

There are a lot of fishermen that would rather fish year round and have to avoid just small areas rather than having these four-month closures. It is devastating to some fishermen especially in our area to not be able to fish for a certain part of the year. I look at it more of a way of trying to get to a year-round fishery rather than just taking something away from fishermen just because it feels good; and that's what some people do want to do.

I think we can get to a year-round fishery if these are done properly and if they're well thought out like Riley's. That is an exceptional place. If you haven't seen video of it, it is pretty impressive. You look at it and you say, "Yes, this needs to be left alone, these fish need to do their thing there and it will work out."

MR. ATACK: Let's move on to Action 9, which is looking at maybe changing the size limits on red grouper. Has anybody got any comments?

MS. BROUWER: Again, this action; the alternatives have been put together by the IPT, mainly actually by me, based on comments that we received during the port meetings. Some folks suggested increasing the size limit to 24 inches for all groupers. There were suggestions, as you may have heard, pretty much throughout the area for removing size limits in order to minimize discards. That is something that we kept hearing over and over again.

Then questions that we have for the council if they went forward with this; would they want to adjust the size limit for both sectors or each sector separately? The IPT thought that there should be some alternatives included for reducing the size limit and then, of course, consider what is already in place in state waters. That is what you have on the screen in front of you. There is a discrepancy mainly in Florida for red grouper. The minimum size limit is 20 inches in the Atlantic and Monroe County and then in the Gulf it is 18 inches and everybody else pretty much is 20 inches everywhere else.

MR. FEX: Usually we put size limits in or increase size limits to slow harvest. We're going to increase the size limit because we're not really trying to slow the harvest. It is opinions that believe that we should slow the harvest. Any increase in size limits will result in dead discards; so I'm not going to support any action on this one.

MR. ATACK: Well, the other reason you have minimum size limits is to try to make sure that maybe that fish had a chance to spawn before it is removed from the sea. If there is a very high discard mortality rate, then it doesn't really achieve that goal.

MR. STIGLITZ: I make a motion for adopt Alternative 1, no action, leave them at 20 inches.

MR. HULL: I second that.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion? Okay, no discussion, I'll read the motion. The AP recommends Alternative 1, no action, on modifying the minimum size limit for red grouper. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed. The motion carries unanimously.

MR. JOHNSON: What was driving this; is this decline in landings in North Carolina; is this where this is coming from or what is driving the changes or the desire to change red grouper regulations?

MS. BROUWER: The landings have been going down throughout; and let me pull up the table. It is actually at the beginning of the document in the background section. Here is a table that shows you what the ACL has been since 2011; the commercial ACL, recreational landings. We have been under the ACL for the entire time series.

Here are the commercial landings, excluding Georgia due to confidentiality. You can see that over time the landings have been going down quite a bit. Now, red grouper is under a rebuilding plan,

and there is a stock assessment scheduled some time in the next couple of years. The concerns, yes, have been the fact that the ACL is not being met and the landings are declining.

MR. HARTIG: If I may, I've got a gee-whiz question. I've been looking at red grouper and I've been thinking about, in the 40-year history or 40-plus years I've been spending on the ocean where I am, several different occurrences of hurricanes have come and blown tremendous numbers of red grouper out of the Gulf and they go right by us.

We see them for about a week or ten days and they keep on going. If you look at the numbers here, you have fairly flat – and we don't have prior to 2004; but if you look at in 2006 the landings go up dramatically for four years there. People who catch red grouper; do you have any sense – was a giant year class that entered the fishery and why the fishery changed so dramatically in those four years.

Because, if you look at that, Hurricane Charlie in 2006 – I can't remember, 2005 or 2006 – in one of those years Charlie – 2004, okay – blew those fish right by us. Well, it is a year or two before you start seeing that increase and then it drops dramatically after that. No hurricane since then has blown any substantial numbers of red grouper out of the Gulf.

I know Scottie has seen it. He has watched it over his period of time as those fish move right by us. They don't stay, but it is a tremendous biomass of fish that move by us. Where they end up, I have no idea. It is in fairly shallow water. We catch them and you can figure release mortality would be relatively low; and like I say they don't stay very long. But to me this would be really interesting for the assessment to know what caused that major increase in red grouper landings for those three or four years.

MR. FEX: If you remember, the LAPP Program was going on I think in 2006 and then everybody started worrying about landing history. Then there was a big, old increase in effort across the board, so that might verify that big increase.

MR. ATACK: Yes, and then back in those times they were worried about gags hitting the ACL; so I know some fishermen were targeting the red grouper and the scamps to not blow through; because once you blew through the gag, all shallow-water grouper would be closed. That can affect the numbers, too.

MR. COVINGTON: What is the correlation between the population density of the species and their sex ratio? Where are the trigger points? I'm thinking maybe there were some low years in there where if you got more females and that resulted in those couple years there of more recruitment, maybe that could explain it.

MR. HARTIG: Wes, I don't know about the sex ratio on reds. To me between them and gags, it is a major difference in the way they spawn. The gags migrate all the way down to my area to spawn. It is much more harem. You have one male for a number of females. It just seems that the numbers are much smaller,

You have one male to four or five, six, maybe, reds where in gags you'll have one male to 15 or 20 or sometimes even more females. There has been concern in the past about the numbers of males in the population for gags; and it is a recurring theme that comes up occasionally. I think what we've seen since we put the regulations in place; that we have seen more males in the population for gags in particular. Now, reds, we've never had that documented as a real problem in that fishery for male and female problems.

MR. BELL: Since you asked, so you don't think we're crazy or don't think I'm crazy, at the December meeting we had at least one individual, maybe more than one, talk to us – we were in New Bern – talked to us about red grouper. There was one individual in particular who red grouper was sort of his thing; and he was very, very passionate about what he was seeing out there.

That was when he gets into these fish at some point in time, they're just running ripe and popping. His concern was that we're putting too much pressure on them at a time when they're spawning. That got us to just kind of thinking about red grouper in general; and then looking at the landings' data – and Kenny may be right; maybe it is an effort thing; I don't know.

But if you look at South Carolina and North Carolina in particular, there is just these dramatic decreases in the landings. I had Marcel just very preliminarily look at MARMAP data, so you have fishery-dependent data and you have fishery-independent data in the MARMAP; and the MARMAP data, since 2003, shows a decline; so those two things combine.

And then the other thing we were looking at was – if you go in and just look at where we are in relation to the ACL, you get nowhere near the ACL. Just the past three years, '12, '13, '14, we're at 40 percent of the ACL, 28.5 percent of the ACL, 20 percent of the ACL. It just looks rather alarming or maybe I'm an alarmist. It was something that we were trying to pay some attention to because fishermen had come to us and said they were seeing smaller and smaller fish. They were just concerned about the fishery, but that is what brought this all up.

There is nothing behind the scenes devious here; it was literally a response to a fisherman bringing us concerns; looking at the data, fishery dependent in particular but some independent as well and seeing some trends there particularly in North Carolina and South Carolina; not Florida; and again we can't really look at the Georgia data because they're confidential. But that is what got this whole – since you asked, that is what got this whole thing rolling on concerns for red grouper. It was initiated from the commercial fishermen.

MR. ATACK: Typically the council is looking at being proactive a little bit I guess on the red grouper is what you're trying to say I think is what I'm hearing. There are other tools I guess we could use if we wanted to be proactive. Changing of the season closure isn't a good one because of dead discards and extending the minimum size is making them larger and more discards. Other options are trip limits or bag limits to where if you're trying to protect the fishery a little bit more than what you are right now could be things we could consider, I guess.

MR. BELL: Yes; and we just came up with a couple of ideas at the meeting and that is how we started down this road; but are certainly other options as well. The other thing to keep in mind is the trends over the past few years is during a rebuilding – what should be a rebuilding period, in

terms of the landings it is going down. That is what brought on the concerns and that's why we were focused on red grouper at the last meeting a little bit.

MR. FEX: All right, I'm looking up there at that chart. In 2011 through 2014, the commercial ACL – where the ACL was increasing. The commercial ACL was increasing because we were on a rebuilding schedule. I am looking next to it, commercial landings, 221; 117; the next year it goes up, 130, so that is an increase.

If you look over at the recreational landings, we all know they're hypothesis, they're made-up numbers, so we really can't base our things on that. So we're getting an increase in the ACL, 100,000 pounds in four years, and commercial landings are an increase in ACL, and then the landings are only dropped 90,000 pounds in that four years; so then your percent is going to look different at the end. I just think we're getting an increase in the ACL and we're not meeting it, but yet the landings are only messed up a little bit on the commercial, 90,000 pounds from four years. The ACL increased so that made the percent of us not meeting the ACL look even bigger. That was my point.

MR. BELL: Yes, and those are combined for everything. It becomes a little more dramatic if you kind of take out Florida and think, well, maybe something is going on. Timing-wise they're a little bit different. Florida versus North Carolina and South Carolina, it gives you a little bit different picture; but when you lump it all together, yes, which is the way we're managing it.

MS. BROUWER: So just to update the AP on the schedule for the next stock assessment for red grouper, it was originally scheduled to begin in spring of 2016, but it is now apparently going to begin in the fall of 2016 with the terminal year for that assessment being 2015. This is what staff anticipates. The schedule is in flux. As you know, there were some issues with red snapper and gray triggerfish that have shifted things around a little bit.

MR. COX: Red grouper is kind of one of my specialties so I just want to spend just a minute and kind of tell you what I see going on. Red grouper are in about 130 feet of water where we fish for them. Robert, not to contradict what you said, but as far as scuba diving and stuff, these fish do congregate.

I think you guys are right on track where maybe at some point with a shallow-water SMZ type of deal with red grouper; but so many fishermen are just seeing the decline and we're not seeing the recruitment in the red groupers that we've seen over the years. I think there is some concern. I think, Milton, that you can testify to this; that we're not seeing the smaller fish. We're seeing the bigger class of fish. Years ago we would see these small fish, so maybe you want to speak on it for just a little bit.

MR. MATHIS: The red grouper that we're catching are a larger class fish. They're bigger than 20 inches. There has been a decline in them that I've seen. I didn't say nothing, but I'd like to see them go two inches bigger on the size of them. Like I said, it has been declining from where we're at. I don't know what it is doing in Florida.

I have been to Florida; don't get me wrong, fished down in Florida; but I didn't catch nothing in Florida but American red snappers. That is all that is there. Like I said, there has been a decline in them. Then again, like he said, we were catching them right regular and now you don't catch them but it could have been, like he said, hurricanes or whatever. I would like to see them go up two inches myself. Of course, that is just me.

MR. DeMARIA: This is another fish that might benefit from a more regional management approach. It seems like they spawn in different times of the year up in North Carolina than they do in Florida. They tend to be bigger. I don't think they should be subjected to the same regulations that fit us in South Florida in North Carolina. It just doesn't make any sense.

And, in fact, to what Jack said, these fish do congregate but they don't aggregate to spawn. You find a wreck or something that no one has hit and there is a lot of red grouper on it. They're congregated but they're not a fish that aggregates to spawn. They go out in the deeper water and in the Gulf in 200, 210. They fan out, nest on the bottom and guard those. It is a whole different spawning strategy than gags or mutttons or anything like that.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, does the group want to look at the recreational bag limit? I think it is three fish per person as it is right now. I'm just throwing that out there; I'm not making a motion. It's just for discussion purposes.

MR. ATACK: Well, I think it might be a good idea for the council to look at that and they could run some numbers on different bag limits. Right now you could have three red grouper or you could have three scamp and you could have one gag. Based on the ACLs; does that really make sense to allow three red grouper and three scamp per person on a bag limit? Then if you wanted to protect it on the commercial side, you could look at trip limits and run the numbers on what are the landings for trip limits. These are things that would be worth considering, maybe.

MR. JOHNSON: I guess we just wait until the stock assessment to see what happens with that and then tackle that somewhere down the road.

MR. ATACK: We will move on to Action 10, then.

MS. BROUWER: Action 10 is looking at adjustments to the bag limit for black sea bass. As I mentioned yesterday, the ACL increased by a pretty good amount recently; and so the council would like to consider increasing the bag limit. They directed us to look at alternatives from six to ten fish per person per day.

Here are the recreational landings compared to the ACL in recent years. As you can see here, the 2013/2014 season, we only harvested 56 percent of the ACL. Here are some preliminary analyses done in the regional office. It is looking at the projected change in landings based on these various alternatives. It is split out. This is just looking at MRFSS/MRIP, I guess.

The reason it includes MRFSS is because we have 2012 here and 2013 and the shift to MRIP didn't happen until after that. You can see the increase in effort for each of these – not the increase in

effort, the projected change in landings for each of these different bag limits for private, recreational and charter and then for the headboat down here.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, this is definitely a regional issue here because I know how Florida feels. Florida wants a year-round fishery. This fishery opens up January 1. If you do an increase in bag limits, what is going to happen in Florida, we're not going to be catching fish in November or December.

I've talked to the recreational guys in my area and no one wants to see an increase. They want a year-round fishery. They don't want to jeopardize or run the risk of having a shortened season just to catch two more sea bass a person. I know it is different in the Carolinas, so I don't know how we tackle that.

MR. LORENZ: This is a species near and dear to me and most of my friends and cohorts who are private fishermen and we go off our own boats. I will mirror a little bit of what Robert had mentioned that I would like to see the council go gently with this. There would be time to increase bag limits.

With this fishery, we had a lot of chaos and challenges for four or five years; not the least was the winter fishery. At all costs we need this fish to be managed so they can be taken, at least a few, during the cold weather months where those of us in the northern end of the council's range don't have a lot to go for. One thing you saw in those years as we opened up with being able to fish all year was remember we just had a dramatic drop in fuel costs now; so this makes it a lot easier or a lot more justifiable for folks to go out for trips. That alone we may see a little more going on.

My recommendation would be to go gradually. The one thing you'll find and you know is that in fisheries' management, as you gradually increase the bag limit, people love you but for a very short period of time. When you get to the point you have to decrease it, they get mad at you for a very long period of time. Therefore, I support as a show of faith a little increase, but I'd go for adding one fish. We can talk about this next year which is where I personally feel on things recreational such as the grouper size limit.

MR. HULL: I'm more on the commercial side here, but I do have headboat that docks next to me and I see what they're doing. Of more concern to them than the bag limit recreationally is because they kind of fish like they have a menu when go on a headboat or a charterboat. They can catch five sea bass, they can catch their verms, they can catch different species, and they try to fill that menu up as their day progresses.

Of more concern to them is the size limit; and off of Florida, the recreational size for black sea bass is 13 inches. There is a lot of dead fish, a lot of dead discards on these headboats, especially fishing half-day trips, which are very popular now. They're throwing back ten to fifteen bass to keep one legal bass.

When you're talking on a headboat that is loaded down, the people that do not know how to unhook a fish and release it quickly, there is a lot of dead discarding. That is one thing that I'm

really opposed to is wasting fish whether it is recreational or commercial. Something of more concern I think is the recreational size limit at least off of Florida. We have a lot of smaller bass.

MS. HELMEY: I'm from Savannah, Georgia; and basically when we go fishing in the fall or the wintertime, that is all we target because that's all we catch is mostly just black sea bass. I had my customers say how can we only keep five of these fish when we caught 500 of these fish? I have them count because I know that if it shows that you end up with 30 fish; and I have them count so they'll know at least they had all this exposure to the fish. I would like for them to increase the bag limit; if it is one fish, if it is two fish; just some just to show good faith.

MS. BROUWER: I just wanted to remind the AP that when Regulatory Amendment 14 came on line this year, that changed the beginning of the recreational fishing year to April. The way that the council wanted it done is they wanted NMFS to project how long the season would stay open based on the catch rates and the increase in the ACL. They've projected that it can be a year-round fishery at this point under the current conditions.

MR. HULL: So for this year it is already determined that recreationally it is a year-round fishery. They set that ahead of time and they look at the projections. What you have there, the percentages, so if it was, say, to increase to ten fish, you're saying that you would have gone over the ACL by 111 percent, for instance, in the average?

MR. FEX: That is the ACL; it is 11 percent.

MR. HULL: Okay, so you would have gone over by 11 percent if you had increased it?

MS. BROUWER: No, Jimmy, I'm not sure that is how you interpret that. I am not in a position to explain it to you in a very detailed way. Mike.

DR. ERRIGO: This analysis was done at the regional office, so I will attempt to explain what is going on. What I think is happening here is it broke out the private sector and the headboat sector. You will have to look at each one separately. What it is saying is if you increase to a ten-fish bag limit and let's say you're looking at the average 2012/2013 – it is looking at the catch; so the catch rates and things like that.

It is saying that you would increase the landings by 17 percent over the average that was landed for 2012 and 2013 in the private sector. In the headboat sector you would increase by 11 percent. That is what that is saying. I don't know if that's done by weight or by number of fish. I don't know how the percentages were calculated. Sea bass, I think the average weight tends to be close to one pound, so I don't think it matters that much.

MR. HULL: Thank you; that's helpful. If you look at an increase of 17 percent on the recreational ACL, where does that put – if you look at the recreational ACL, what would that do to it say with the current ACL where it is at? If you were to increase it by 17 percent, when would it close or would it close?

MS. BROUWER: Well, maybe just looking at if this past season, 2013/2014, and we're only at 56 percent, without having any analysis, I would think that you would still not go over it at the ten fish.

MR. FEX: Well, yes, that was the first year the ACL went way up; and like Bob said, the fuel prices are down so that doesn't account for extra effort here for more trips.

MR. COLLIER: Based on going up about 120 percent; that would get you right at 700,000, whatever this metric is, if it is pounds or numbers of fish; so it would be still be less than the ACL.

MR. HULL: So with that information, why wouldn't you go along with – why wouldn't we be thinking, hey, they should be allowed to have more access to the stock that's available like Judy is saying? According to the information we have you're not reaching the ACL and you're not providing maximum sustainable yield or opportunities for the recreational sector.

MR. COVINGTON: Would it be proper to make a motion at this time, Mr. Chairman? **I move that we support Alternative 4, eight fish per person per day.** If we went ten, that's double; and if we were at 56 percent; and theoretically you would be going beyond 100 percent, of course, you went with ten, and that's not including any discard problem.

I think this will help the discard problem; so instead of having to cull so many to get your – because what I experience off Murrells Inlet and off Edisto where I fish with a private boat is I can tell whether a spot has been pressured or not. I will either catch a lot of 12.5 inch fish to weed through and catch one per ten fish that is over 13 inches or either I'll get on a spot that I can tell hasn't been fished in a year, and I'll catch nothing but 15- or 16-inch fish. It just seems to me that there is a lot of culling that has been going on; so I'd make a motion at this time for eight fish per person.

MR. HULL: I'll second that.

MR. BROWN: I understand what Wes is saying and I do agree with that. In looking at the numbers it looks like it will fall in line with itself; but I do know, as Jimmy said, we have the same situation here in South Carolina where we have a lot of discards. If we're going to increase the catch limit, I really believe that the size limit needs to be decreased some, too, so we can all set this increase in the catch limit so that we can continue with an extended season. If we continue with a lot of discards, that's going to impact the length of your season.

MR. JOHNSON: That was the point I was going to make; but I just had a question. What are the accountability measures on black sea bass? If you bust your ACLs, the season is shortened the next year? How does it work, Myra?

MS. BROUWER: No; the accountability measures are now consistent throughout; so there are in-season closures and there is only paybacks if the total ACL is exceeded and the species is overfished. That is not correct; here is Anna.

MS. BECKWITH: The accountability measures for black sea bass, since we have a set season, the National Marine Fisheries sets the season prior to the season opening. So depending on the

effort involved, if they feel like the ACL is going to be surpassed the following year, they'll shorten the season.

Something else to consider, too, is we could set it up where if we had an increase – to me it sounds like the primary goal is to maintain the full season. It would be possible I believe for the council to set an additional AM to say, okay, well, if you raise it to seven this year and we go over the ACL, an automatic accountability measure would be reduce it the next year without having to go back through the whole process.

We could do something like that saying, okay, well, we raised it to seven. We surpassed our ACL by 10 percent; the following year we automatically set a bag limit of six and so forth, to try and achieve with the ultimate goal being to maintain the year-round season. Something for you guys to think about.

MR. ATACK: Could another way be looked at where they go ahead and set it up for five fish per person; and then when three-quarters of the year is through, if it looks like they're not going to bust the ACL, increase it to eight for the last three or four months of the year. In some fisheries they do that. They adjust the bag limit based on what the landings are; so why couldn't we be more flexible and have something like that set up in our amendment?

MR. BECKWITH: I think for this particular instance I think the National Marine Fisheries looks at prior to the season and setting the projected season; and there is no in-season accountability measure; so at the end of the season whatever happened, that is taken into consideration to set the following year's season. They're not monitoring closely during the season. It is kind of set and done; and depending on how it shakes out, we set the next year's recreational season accordingly.

MR. ATACK: Yes, but in black sea bass it goes April 1st to April again, right; so if by the end of the year –

MS. BECKWITH: April 1st through – right.

MR. ATACK: Right, January 1st you have – so, anyway.

MR. LORENZ: I would just like to ask Wes I would be a lot more excited about a motion to increase the bag limit if the motion was for the more conservative level, two or three, so we'd have the potential to make another motion that the next time it is visited if we're able to increase the bag limit; that we address some of these concerns with the bycatch where we could possibly have the potential to drop to 12 inches with the more conservative limit or go up from there. I'd like to see it just a little more conservative than eight fish.

MR. JOHNSON: This is a question for Chip or Mike. If you adjusted the minimum size limit on black sea bass; does it totally change these equations?

DR. ERRIGO: Adjusting the minimum size limit doesn't just change – it changes a lot of things. It actually changes the selectivities that went into the assessment as well; so the projections and

things that came out of the assessment won't necessarily still be viable; but I don't think they'll redo those until the next update. There is a lot that goes on with changing size limits.

That doesn't mean we can't or shouldn't do it; but this analysis can't be relooked at. The problem is if you decrease the size limit; that means that a lot of the fish that were thrown back, that weren't kept, that went into this bag limit analysis may have been retained and the bag limit analysis may have come differently. The bag limit analysis that was done here may not hold if you change the size limit.

MR. FEX: A comment to the size limit; the recreational sector chose that 13-inch size limit a long time ago to get more fish is my understanding from Duane Harris. To your point, Wesley, you said at five fish you were culling through to get them and now at eight fish do you think you're going to cull through some more?

MR. COVINGTON: What I personally do is I move. If the first couple of fish are short, I'm moving. I'm not culling anymore, but I understand the concern. We don't have headboats in Charleston anymore. We've got a headboat in Murrells Inlet and we've got one in Savannah, I think. I personally move but I understand the concern where somebody will sit there and catch 20 fish until they get one that is that much legal.

I personally would like a larger size limit, but I understand biologically the effect it will have on the overall fishery and why that's not necessarily a good idea. I'd be happy to amend my motion. If I get the sense that we want to take a little more conservative approach, I'd amend my motion to go with seven fish per person rather than eight and keep the minimum size limit the same.

MR. HULL: I just have to go by the information that we have, which was presented. The recreational ACL is only being a little over 50 percent harvested; so there is no reason that you shouldn't allow more harvest, a larger bag limit. You can think about all these other scenarios; but when you're only catching 50 percent of the ACL and you have a five-fish bag limit, there is not a good reason that I can see not to increase the bag limit. I don't think you need to be that conservative. You have a stock that is totally rebuilt; so I don't think you need to be conservative. I would have even supported ten fish per person.

MR. ATACK: He is trying to amend it; so whoever seconded, will you go along with the amended motion?

MR. HULL: Yes, I'll go ahead and second it as amended.

MR. ATACK: And if we go from five fish to six fish; that is a 20 percent increase in your bag limit. If you go from five fish to seven, that is a 40 percent increase in the bag limit. That is another way to look at it.

MR. FEX: And just food for thought because I really don't want to regulate the recreational sector, but they're about to go through some charter/headboat logbook reporting in North Carolina. I know South Carolina I think already has it. We might start getting some real hard numbers that might really affect our decision, so I would be real lenient because we know where that gets us.

MR. ATACK: Anymore discussion? I'll read the motion. **The AP recommends Alternative 3 as preferred. Alternative 3 is increase the recreational bag limit of black sea bass to seven fish per person per day. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed. The motion carries unanimously.** That's last action on this amendment, I believe. Gregg, are you ready to do your presentation now?

MR. WAUGH: We've got two documents in here for Amendment 36. Attachment 4A is one that is the decision document that the council used. If you want to see what the wording looked like when you looked at this last, you can look at that document. It gets quite confusing because we've got the old wording, what the council did, and then a restatement of the new wording.

What we used for the public hearing is this public hearing document, which is 4B, and that is the one I'd suggest we use going through this morning. You all have been through this before. Your AP comments are in here. I'm going to walk you through the actions. Again, we're not looking for any sort of final action from. There is still no detailed analyses.

What the council has decided to do is slow the process down. You all were here for the workshop last night, and I'm going to go through all that material. We want to give the public a chance to have input, and that is what we did yesterday and that is your opportunity here. The council has sample sites to let the public know what sort of areas in terms of size and location that they're looking at.

We'll have a series of public hearings with listening and comment stations next week. Then all that material goes to the council in June; and the council will pick sites to go out to public hearings. Then we will do the detailed analysis and conduct those public hearings in August. The council will look at the results of those in September and pick their preferreds.

When you see this again in October, you will have a clear understanding of what the council is proposing. All the details will be in there. Of course, you all will also have the opportunity to comment during the public hearing process. If we look at the first action, Actions 1 and 2 set up this process.

Action 1 would modify the special management zone procedure to include protection of natural bottom important for habitat. We have to do that in order to be able to use this tool that has been in our Snapper Grouper Plan since it was originally put together back in the early eighties. The council's preferred alternative is to modify that procedure; and that is consistent with the AP's guidance before supporting this alternative approach.

Action 2 lays out how we're going to modify it. The council's preferred alternative is to modify the framework; and what the framework refers to is the ability to make changes a little more quickly. A plan amendment takes a little bit longer. You can move a framework along a little more quickly. It would still take place over two council meetings; so you'd have plenty of opportunity to have comment.

The council's preferred alternative is to modify the framework for the Snapper Grouper FMP to include modifying or establishing new spawning SMZs. Alternative 3 would allow you to use a framework for modifying them; but if you wanted to establish new spawning SMZs, you'd have to do a plan amendment, which would take a little longer.

The combination of Actions 1 and 2 sort of implement this new approach that we're talking about. It allows us to look at areas, to evaluate areas; and as we'll talk about later, we're setting up system management plan that will lay out the detailed research and monitoring to support this. Those two together lay out the procedure. This is going to be an iterative process that you and the public will be involved with in monitoring these sites.

If we find that whatever sites end up being included in this first round, if we find out they're not working, quote-unquote – and by working, what we mean is that we can document spawning taking place in those sites – then the council will use this framework and remove those sites. Those no sense keeping them in as spawning SMZs if there is no spawning going on in there.

That is how the process will work; and the council has those two preferreds. I think you all have seen this information before. You commented on Action 1. I don't if you have more specific questions or input at this stage on Actions 1 and 2. Not hearing any, we will move on then to Action 3 where we start getting into the sample sites.

We had some good input last night. That will be, as I indicated, put together for the council to consider as well. The council is looking at the Malchase Wreck and the 780 Bottom. We've got several subalternatives for a range in size; but you don't need to feel limited by this. You're free to suggest whatever you want to. We've got charts in here that show the general area.

We had one comment last night to put in the northern and southern latitude and longitude so people have a good read as to where those are. I'll modify the public hearing document to show those latitude and longitudes here. I've got them if anybody needs them while you're discussing those now. We'll turn it open for any questions or comments that you have.

MR. JOHNSON: When you said you're going to analyze whether there is a spawning activity occurring on a designated SMZ; over what period of time would you do that; one year, three years, five years? You said obviously if there was no activity, you would remove it. I just didn't know what the timeframe was for that.

MR. WAUGH: Well, that level of detail is going to be laid out in system management plan; and it hasn't been determined yet. We're going to be working with you, the public and our SSC to get those details put together with the system management plan. We'll talk about that in a few minutes, but we intend to have those specifics laid out after our June meeting when we head out to public hearings. Part of it is based on the experience that was observed in Riley's Hump, it takes a couple of years before you start to see something happening. If you have a suggestion for how long it should go before it gets reevaluated; that's valuable input and we can crank that in.

MR. MUNDEN: Gregg, I think it would be helpful at least for me when you list the square miles to also convert that to acres. As an example, being an old farm boy I know that a square mile is

650 acres; but then when you start to increase that to 2.47, it becomes mind-boggling. I think it would be helpful if you would indicate the number of acres for each of these proposed areas.

MR. WAUGH: We'll do that.

MR. ATACK: And is it nautical miles or land miles?

MR. WAUGH: These are just miles; and the reason for that is the GIS programs that are done operate in miles. We have converted everything to miles for consistency.

MR. HULL: Gregg, in your definitions you're saying that these are sample sites; so there is something to sample. Some of them you have a lot more information on the site, the topography, the intercepts over the years of fishermen with maybe spawning fish in the area which you have reports on.

I can only speak to areas that I am somewhat familiar with; and that's why I thought that the lat and long information would be very helpful for people that are familiar to these areas to look into what is proposing to be sampled as an SMZ. It would be nice to know the information we have. For instance, I can use the Daytona Steeple area because it is off my home.

What information do we have on this area so that before we can make decisions about it ought to be 12 square miles or it should one square mile – and I realize you probably don't have a whole lot of information; and just like in a lot of things that we're doing we don't have a lot of information.

It would be nice to know what information we have. If it is one fisherman that said, "Hey, we used to catch spawning speckled hinds in this area and I think it should be an SMZ"; this was 30 years ago when there was a bandit fishery going on off my coast. Things have changed so what do we have; more information is what I'm asking for.

MR. WAUGH: Jimmy, we talked about this last night at the workshop and that's an excellent point. Let me clarify when I say that these are sample sites; I think it is better to say example sites. This is to give you an indication of what the council is looking at now. Jimmy is exactly correct; we have information on areas ranging from the occurrence of spawning fish from MARMAP data collected over time.

We've got sites in the Malchase Wreck and the 780 Bottom or some that were suggested and worked up by the MPA Expert Workgroup. Then we've got some sites that Jimmy is talking about, specifically the Steeples off of Florida, which we'll get to in a minute; that area is a part of the Coral HAPC that the amendment has been approved, but the final regulations aren't in place. When those regulations come out, you won't be able to anchor in that area; so that area already has some level of protection. It is estimated almost 50 percent as effective as an MPA.\

But if you look at the bottom topography within that area, it has high, high relief. Now, what Jimmy was pointing out is, well, that may just aggregate bait fish and may not have others. We're

got a range of information levels for these various sites. The version of the document that goes out to public hearing will go into a lot greater detail.

We didn't want to get the cart before the horse. We wanted to make sure the council gave us some guidance on what to take out to public hearing before we started to go down and do a lot of detailed analysis. We will lay out all the available information to support each site. As Jimmy has pointed out, it will become obvious that a site like the Steeples – you know, the council is proposing that based on bottom topography and an expectation of what will be in there.

If you buy into the process and we monitor that site for several years and find no spawning, then we'll amend the plan and take it out. That is how the process is set up to work. It is sort of a tradeoff. Do you wait and try and get the research done and risk some of these sites where you expect there to be significant spawning, have been fished over the years before you can get all the research done or do you close some selected areas now, commit to doing the research and commit to reopening them if you don't find the fish there. You guys have to weigh that tradeoff. That is where the council is coming from.

MR. HULL: And I buy into that and agree with a lot of it; but for me as an AP member, some of these areas that I have very little information on, to say how big an area should be closed and when you've got a range from 20 some odd square miles down to one mile; I mean, how can I justify such a decision which affects such an important decision on the size. It is just hard for me to do that without further information.

MR. WAUGH: And we're not asking you to make that type of decision now. Maybe it would be helpful if we focused on the sites off of each state and then those members that are familiar with those sites can speak up. Then when we get to the ones in Florida for you, then you'll be more comfortable speaking. But, again, we're not asking for any final recommendations.

These are what the council has agreed to go out to this first round of public hearings. If you have some strong feelings about these sites that they shouldn't be considered further, if you have thoughts of additional sites that should be added for evaluation; that is the type of input we're looking for at this stage.

MR. COVINGTON: The alternatives that I see in here say fishing for, harvest and/or possession of species prohibited year round.

MR. WAUGH: Excuse me one second, snapper grouper species, species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit. We're not addressing billfish, any of the pelagics, coastal migratory pelagics, king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, cobia. All that will be allowed. There will be a transit provision in there that specifies how your gear has to be stowed if you're transiting those areas. The intent is that there is no fishing for or possession of species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit only.

MR. COVINGTON: My concern is when the public comes to the council and gives the council their thoughts on this, their opinion; how do you explain the difference between this concept and the MPA concept? What is the actual difference if there is a prohibition year round?

MR. WAUGH: To me it is very easy. If you say MPA, what people get in their mind is, okay, you're talking about a big square box. When we say spawning SMZ, what we want you to think about is a targeted area that is critical for a number of species to spawn; and that is based on the bottom topography where we have the occurrence.

You're absolutely correct, and we're being up front with this. The bottom-line regulations in both are exactly the same; but one is large MPAs, large square boxes. The other is spawning SMZs that is tailored to protect specific bottom habitat. I think it is important to look at what is going on in our offshore waters now, particularly with the oil and gas exploration, wind farm siting.

If we have areas that are protected as essential fish habitat, essential fish habitat areas of particular concern, coral habitat areas of particular concern, MPA, and if we go forward with these spawning SMZs, it is going to be more difficult for those industries to conduct business in those areas because we are designating them as higher. It doesn't make it impossible, but it gives them some more hurdles to overcome.

MR. DeMARIA: Just as we get into this spawning SMZ thing a little bit more, I'd like just to say something about how we did things in the Keys. With the exception of Riley's Hump and probably Tortugas North, I think we did a pretty poor job and the Keys are probably not an example to follow. We started out with a good idea of having some spawning areas and just marine protected areas.

We watered it down so much in the way of making concessions to people to do this and do that; that it became ineffective; and then years later we're told, see, it doesn't work. I would not want to see us do that up here. A good example I think is something like Looe Key. It is three by two miles, supposedly an MPA; but the very core center is not much more than a half mile square is the only protected area. You can't take anything there. You can dive but you can't fish.

Anything outside of that you can trap crawfish, you can hook-and-line fish, you can dive for crawfish recreationally, but you can't spearfish or you can't catch a tropical fish with a handnet; so it doesn't make any sense. Then we're told years later, well, the MPA is not really working there. Well, of course not; people are still fishing there.

Another one is we really wanted Western Dry Rocks in the very beginning, but there was so much controversy over that we ended up with a place called The Sambos, which is just a mudhole. It is on the east side of the main ship channel and when the cruise ships go through it stirs up a bunch of silt and it all settles over there. It is a place that nobody really fished much to begin with.

We made an MPA out of that and then we had to stop just short of the reef because the charterboats wanted to trawl and there is nothing that really spawns inside of there, maybe bicolored damselfish, but everything spawns on the outside of the reef. The line was drawn 60 feet; so there is nothing spawning in there. Then years later we're told, see, it is not really working; but it was never really set up right to begin with. I would like to see us, as we go into this, do it right the first time around and don't expect Riley's Hump type results when you set up a sub-quality type area as a reserve.

MR. JOHNSON: Earlier on this whole idea – and maybe I didn't understand, but it was sort of pitched to me as a more targeted smaller approach. I felt like fishermen would buy into that versus these large MPAs. My question is who is going to determine the size of these SMZs and what kind of voice are the fishermen going to have in that?

I've heard everything from one mile to maybe moving out four, six, eight miles; so where do we make the determination where the boundaries are going to be. I support obviously a very small targeted approach that maybe captures one very special place where these fish congregate to spawn. That's different than an MPA; but when you start making these SMZs six by six miles, it is no different than an MPA to me. You're just calling it something different.

MR. WAUGH: Well, Robert, to answer your question, the council is going to specify what the size of them are. What they've done is given you a range of examples that they're considering. For instance, for North Carolina, which are the sites we're talking about now, you've got for the Malchase Wreck one mile to 2.47 square miles; for the 780 Bottom, three, four and twelve.

This is the AP's opportunity now to give the council some guidance as to what size should be looked at. When we come to the ones down off of Florida, you'll have that same opportunity. The workshop last night was an opportunity for people to participate and give that input. Monday through Thursday of next week we're having webinar hearings with listening and comment stations. That is an opportunity for the public to give input. Once the council looks at that in June and they select sites, here is what we are considering. Then people have another opportunity to provide their comment.

MR. COVINGTON: I 100 percent agree with Mr. Johnson's statements about the way this is viewed and what we want to provide the council with is a way to get more buy-in. When you target these things now not only geographically but to my point earlier year round versus a seasonal issue – to harken back to Kerry's motion earlier this morning that was successful, she was wanting to look at a seasonal closure of a particular area for shallow-water species. Here we're dealing with deep water and –

MS. MARHEFKA: No; I absolutely wasn't. I personally and wholeheartedly believe that if you find specific spawning sites; that they need to be protected the entire year. With the seasonal, you would take away the full seasonal closure. Biologically speaking, there have been studies that have shown in areas where MPAs have been put in place and then at some point, for whatever reason, whether the spawning stops and so some fishing is allowed, it has been shown that all the positive benefits of a closed area are lost or most of them are lost the minute you allow any kind of fishing for that species again on it. I personally, when I was speaking earlier, was talking about a full-time area closure.

MR. COVINGTON: I apologize. I believe the way I viewed that this morning was the intent there was to get away from a broad seasonal closure and focus on the areas where the activity was actually occurring. I guess we will have to disagree on that; but to get more buy-in, I feel like the public – if they view what you're offering and they see that the science is there and they say, okay, an aggregation of Kitty Mitchell; we've got evidence basically of this happening four places off

South Carolina, four areas. We want to grab two of those areas and put them into this SMZ. We know it only happens three months out of the year.

If you go to the public and you say you want to shut it down all year to fishing for all snapper grouper species, you're not going to get the buy-in that you'd have if you just say you want to shut it down during those three months. That would be my recommendation is to try and target not only geographically but temporally as well.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think that speaks to Don's point that what you're then doing is watering them down so much that they will not work. If you want to make it science-based, I'm pretty sure there is a very strong scientific case for keeping it closed all year. We're really only hurting ourselves and hurting the process if we water them down so they don't work.

I think what will help the process is that anyone who has knowledge of these specific areas can come in – and we did this yesterday. I wasn't able to be here last night, but we did this yesterday. Mark got out his charts to say I fished this area; here is what I'm seeing at this area; here is the exact spot I think needs to be protected. If everyone can take their individual knowledge off their states and offer that, then you build a good site. That is what will be effective and that is what will allow buy-in.

MR. HAYMAN: I just want to weigh in on this point; and that is that from the science that I've seen published on this and that I've done myself; a lot of the science, once they've been identified as spawning areas for some of the big groupers and snappers, that they're used by all of the different species through all the year.

By closing it down for one species one piece at a time, you're kind of, yes, like Kerry said just not getting that benefit. Similarly, a lot of the big fish like gag grouper are known to kind of live at some of those sites year round, so you have a population of big, huge breeders that just never leave; so if you open it up, boom, you lose those to the population. Just backing up what Kerry said in terms of the value of a full-time closure once you find a really good spot.

MR. SMITH: Going back to what Don was saying about Looe Key, economics, it is amazing what a similar set has been to the economy there in that part of the Keys. The boats that go out there every day just to snorkel – now, I know it is not a spawning closure and it is a very small area, but it has been effective. We have to look at the economics; and I think economically it is really worth the value to taking that small part away and keep people fishing year round, they'll have these closures; it is a long-term thing and it is going to take a while to get it, but I think we're on the right track.

MR. ATACK: Yes; these might be a little too deep, though, to snorkel and see what is going on.

MR. SMITH: I doubt it.

MR. BROWN: I can only speak back historically from what I remember years ago for the red snapper and how some of us in this room remember the days when we'd go and find a bonanza or

a place out in the desert where these fish had congregated to spawn. There was lots of them caught in a short period of time.

To my recollection, I don't remember those fish ever coming back there. Once they were caught up, they never really back to that same area to reproduce; so that is something to think about, too. If you do set aside a place and if you do open it back up, then they're not going to come back there to spawn.

MR. HULL: I agree; but if we have site that is so special that speckled hind spawn there at a certain time, other species in the snapper grouper complex are going to spawn there, also, at a different time; so I would think that we would want to close it year round for that reason and for all the other reasons that were mentioned here.

I think the most important thing, though, is to do it right and to choose these targeted areas. For the general public to buy into this initially – it is hard for even anybody to buy into it; so for the general public to buy into it, these things are going to have to be well thought out and they're going to be justifiable and they're going to have information and data that these are as special as we say they are.

MR. DeMARIA: Just going back to the spawning areas and seasonal closures on them, I wouldn't agree with that either. When Riley's Hump was closed, it was mainly because of mutton snapper; and then as the years went by, we went out there diving on it and we saw that the dog snappers were aggregating there, and big dogs – I don't know where they came from – huge 20 pounders or so; and the Cuberas and blacks.

We didn't really think that would happen, but it did. There is something special about these spots. They're multispecies areas and they're not all spawning at the same time. They're out of sync with each other. The blacks is more like February I think is the peak and the mutttons May or June. It is a year-round spawning thing for something.

That area was beat down pretty much to you could dive and hardly see any mutttons there towards the end, but they came back. I don't really agree with what Mark says. The Goliath grouper, too, off of West Palm Beach and Jupiter; they were non-existent for a while; but as years went by, they came right back to the same spots they used to spawn years ago, 30 years or so, 40 years ago.

There is something ingrained in these fish; that if there is some of them left – now, there may be a critical number beyond which they're fished down that they won't regroup, but there is something in these fish and they come back to these same area. Goliath grouper off Jupiter came from as far away as St. Mary's River, Georgia, 300 miles. They were tagged with transponders and we recorded them; so there is something really unique about these areas; and I think if we can locate them, they're worth setting aside and just don't water them too much.

MR. ATACK: Okay, I guess what the council is looking for is some input here on like Table 1, like the Malchase Wreck would be good to give a preferred option on the Subalternative 2A or 2B.

MR. WAUGH: Jim, if I could, not so much for a preferred option, but these are the sites that the council is looking at right now. Do you all want to offer any opinion on these sites or adding new sites or removing some of these sites? This is your opportunity. As Robert talked about the size; do you want to give them some more guidance so that when they're looking at this in June to approve to go out to public hearing, they have your input on size.

MR. FEX: I'd like to make a motion on Table 1; the council consider 2B and 3C as preferred SMZs or consider as SMZs.

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second it for the sake of discussion; but I find it difficult to even weigh in on an area that I know nothing about. That is where I struggle here and I think that's where the AP has struggled before because you're –

MR. WAUGH: Robert, then wait for the discussion to get to Florida.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes; but he made a motion.

MR. WAUGH: Right, but we have North Carolina members on here. That is the intent. I'm not trying to stop you from weighing in, but don't feel like you have to have intimate knowledge of all of these sites. That's why we've got a broad AP; so those members that are comfortable commenting on each one can comment.

MR. FEX: And that was just the thing to get the ball rolling because we're going to sit here and talk about SMZs for a long time. I've got a big, old MPA in my backyard so I see what they do. I know they're effective so I was just bringing that motion up. I've heard Jack's opinions on it. I've been to several council meetings. This ain't the first time we've talked about this. I was just knocking that out because this is a North Carolina thing.

MR. MATHIS: That 780 Bottom to the Malchase; that is a very large area and it is going to hurt a lot of fishermen. There are some sites above that where I know for a fact there are snowies, B-liners, amberjacks, Warsaws, the whole nine yards and it won't affect the fishermen as bad and is probably a better place. It is to the north of it 20 miles.

MR. ATACK: So have you turned it in or told them to –

MR. MATHIS: I've talked to them last night about it. It needs to be an alternative place to the 780. You'll get less resistance against it and actually I believe it will be a better place.

MR. ATACK: Okay, when we're finished with this motion, you could make a motion to have that as one of the alternatives to look at. You'll have to call it something.

MR. MUNDEN: I'll support the motion; and even though I'm not speaking for Captain Gould, who is no longer on the AP, at the last meeting he also expressed his support for both sites. I support the motion and suggest we move ahead with it.

MR. ATACK: The question I have is like on the Malchase you're talking about one square mile; so you could fish within 2,500 feet of the wreck providing you have an accurate GPS and not get closer, right. Is that really a big enough radius around the wreck or should it be 1.5 miles around the wreck?

MR. MUNDEN: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that was my concern, too. Going back, one square mile is 640 acres; and with some of these boats we have out now, Contenders and Regulators and whatever, they can pass through that area in just a matter of two minutes. It would be very, very hard from my perspective to effectively enforce a one square mile closure. That is something that we need to get public comment on.

MR. ATACK: Okay, if there is no other discussion, I'll read the motion. **The council should consider 2B and 3C off North Carolina as spawning SMZs. All in favor of the motion; all opposed raise your arm. It looks like three against and seven for. The motion carries.** Milton, do you want to put your spot on the map?

MR. MATHIS: Yes; I would like to include – I've not got the latitude and longitude. I've got the Loran numbers on it. It is 35 – it is 40,005.5 on the bottom and it is 2695.4 on the top. It is 40,005.5 on the bottom – that is the TD's – and on the top line is 2995.5. I want this to be an alternative to the other.

MR. ATACK: And that's an alternative to the 780 Bottom is your preferred?

MR. MATHIS: On that 40,000, it is 40,005.5 on the bottom.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion? Did somebody second this?

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second it.

MR. MUNDEN: Mr. Chairman, it is proposed that this be the AP's preferred option or it is just another option for the council to consider? If it is just another option, then I would support this.

MR. ATACK: That is my understanding is this is another option.

MR. LORENZ: I just want to be clear it is another option with respect to it is an additional or in lieu of this other one?

MR. ATACK: I think Milton's intent was in lieu of, right, so we have to look at it. He would prefer one or the other, right? Do we have the motion properly described for you, Milton?

MR. MATHIS: Yes.

MR. DeMARIA: What is out there; how deep is it; is it rocky bottom, wreck or –

MR. MATHIS: It is a wreck. I found it, I don't know, 20 or 25 years ago. I've never seen nobody bottom fish on it but me and couple of friends of mine. It is a big area; it is a big wreck; and it

rolls out of 67 fathoms up 62 fathoms. It is right on the side of a mountain like a hill. It covers a big area. Like I said, anything you wanted to catch, you'll catch it there.

You will catch your snowy there, your B-liner there. I've caught several Warsaw groupers there, amberjacks there. It is all there. You've got your greater amberjacks; you've got your lesser amberjacks; you've got almaco jacks; but it is a big area. We'll catch snowies there; you can catch everything you want to catch right there in one place. It's kind of like Kmart; one-stop shop.

MR. ATACK: Okay, I'll read the motion if there is no more discussion. **Include an area north of the 780 Bottom, 40 on the north and 29905 on the south, as an alternative to the 780 Bottom. All in favor of this motion raise your arm; all opposed. Motion carries unanimously.**

MS. MARHEFKA: Gregg, there has been some work I know working with some of the Pew money and cooperative research done in some of the areas that the council has considered example sites; would there be time, not to slow down the process, but as the process is going through finalizing preferreds, the council choosing their final alternatives; if a site keeps coming up – again, if you go out in North Carolina and a bunch of people say that Milton's site is great; is there an opportunity to get someone in there to look at this?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; and this is the utility of having someone like Will here. Will already talked with Mr. Mathis; and he is already making arrangements to try to get a trip in up there. I'm confident that before the council takes final action on this site, we'll have some data from that area and some observations with the GoPros.

That would be the intent if we get other areas sited to have some information put together for the council to evaluate. Will, the question just came up about this new area north of the 780 Bottom, is the opportunity to have some work done in that area; and I mentioned that you had already started with him and we'll make it – we very well may have some MARMAP samples from within that area as well.

DR. REICHERT: Not just MARMAP but the combined reef fish survey. We are in the area, too, and we have every intention to look at some of these proposed sites and see if we can – we may already have some sampling sites in those areas. We'll certainly consider sampling in those areas if we are in the neighborhood.

MR. ATACK: Okay, any other comments or motions on North Carolina before we move to the next one.

MR. LORENZ: Just to comment maybe on everything on this; as you move this out to the public, one of the things you'll get is how did you pick this and you'll get the pushback on where is the data, where is the science, et cetera. I would hope to be very visible people we could find a way to bring out the species that may be protected.

It's just we will feel a little better if that could be divided even into two buckets, those of a very high priority and those of a lower priority. It might help sell this for a little bit wider and longer thought. It even occurred to myself, my interest in protecting larger hogfish – well, if I was to find

one of these areas that just so happened to have a bunch of them and spawn there, I would be a little more excited about it – not a lot, but kind of a listing of what we might protect on some of these specific areas might help, but it will certainly be of interest to your more intelligent and enrolled fishermen.

MR. HAYMAN: In direct response to your hogfish point; the sites that I have seen that are multispecies spawning sites, on the shelf edge you've got your cubera snappers and your big yellowfin grouper and the black grouper.

But, up on the edge, just before it drops off, we're seeing big harem aggregations of hogfish; and so you'll get like 8 to 12 females surrounding one big male in like these oval-shaped kind of harem pieces on the bottom. It is just like whoop, whoop, whoop; and the best ones are guarded by the biggest males and having the biggest harems, et cetera. But, again, they're all in those same crazy places.

MR. MATHIS: I would like to say something on your top line there. That's the 26th line of 5.5. It is not the 29; it is the 26.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, we'll move down to South Carolina. Let me just mention Roger put these together. In addition to giving off of each site the size and the depth on the inshore and offshore side; there is a depth profile slicing through these sites. That gives you an idea of the relief on these site.

If we move down to South Carolina, we've got the Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole Area, ranging from 1 to 4 to 13.5 square miles. We've also got Areas 51 and 53. These are areas that we're not disclosing the location for. Now, these are areas that were permitted by the state of South Carolina to put artificial reef material out there for the expressed intent of having them serve as a protected area.

We've got some results of some of the work that has been done in here. Each of these areas; the permitted site is 2.58 square miles. We've got some results of those areas in here so that you understand the type bottom was sand. We're hoping to be able to hold those specific locations until the final rule comes out so that we just don't have inadvertently some fishing in that area.

We have got the larger chart to orient you; the smaller chart with the specific alternatives; and again we will add the northern and southern latitude and longitude so people have those clearly in mind; and also indicate, as was suggested, the species that are being protected. Those are the alternatives for South Carolina right now.

MS. MARHEFKA: As I had mentioned when I spoke earlier, Mark and I sat down with Will when we had time; and Mark has given Will specific coordinates for a box that he thought would work encompassing the Devil's Hole area. We are in support of designating that a spawning SMZ. Other fishermen I've talked to; what I hear about that area is there are so many sharks in there right now that it is really hard to bottom fish there, anyway, because your fish aren't making it up.

I've seen the research that has been done in there and I've seen many instances of spawning that is happening there. I know it will hurt some people. I do believe it is an important area to some of the fishermen, but we support this action.

MR. ATACK: So on that note, which of the three sizes or what area are you specifically recommending?

MS. MARHEFKA: Like I said, Mark has actually given a box to Will, who will give it to Gregg. Maybe Will can discuss it. I'm not sure size-wise how his box fits into what is on there. I know what we specifically looked at yesterday was catching the area that is the Hole itself and trying to leave the ledge that comes from either side of it alone. Mark is here and he can discuss it. Obviously, I'm not out there fishing it like he is. He has brought Will in there to fish in there. That will suggestion will get passed on to staff.

MR. COVINGTON: This area already has a good bit of natural protection afforded to it by the current. It is pretty rare when I get a chance to be out there and I can get something into the smallest proposed area. Like she said, the sharks are really bad out there right now. **I make a motion that there is some reliance on Mr. Marhefka's suggestions and that the area be no larger than one square mile. That is sort of a 2C, but it would mirror whatever Mr. Marhefka's suggestions are, which it sounds to me like is the Hole itself.**

MR. ATACK: Any other discussion? Does somebody want to second that?

MR. MERSHON: I'll second it.

MR. ATACK: Okay, any discussion since we have a second? Don.

MR. DeMARIA: I think one square mile is watered down; and I'm not sure that is what Mark suggested.

AP MEMBER: So you're not agreeing with him?

MR. DeMARIA: No, I'm not agreeing with him, but I would agree with Mark. I can't think of anyone else that knows that area better than Mark; and if he thinks it is a valuable area, I think that says a lot to get Mark's support on something like this. I don't believe Mark suggested one square mile. I don't know; I might be wrong.

MS. MARHEFKA: I didn't second the motion and I'm not sure I'd be in support of it; because I don't know what size that box turned out to be that he has passed along. I'd say it to him, too, and I disagree with him; I think one square mile worries me that it is too small, personally. I wouldn't be ready to advise the council on any size at the moment. I know there is going to be some more work done in there. That seems really small to me and really, really hard to enforce at that size.

MR. WAUGH: Let me just mention that Mark is out there with Kyle now and they're trying to get the area input so that they can give a size. I don't know if you want to deal with this motion and come back to it or table this motion and come back to it, however you want to handle it.

MR. COVINGTON: I don't have a problem voting right now, Mr. Chairman. This is where I don't rely on this for my living; but this is where I hear from the organizations that I'm part of this is all they're concerned about right now. If you want people showing up at these meetings and this is all you want to hear about in opposition to this type of closure, which essentially is an MPA if it is larger than the Hole itself, then go right ahead.

I fish out of Murrells Inlet and Charleston, South Carolina, just like Mark and Kerry do. Again, I'm a recreational and private boat. This is a really popular area. It is going to hurt a lot of people and hurt a lot of people in the sport fishing industry. Commercial guys, you've got other places to fish, you can stay out longer, you can go elsewhere.

If you want to protect these deep-water species, there are better areas than this, in fact. Like I said, if what we're really trying to do is pinpoint areas that are specific and really important, I wouldn't have a problem with closing off a square mile here. I think it would be very valuable. I think my motion was seconded, but I'll leave that up to the chairman to determine how to dispose of that.

MR. ATACK: Yes; I think what I want to move on to the next one and then come back and vote on this once we get the coordinates and size from Mark so we can talk about the two; and then we can decide what to do with this motion. Since we're waiting on that, let's go to the next state and we'll come right back to it once that information is here at the table.

MR. WAUGH: The next area is Georgia, and we've got an area that is up close to the existing Georgia MPA. It would add some area to that ranging from 18 to 52 to 71.5 square miles; and then an area down around St. Simons that would range from 9.4 to 14.1 to 23.5. We've got a large chart indicating that area. The area in blue here – or teal – is the existing Georgia MPA. Alternative 2A is the green area shown here; 2B is that red area; and then 2C encompasses the area in the middle where we have all the observations of fish in spawning condition.

MR. MERSHON: I still would like to speak about South Carolina. I would like to make a motion. We have gotten to another state and I'm down here waving my hand.

MR. ATACK: Yes, but we're going to come back to South Carolina. We were just waiting on one more thing and come back to it.

MS. HELMEY: I believe we need the closure, but I don't know if it should be that big. Our coastline isn't but 104 miles. You're talking about a lot of closure here. Maybe we could have an alternative where the closure wasn't so large.

MR. JOHNSON: This is an existing MPA presently, right, and you're talking about moving the boundaries inshore? No?

MR. WAUGH: No, the existing boundary for the Georgia MPA is this area in blue; and we're talking about adding area to the west of it. These boxes show the different areas. 2A is 84 square miles; 2B is 86 – I'm sorry, the green one is 2A and that is 71.5 square miles. 2B is this red line

here going over to the boundary of the existing MPA; that is 52 miles; and 2C is 18 miles. That would just add this area in the middle shown here that encompasses those known sites.

MR. ATACK: Are these additional square miles or does that include the existing MPA?

MR. WAUGH: Additional; this whole approach is not making any changes to existing MPAs other than with one action that we'll come to that slides the box off the deep water or to the existing SMZs.

MR. FEX: I want to make a point here. The smallest one I see up there is 18 square miles; and then we talked about the Devil's Hole and you want one square mile. You've got to look at this sometimes. A lot of people are giving up certain areas in big amounts and then you're fighting over one square mile. It is hard for me to accept that one.

MR. COVINGTON: I respect your feelings on that, but we already have a Deepwater MPA off South Carolina, and we have the Edisto MPA and the Charleston MPA, whatever you want to call them; so it is not like we already aren't giving up something already. I'm just telling you guys the way our folks look at these things, MPAs, unless they're narrow, specific, targeted rifle shots at a problem that we all recognize.

MR. ATACK: Yes, I understand that, but we're looking for input now in Georgia, so anybody else want to weigh in on input on Georgia, on what we've got up here?

MS. HELMEY: Has Will worked in this area at all; has anybody worked in this area?

MR. WAUGH: Will hasn't worked in this area, but we've extensive MARMAP data, the mapping data in this area; and that is what – if you see all those observations in there, that is observations of spawning fish. There is some down in this area here as well.

MR. SNYDER: Would this be the appropriate time for the AP to consider any areas further west? I've got some charter captains that are worried about some spaces between 25 and 35 miles offshore.

MR. WAUGH: Sure, if you have suggestions just like we heard from Mr. Mathis for North Carolina for looking at one; yes, this is the time.

MR. SNYDER: Then I would like to make a motion for the council to consider researching areas for me to get you numbers later. I don't have specific numbers; I just got the text this morning – council consider researching areas between 25 and 35 miles west of St. Simons; long and lat to be determined soon.

MR. JOHNSON: You did mean east, right?

MR. ATACK: Is that the proper wording on your motion?

MR. SNYDER: Yes.

MR. ATACK: And does somebody want to second it?

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second it and then I have a question. What were their concerns and what depth is that in; what species were they concerned about?

MR. SNYDER: It is groupers and snappers that we catch. There is live bottom there, and they've told me that they can't catch them like they used to. They're just worried that they need some protection.

MR. JOHNSON: But the whole purpose of the SMZ is to protect spawning habitat. What I guess I'm trying to get at is this a spawning area or is this just where fish live and they feel like the stock is depleted, because that's two separate things?

MR. SNYDER: They said they've caught them there spawning.

MR. WAUGH: Again, not to keep harping on it, but we can have a range of suggestions for the council to consider. That is the purpose of this workshop, the AP and the hearings. It will be incumbent upon staff, working with our IPT, to compile what information and work with people who are suggesting these areas to provide as much detail as we can to the council in June for them to look at.

I know your comfort level is probably lower with some of these new suggestions, but this isn't your last opportunity to see it. We will work up the details and then the council will decide whether there is enough here to include it in this next round of public hearings or not.

DR. KELLISON: I was just going to make a FYI note about the existing Georgia MPA. I guess one of the recommendations is to expand that; and it is my understanding – and, Jim, you might know or Judy – that there is very little, if any, hard-bottom habitat in that existing MPA. It is a mud-bottom MPA. That is just FYI.

MR. WAUGH: And that is correct; that was established mainly for golden tilefish, and that is why it is good habitat for golden tilefish.

MR. ATACK: Okay, let's bring the motion back and we'll vote on the motion. **Council consider areas between 25 and 35 miles east of St. Simons; lat/long to be provided by Mr. Snyder. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; any opposed. No, opposed; six for; the motion carries.** So if we go back to the Alternatives 2A, 2B and 2C; is there any preferred alternative that we want to recommend to the council of those three that are there?

MR. DeMARIA: I guess **I would like to make a motion that we go with 2C.** That seemed to be where all the spawning was found. That is 18 square miles additional. I would also recommend that the council deducts 18 square miles from the total box, maybe shave off 18 on the western-most edge. In other words, reconfigure it so it is the same square miles; just basically saying to reconfigure it so the total square miles stay the same, but it includes that 2C area where they spawn.

MR. ATACK: Is that the way you want it worded?

MR. DeMARIA: I think I would take “offshore” off of there, just wherever they want to take it out of, just reconfigure it so that it stays the same number of square miles. Maybe you could help me with the wording.

MR. ATACK: Well, let’s just remove 18 square miles from the existing MPA and you’re adding 18.

MR. FEX: I’ll second it.

MR. ATACK: David or somebody; do you have any discussion on this?

MR. SNYDER: I’d rather see the council consider all alternatives. Yes, some are a little large, but it doesn’t mean we just can’t look at them. I would be more supportive that the council consider all alternatives rather than just 2C.

MR. WAUGH: The way I’ve been interpreting your intent is you all are making suggestions within this range of alternatives; that the council give some greater scrutiny to the ones you are suggesting. I’m not interpreting that you all want the others removed. If that is the AP’s intent, then you need to make that clear, but I don’t think that was.

MS. HELMEY: Just this motion; the council consider the area between 25 and 35 miles east of St. Simons, I’m really confused about that part because that is what we call the Snapper Banks. I don’t like that; I think we should maybe get clarity on that.

MR. ATACK: Well, we have had that motion and it is approved, but more information is going to come to better define and they’ll look at it and evaluate it and then there will be another chance to put input on this again later. Okay, I’ll read the motion. **Council consider 2C off of Georgia and remove 18 square miles from the existing MPA for Georgia. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed. The motion carries six for.**

MR. WAUGH: The next area off of Georgia, we had a suggestion the council look at an area inshore of this St. Simons 2. This area, we’ve got three alternatives, and you can see the green box is Alternative 3A; that is 23.5 square miles. You can see all the observations we have along this shelf line here. This really targets – we’ve got observations of spawning fish all along this rea here. 3B is 14.1 square miles and 3C is 9.4, focusing in more on the shelf edge but including all the observations that we have for spawning fish in that area.

MR. ATACK: Any input from Georgia?

MR. SNYDER: **Motion that the council consider Alternatives 3A, B, and C; as well as possibly D, something smaller.**

MS. HELMEY: I second.

MR. JOHNSON: I just have a question. How far north of the North Florida MPA is the southern border of this one? Do we have some lat/long? I'm just trying to figure out where in relationship they are.

MR. WAUGH: The southernmost latitude for the St. Simons sites is 31 degrees, 13.029; and I don't have the exact latitude for the northern one. Let me see how it is shown on the big chart – just south of 30 degrees 30 minutes north.

MR. JOHNSON: So that is just a little less than 60 miles? I think this is more – do we have any Georgia commercial fishermen here; because this is definitely going to affect the commercial guys more than anybody. Looking at the distance from shore, I just didn't know – I just want to have some input from somebody from Georgia that actually fishes here.

MR. SNYDER: The only commercial guy is Charlie Phillips. He is at MREP right now. I know he would want to have some input. The input that I had for my earlier motion was from some charter captains.

MR. ATTACK: But the way the motion stands; the council is considering those alternatives so that motion really doesn't do much other than to look at maybe something smaller is what you're saying. If there is no preferred alternatives other than just look at these alternatives and another smaller one, I guess we can move on. We will go ahead and vote. **Motion to consider Alternatives 3A, 3B and 3C as well as a 3D, smaller. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed. The motion carries, five for the motion.**

MR. WAUGH: Okay, next we have Florida. We've got the Warsaw Hole, which is to the west of Key West, alternatives for one square mile and two square miles; and then in the Daytona Steeples ranging from 6 to 12 to 27 square miles. Here is where the Steeples alternatives are. This area that is outline out here is the extension of the Coral HAPC, which fishing vessels won't be able to anchor within that area; and the more detailed showing the area again. It is matching the bounds of this Coral HAPC.

The northernmost border here for Alternative 3A is at 29 degrees 6 minutes north latitude; and the southernmost is at 28 degrees 58.8 minutes north latitude. Again, it ranges from 6 to 12 to 26 square miles.

MR. HULL: Mr. Chairman, this area obviously we're just digging into this, and this is a sample area that – you know, it is in the Coral HAPC which already will provide I believe it is 50 percent protection; so it is already in an area that is protected. You're talking an area of steeples of lots of steeples and lots of area that potentially has fish on it during the year from time to time.

To narrow it down to say that this is a special management zone type, zeroing in on a special area, without any further information as I asked for earlier, is a very difficult position to put us in on all of these, and that's why you're seeing so much abstaining on the voting here on these things, because no one feels comfortable.

I would make a motion that this AP proposes taking The Steeples out of consideration until we have further groundtruthing of this area with at least some type of biosonic transects of the area to see what we're dealing with here. We need more information, To come in here and say let's look at this, even spending any further time looking at this area until we have more information because a lot of this area is just not suitable for an SMZ; and it already has some protection. With the limited information we have, it is being protected somewhat at this time. I don't know; that is a lot rambling there and I need to think about how we would craft this and see if I can get a second.

MR. STIGLITZ: I'll second that.

MR. HULL: Can I read that? The AP advises that the Daytona Steeples be removed from consideration until sampling is conducted to determine if spawning is occurring. I may want to add not just sampling but some directed research of the area.

MR. STIGLITZ: I'll second it.

MR. HULL: And to comment further; I think that this is important that the AP on some of these areas – obviously, some of these areas are very – you know a lot about them. The work that Will has done and the work that her husband has done, I mean you have a lot of information here. The areas like this, we have a lot of incidental information.

We have a lot of information that, yes, I fished these areas, we fish The Steeples; but we don't have enough information to go and make this an SMZ. Even for us, too, I think it is important to let the council know that we think that some more work needs to be done. I know, Gregg, that you have been working on all this stuff and all you guys for a long, long time. I buy into it, but I don't buy into just throwing a dart out there and trying to figure out later if we did the right thing.

MR. DeMARIA: A lot of these areas like Riley's Hump again was beat down so low that you could have sampled all you wanted and you wouldn't be able to determine that spawning was happening there; and the same thing could be said about the Goliath grouper off of Jupiter 15 years or so ago.

You could have sampled all you wanted and not found a ripe one or not even seen any spawning; so it is areas that historically fish have spawned that we need to look at and come back to. I'm just a little bit uncomfortable about more research to determine if spawning is occurring. If you mean research by going out and trapping fish or whatever, you may not ever get any that is in a ripe condition. You may not even be able to determine even though it is a spawning place. That would have been the case with Riley's, for sure.

MR. JOHNSON: How were these sites determined? Was this MARMAP data or was it fishermen?

MR. WAUGH: This one is based on the bottom topography, looking at The Steeples within that area. This is something that was suggested by our council that we look at; and so that's what we're doing. This one in particular, we haven't identified thus far any actual spawning or sampling

within that area because this is an area south of where MARMAP and I think most of the fishery-independent sampling has occurred historically.

There may be some opportunities in the future to have work done there; but it was based on input from our council members and looking at mainly the bottom topography to look at that area. Again, as Jimmy has said, it is within the context of this process you protect it, you look at it; and if it is not working, we throw it out versus Jimmy's viewpoint is show that there is something going on there first. That is sort of the two approaches for this one.

MR. MUNDEN: The information that this motion is requesting will be provided by the staff as we go forward with this. This whole process involves the ability and the willingness to take a leap of faith; and so I can't support this motion. I think we need to go forward with it, get some public comment and then the staff and the council will provide additional information as this process moves forward. I don't support this motion.

MR. HULL: And to make myself clear, I'm not opposed to an SMZ off of Daytona and The Steeples area. I'm not opposed to that; but again it puts us in – and, Red, I agree with you, a leap of faith – are we going to get this information is what I'm saying. Yes, we can have a leap of faith and we can say we want more information and here we'll go ahead and say go for it.

Well, when are we going to get this information? What information do we have to the current MPAs? The North Florida MPA, what more information do we have since that has been enacted? We're pretty slow about getting this stuff done and we're even slower about getting the monitoring done and the surveying done and the sampling done. That's my point. I appreciate everything that everybody said and hopefully you'll appreciate what I said. I have a lot of concern about moving forward with things with the amount of information that we have.

MR. MOSS: Just a quick question for my point of clarification. I hope I'm not the only one that's confused; but perhaps I am. Aren't we initially looking at just suggestions to further look into this stuff, anyway? I'm a little confused on that. As I understand it, we're making recommendations to further look into things, but then we're making motions to further look into further looking into things.

Am I the only one confused on that? It's a long-winded question so I'll try to shorten it. It is my understanding that we're initially looking at this stuff to make suggestions to further look into some of these areas; so I'm not quite sure are we making suggestions to look into further looking into these things?

MR. WAUGH: These are areas the council is considering and they're asking for your input at this stage, the public's input at the hearings next week; and then in June they're going to decide which ones that they think should be looked at in detail. After the June council meeting, then our staff, working with what is called the IPT, the NMFS staff as well, will put together all the information for the sites. Then you'll have a chance to look at what the council is then proposing for – I don't know if you can call it more detail – more active consideration with the justification. Then that will go back out to public hearing.

MR. MOSS: So then I guess this goes back to Jimmy; isn't that kind of what you're asking for, anyway, for us to look more into this stuff before we actually move forward with making these SMZs?

MR. HULL: Yes; but I think, Gregg, if you could explain to me and to the AP as to the protocols and the procedures of once – okay, so say that you say, okay, Daytona Steeples and it goes to the six square miles, the council says, yes, this is going through and it gets to the framework or however we're going to do this; so where is it written, okay, here is how we're going to groundtruth this, here are the reasons? Where is the plan here that shows how we're going to do all this line by line by line; and now, yes, this is now an SMZ because it fits all of this different criteria that we have in place other than, yes, we have some intercepts; yes, it is the right type of bottom.

MR. WAUGH: The protocol for doing the work is going to be laid out in detail in the system management plan, which we will be talking about before we break for lunch at noon. That will lay out the protocol. But, Jimmy, the meat of what you're getting at is what are we going to be able to bring to the table to actually support these areas that the council is looking at, that we don't have right now?

We can show you the MARMAP data and the fishery-independent data that we have now. Well, for instance, the new site that was recommended off of North Carolina, Will is working with Mr. Mathis and he is going to go out and do some direct observations there. Marcel and the fishery independent can try and do some sampling in there before the council finalizes this ultimately. We're going to be talking about the Warsaw Hole next.

Nick Farmer has worked with – and I forget which research cruise it is; but that Warsaw Hole will be mapped before the council looks at final consideration. We do have the opportunity to do some more work in these areas that are being evaluated before the council make its final decision for this time around. That is not laid out in any detail because what we're doing is the council has put in some our own limited resources to get some of this work done, as has Pew and other groups.

Will has cobbled together funding from lots of places. It is going to be a little helter-skelter between now and what we finally get implanted. What happens after that; we will have a system management plan and you'll see how detailed the outreach portion is. That will be done for the research and monitoring and it will have estimated costs there.

It is still going to be challenging to go out and get that funding, but we are setting up a procedure in-house that John Carmichael is heading developing a citizen science protocol. That will be laid out; but we've got to use that system management plan to then go out and get what limited funding we can get through NMFS; but we've all got to be creative and come up with some outside funding.

MR. CONKLIN: I think there was a question earlier about where these boxes came from and didn't they all originate – all the original ones came from Amendment 17 and MPA Expert Workgroup. They were used as an initial kind of starting point, and the intent of these were to have fishermen come up with other areas within those – or more targeted, tailored spawning zones.

We've had a lot of trouble actually getting that information. Today is I think the most information we've gotten throughout the entire process. I have similar concerns, Jimmy, of designating these boxes that were brought up in Amendment 17 and drawn because they are the same size and same spots as the MPAs.

That is not what our intent is here, I don't think, but I would want to make sure that we find smaller spots, that if we're designating these areas to be looked at, then I certainly support groundtruthing as well. The only information currently we have on research is in the Georgetown Hole; and going on that kind of information, that is an educated decision.

I think that people could use that and make a good decision; but as far as like you're saying throwing a dart at a board based on some of these data points that are real old, I understand the historical spawning grounds aspect of it and everything else, but this has got to be a two-way process.

If the fishermen can help the scientists and vice versa and we can really groundtruth this stuff, it will be valuable. If I was making this decision this week, I would only support closing one area and designating an SMZ and then supporting moving forward with conducting further research. That is the smart way to look at it.

I don't know if you guys have been thinking about that; but moving forward too fast could be – there is a lot of discussion here of making educated decisions and then other people are wanting to just go on historical stuff. I think we need to stick to the well-tailored spots and getting the bang for our buck based on education.

MR. ATACK: I agree with the groundtruthing and more is going to come out on this. I do not really go along with this motion or support this motion because you're talking about removing these from consideration. I think at this point in the game they should be considered and looked at, the groundtruthing, and then later on decided whether or not we should remove these from the SMZ plan. That is my opinion. Is there more discussion?

If not, we've got a lot to cover today and we can go ahead and vote on this motion. I will read the motion. **The AP advises that Daytona Steeples be removed from consideration until sampling and research is conducted to determine if spawning is occurring. All in favor of this motion raise your arm; all opposed raise your arm. The motion does not pass; it fails; two for and six against.**

MR. SMITH: **We would make a motion to accept 3B as the preferred.**

MR. ATACK: Anybody second? Don DeMaria seconded. Discussion?

MR. JOHNSON: I'm not picking on you, Rodney, but I'm just curious why you chose that one other than maybe the less restrictive one that is six miles. I guess you're picking the middle of the road here. I don't personally know enough about that area where Jimmy fishes. I don't go down there so I can't really add any input. That sort of what troubles me with this process. We're all

voting on things and a lot time we don't even have any idea about what happens there, how many people it would affect, all those kinds of things.

MR. SMITH: You're right, Robert, and we're trying to move forward, trying to be a centrist, and then I think what I don't see is that we pick areas – and we can't avoid it the way we're going right now – that later we go, well, man, we missed that. It seems like that happens all the time and that is how we learn the process that we learn by. I just went for the middle, yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Just one more comment. As you get further south in Florida, you affect more people because of the distance from shore. When you start making these MPAs; it is one thing for me to live with the North Florida MPA, which is 65 miles from where I fish. But when you start talking about, what, 38 miles to The Steeples, you're closure to shore. I would maybe have support 2C, I don't know, but I just think you need to think about those things. You're affecting more people just because of the proximity to shore.

MR. HULL: I would not support that simply because it is too large of an area and for all the reasons I stated earlier. These SMZs are supposed to target specific smaller areas. I would support the smaller option; I would support that to move forward with it; but I wouldn't be able to support this one. If you would amend it, you would get my support on the smaller one.

MR. SMITH: I'll amend it if my seconder will accept that.

MR. DeMARIA: Yes, sure.

MR. DeMARIA: I think just the important part is that we encompass the main bottom where we figure fish are going to spawn and make it as small as possible.

MR. HULL: I like what Red said earlier; one square mile is 640 acres. If you've been out and seen a 640 acre area, it is pretty large. I think that the smaller option is definitely justifiable and supportable.

MR. ATACK: Okay, if there is no more discussion, we will read the motion. **The council consider 3C off Daytona Steeples as the preferred alternative. All in favor raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. It passes; the motion is approved; 13 for and none against.**

MR. WAUGH: The last one off of Florida is way south. It is the Warsaw Hole and here is Key West. The Warsaw Hole is this area right here that is shown much better on the smaller chart. You've got Key West up here in the top right and then here is the box. Alternative 2A is two square miles; 2B is one square mile. This is based on input from fishermen and this was one that was recommended by the Expert MPA Workgroup as well to include it in there.

MR. DeMARIA: I can say something on this. It is called the Warsaw Hole for a reason. The old conchs used to catch a lot of Warsaws there. I think today if you went out and fished, you'd be lucky to catch any. I recall stories when I first came to Key West of just catching large amounts of them in the summertime. If anywhere is a place where they spawn, it is probably that. Do we have evidence that they spawn there, no, and we might not ever get it if it remains open.

It seems like if you're going to choose a place to set aside for Warsaws and other species – there are scamps there, there is blackfin snapper, yellow eyes, a lot of other species there, too. It seems like if you're going to set a place aside, this seems like a reasonable one to set aside. One square mile would be too small an area.

It is kind of a rectangular shape going east and west the way the ridge runs. It comes from like 260 down to 320. It is a series of big humps and I think it is the remnants of an old shoreline. A researcher from the University of South Florida, Al Hines, went out there in a submersible years ago and they looked at it and has some video. We could always obtain that. It is kind of silty, but it is pretty rugged bottom. At one time there were a lot of Warsaws there.

MR. ATACK: Does anybody want to choose or weigh in on which preferred option we would prefer?

MR. COVINGTON: In the spirit of compromise, I move that the area be 1.5 square miles.

MR. ATACK: Do we have a second?

MR. STIGLITZ: I'm not in favor of the Warsaw Hole at all. As Don said earlier, down in the Keys we've got massive amounts of MPAs. He made the comment earlier about how they're not working. It is hard to swallow that they've already took miles and miles and miles of bottom away from us that we are admitting that aren't working and now we want to make another one there.

I said in the fall I was dead set against it until they did something else. I am dead set against the Warsaw Hole until there is some information that it really is there. They need to give some of this stuff back that is not working. Don said earlier they're not working. They've got proof that they're not working and now we want to make more of them.

MR. SMITH: In the spirit of compromise, I'll second that motion.

MR. COVINGTON: Mr. Chairman, I feel compelled to withdraw my motion having no local knowledge of the area and hearing the argument that was just made.

MR. ATACK: Can he withdraw his motion?

MR. WAUGH: If the seconder agrees.

MR. ATACK: Do you agree, Rodney?

MR. SMITH: I withdraw my second.

MR. ATACK: Is there any objection from the AP for this withdrawal? If not, it is withdrawn.

MR. SMITH: I have a comment. First I would going to suggest that if Richard made a motion that we would go with the two miles instead of one; but then I heard him say that we've taken away miles and miles of bottom fishing already. I just wondered where are those miles and miles

of bottom fishing that we've taken away in the Keys. I don't know if that is true, Richard, and you're the guy to tell because you fish that area.

MR. STIGLITZ: We've got the Dry Tortugas; we've got Riley's Hump; we've got the Sambos; we've got Looe Key; we've got Sombrero Lighthouse. I don't even know them all. There are so many things from Miami to the Dry Tortugas that you have to take a lawyer with you to go fishing because you can't keep up with all of them. Don probably knows them better than I do, but you can't even keep up with it all there is so much bottom they've taken away down there.

MR. DeMARIA: I agree, Richard, and the only way I would support any new reserves in the Keys is if they gave back an additional square mileage to us. I've said that numerous times on record. The same thing with the Warsaw Hole; I couldn't support an additional two square miles unless something was given back, something from the Sambos or somewhere.

That is kind of where I'm on it; and as far as areas being taken away, yes, there are areas where you can't fish, but there are a lot of areas that are – they call them SPAs, Sanctuary Preservation Areas; but you can still net fish for bait and you can still troll in them and all that. They ought to just change those areas named to special privilege areas, use the same acronym, but it is kind of a joke what we've done in the Keys.

I agree with you, it is frustrating, it is a joke, you've got to have an attorney with you when you go out. It is a mess. We're not an example on how to do things; but I believe Riley's Hump was well thought out. I believe this Warsaw Hole thing, in talking with the old-timers, it should make a good one, I think. There is no way to tell. It is fished so heavily now, you can't tell. If after so many year there is nothing happening there, then it needs to be opened back up again. I do believe the Warsaw Hole has some potential.

MR. ATACK: I would think that the two options there, the one square mile we've talked about; is that really big enough to actually do what we're wanting to do. It is diluted down. That's the two options. We can either give them a preferred option or we can move on. They're going to look at more groundtruthing on this area. We can go back and talk about South Carolina. If there are no motions, we'll go back to South Carolina unless there is a motion.

MR. DeMARIA: **I'll make a motion to go with the two square mile one, whatever option that is.**

MR. ATACK: Do we have a second? Kenny Fex seconded. Anymore discussion?

MR. SMITH: I can't argue with Richard or Don on that. The whole Keys area is a sanctuary, right. I mean basically is a national marine sanctuary, so there are lots of different rules. That is what is happening. There is a lot more people and we've got to make rules for our waters like we've made rules for our lands.

This happened way earlier with the National Park Service and it is frustrating. They're talking about now closing the Rocky Mountain National Park because there are too many people in it at

certain times. We've got to make rules and we're the people at the table that make these rules and it is easy.

I agree there needs to be a tradeoff so that we're not so frustrated and user groups don't feel like they can go out there and use. If we push the people off the water, then we're in big trouble because I guess the only people out there will be the ones that make the money that sell the fish. Two miles seems like a very reasonable size. It is not a giant area. I think if we have proof that these fish spawned there in the past, then we definitely need to protect it and then move forward.

MR. DeMARIA: I'd like to add something to that motion if I can. Consider 2A to Warsaw Hole as spawning area reserve, whatever we call it, only if an equivalent amount of bottom can be reopened. Maybe someone else can help me wordcraft this, but I don't want to consider in addition to areas that are already closed, additional square miles, but consider it only if an equivalent amount of existing reserve can be reopened, something like that.

MR. JOHNSON: I have a question; are those state or –

MR. DeMARIA: No, it is federal.

MR. JOHNSON: They're federal closed areas, okay.

MR. LORENZ: I would just like to say we'd be a lot more comfortable that if we're going to have the tradeoff – I like to call it the horse trading – where an equivalent bottom will be taken off; I would like the equivalent bottom roughly in this depth. There are certain species that may need certain depths; so this would be the 250 foot depth. I wouldn't see as much point in removing an area that is 80 feet or in Loos Key or something like that that is shallower.

MR. HARTIG: If you want to do this equivalency, you have to stay within the context of what we're managing. Really, the only place in the Keys that would be appropriate to do this is East Hump that we have a closure on already. Actually you would be making two miles off of the East Hump to do the Warsaw Hole. To me that's the only way we could do it, because those are the only two places we have closed. We don't have this closed; this is a proposal, but we only – this council only has one closed area in the Keys and that's East Hump. That's how it would work.

MR. DeMARIA: I didn't intend for it to be an equivalent depth or anything like that; just two square miles anywhere. Riley's Hump can be an equivalent area, too. It goes from 80 or 90 feet out to 1,500, so that could be taken in that depth; two square miles from any reserve anywhere. I really don't want to change that.

MR. MUNDEN: I was very comfortable with the initial motion, but I'm uncomfortable with the provision that we remove additional areas. If that stays in the motion, then I cannot support the motion.

MR. WAUGH: Don, one question. The point Ben was making is while other SPAs and so forth in Florida might be federal, they're not council federal. That is a different part of the federal government, and we could only make a recommendation to them to consider it. What Ben was

pointing out where we have direct authority is the East Hump MPA. We could reduce that by two square miles to meet your intent. That is the only area that we control that is nearby. Is your intent to specify the East Hump?

MR. DeMARIA: No. We can just remove that part out of there, the equivalent area. I'm fine with that, too, but that is my intent is not to create anymore square miles in the Keys, but it kind of confuses the motion. I'll remove it.

MR. ATACK: And who seconded the motion?

MR. FEX: I did.

MR. ATACK: So you're good with the motion?

MR. FEX: I'm fine with the way it stands.

MR. ATACK: Okay, then I'll read the motion. **The council consider 2A for Warsaw Hole as a spawning SMZ. I guess that is the preferred alternative. All in favor of the motion raise your right hand; opposed to the motion. Four opposed; the motion carries.** Now we're going to move back up to South Carolina. I think we have some information on the box that Kerry was talking about.

MR. WAUGH: This is something Will put together that includes the coordinates that Mark has. Will, did you want to make some point on this one before I move on?

MR. HAYMAN: Just a quick general point before I dive into the specifics; and that is just from my perspective, looking at this as a 50-year-old dude with two kids that I've got to put through college and then retire, I'm wrestling with how much money I need to put in my retirement account every week, every year, every month, every day.

I figure that this is kind of parallel to what we're talking about here in terms of this fishery used to focus on big gag grouper, big Warsaw grouper, big fish; and we're looking at the dregs of what some people knew as a fishery. I just want to remind us what is at stake here. This is a long-term deal. If we can find the places and protect the places, that to me is like putting money aside for the long-term, for our kids and our retirement.

I just wanted to put that in from my personal perspective. I don't try to put the minimum into my retirement every year. This point is from a paper that was published just last year in a book about this thick, all about spawning areas. It is hard to read; I'm sorry that it is so small. What it is showing is that when fish are spawning, they use certain amounts of area.

When they're actually spawning, they've got to be really close together in order to get that maximum level of fertilization. They can be packed into smaller than one square mile. They'll be packed into – and this thing says one square kilometer. This is based on data for cubera snapper and dog snapper for the Caribbean; so I don't want to say it is exactly parallel.

If anything, those are more concentrated from everything I'm hearing and seeing than the ones here. But, yes, if you want to just protect the place where they're spawning for those few hours, then you could make a really small box. But if you go out a little bit, if you look at the courtship area where they may stay for days; that is ten square kilometers.

If you look at the staging area where they might be for a couple of weeks, we're getting up towards ten or a hundred square kilometers; and so how much time and space do you want to give these guys. It is like okay – so, again, for perspective I just want to kind of offer you this idea. The largest circle is the functional migration area, how far do the fish come to these places to spawn. There is lots of documentation of fish that move hundreds and hundreds of miles to get to these places for that short of period of time to get what they need done. Yes, we can't obviously protect hundreds of square miles to get the spawning protected. By the same token – anyway, do you see where I'm coming from?

All right, let me move through. Again, this is the data that we looked last night collected in 2014 on Marhefka's boat, using the histology of female fish in spawning condition. You can see that the bulk of that is – maybe you can't see it, but anyway we've got spawning-condition fish right concentrated all at that point in addition to some fish at that little bump just to the northeast.

That is yellowedge grouper spawning condition right there at this kind of hump right nearby. The Warsaw is right at the point, but there is snowy in both places, scamp in both places. Just looking at that and looking at the various sizes, to me it would be worthwhile to try to capture – and again it would be important for me, knowing what I know, to try to capture both that bump where we're finding yellowedge as well as the actual promontory tip.

Let's move forward on the slides. These are the three boxes that I've love to have you think about. The one is the one square mile, and that is the white. As you can see, that's going to take in definitely some good habitat and probably some areas where fish actually spawn. The next bigger box, the purple one is the box that Mark drew that Kerry referred to earlier -- that is 3.1 square miles, about 1.7 miles on a side, and takes in that promontory tip.

It gives them a little bit of edge, a little bit of the shelf. It might get some of those – you know, since it is up a little shallower, it might get some of those other species like the hogfish we were talking about. But if it was me, I'd be looking a little bigger. I'd be trying to give them a little bit of that shelf both to the north and to the south, give them room to feed, a little of room to move around and have confidence that what you're doing is going to make sense for the long term. That is kind of my piece for the moment.

MR. ATACK: Any questions or comments?

DR. REICHERT: If you'll allow me, Will, that was a combination of historical MARMAP data, some of your observation of the spawning –

DR. HAYMAN: Apologies; no, that was just this 2014 cooperative research. It doesn't include the MARMAP data. That was three trips to that area; one in February, one in April and one in July.

MR. COVINGTON: Mr. Chairman, would this be the proper time to amend my motion from earlier?

MR. ATACK: Yes.

MR. COVINGTON: I would like for the council to refer to this area as the Georgetown Hole Area rather than the Devil's Hole Areas to be clear and transparent with the public. I also would amend the one square mile maximum area to be three square miles maximum area. I would also like to add Alternatives 3 and 4, which would include the Area 51 and Area 53, the DNR's artificial reef that has been in place, and include them in special management zones.

MR. ATACK: In the presentation Will just gave, I thought it was I think 3.8 square miles was the one box – 3.1.

MR. COVINGTON: 3.1 is fine. I would be happy to clarify that motion. I know it was a bit lengthy. What I'm reading on the screen is the intent of my motion. Thank you.

MR. ATACK: Anybody second the motion? Bob Lorenz seconds it. Any discussion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Wes, I appreciate your willingness to be flexible on that point. My question is for staff. I'm guessing that it doesn't matter whether or not the advisory panel recommends it as a preferred. The council will analyze also the box that Will put forward that is a little bit bigger. It will be analyzed as well? I say that with clarification that doesn't mean I'm supporting it. I'm just curious about what happens to it.

MR. WAUGH: That's an interesting question. In the context of it would be raised during public discussions, it would go to the council. Will obviously has done a lot of work in this area; and so it has been presented so it would be carried forward to the council and the council would determine whether they want that added or not.

MR. JOHNSON: Not to beat a dead horse, but earlier on this whole process was pitched to this AP and pretty much to the public as a more small targeted approach. I know that bigger is always better; but if we hope to get any kind of public support for these things, I think the box that Mark drew is a much better alternative to take out to the public than a larger box.

If we really want to protect them, let's just close the whole shelf edge. We don't want to do that; and I think when you start making something 13 square miles, you're getting back toward that MPA-size things that we know the public is really opposed to.

MR. WAUGH: And that is why the AP's motion is to indicate 3.1 as the maximum that you want considered, so that is consistent with what you're saying.

MR. ATACK: And the alternative is already in the thing as a four-mile. That 2B; is that really different than the 3.1. Is that the same area just shoved a little bit different?

MR. WAUGH: We have to overlay the two spots. What we try to do is present a range of sizes going from the one to four and then 13.5. I think this recommendation for 3.1, Mark has given specific coordinates. That is based on a lot of his observations out there supported by the research. I think that's pretty clear at least in my mind as to why you'd consider that 3.1 instead of the 4.

We've already got an alternative in here for 13.5 square miles, so what has been suggested from Will as a scientist working this area is smaller than one that the council already has in there. You all are indicating your support for the Georgetown Hole only being a maximum of 3.1 square miles. I think that is clear direction to the council from you.

MR. ATACK: Anymore discussion?

MR. DeMARIA: I guess I'm not clear on add alternative for Area 51 and 53; does that mean an alternative to Georgetown Hole or just add them in addition to Georgetown Hole? I'm not clear.

MR. COVINGTON: Those were the proposals to encompass the 2, 2.5, 8 square mile areas that South Carolina DNR has placed artificial reef materials in since I think the eighties or nineties. They totally exclusive, separate and apart from Georgetown Hole. I won't comment on where I think they are, but they're not near Georgetown Hole.

MR. WAUGH: And the way I interpret the intent of the motion is just to indicate the AP's support for moving forward with those two alternatives for 51 and 53 in addition to the Georgetown Hole.

MR. ATACK: I'm going to read the motion: support the Georgetown Hole area but no larger than a 3.1 square mile and add alternatives for Areas 51 and 53. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. Okay, ten for and none opposed; the motion carries. Wayne, didn't you have a comment that you wanted to talk about earlier?

MR. MERSHON: We spoke last night at the workshop about an existing MPA, our northern MPA off of South Carolina. How do you go about making – I mean, I'm new at this, guys – how do you go making a motion for that place to be researched, maybe expanded offshore a little bit, add to the existing MPA? The bottom is there for the same kind of thing that you're looking for.

These elbows and all that, I showed you on the charts last night. Mark could take the researchers up there, whoever; and if he don't know the bottom well, I'll be more than glad to supply him with a bunch of numbers for that area. How would you go about making a motion for that and to word it properly? Am I just talking out of turn?

MR. ATACK: No, you can make a motion like Milton did earlier where you make the motion that the council consider looking at these areas as potential SMZs. You'd have to give some type or coordinates or a name. You've got to call it something so that we can refer to what it is.

MR. WAUGH: Wayne talked about this a lot last night; and we've got some lines that Wayne drew on the chart. What it is, it is taking the existing Northern MPA and expanding it to the south.

MR. MERSHON: And straight offshore.

MR. WAUGH: And/or straight offshore and it encompasses – on the big chart is this green box right here. What Wayne was talking about was coming down to the south and incorporating this area here. You can't see some of the bottom topography. There is some higher relief in here similar to a bump you see off of here – and also possibly expanding it offshore.

As I understand the intent of the motion is to add an area expanding this existing MPA for the council to look at – to see if we can pull together any information for the council to look at in June and see if the council wants to add this in for consideration. I think that gets your intent is that the council consider an area adding to the Northern South Carolina MPA to the south and offshore to be evaluated.

MR. MERSHON: As an alternative to the Georgetown Hole before they set in stone one thing. We've already got an existing MPA. You're talking about those big oval circles that was just shown up there. Well, hey, we've got an existing MPA those fish are living in and nobody has been pounding on them. Like I said, you move it a little bit more, add a little to the offshore side of it there where it goes down to that 300 foot and stuff; and you've got the same thing that you've got in Georgetown Hole.

MR. ATACK: Did somebody second this motion? Wes Covington seconds it. All right, any other discussion on it? **The motion is consider council consider area adding to the Northern South Carolina MPA to the south and offshore to be evaluated as an alternative to the Georgetown Hole. All in favor of this motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. Ten for and none opposed; the motion carries.**

MR. WAUGH: Okay, I said we were going to get through the system management plan also before we broke for lunch; but I talked with Myra and she said you guys need to eat. What we'll do is I think we can blast through these last couple of action real quick and then we'll take a break. When we come back, we'll pick up with the spawning SMZ.

What we have left is Action 7 is to move the existing Charleston Deepwater Artificial Reef MPA 1.4 miles to the northwest. The state of South Carolina had a permitted site. This is in sandy bottom. Some material was placed there. Unfortunately, due to weather and current conditions it landed on the border and just outside; so they have gotten the border changed through the Corps of Engineers.

Now what we would be doing is the council's preferred alternative is to move the existing Charleston Deepwater Artificial Reef 1.4 miles to the northwest to match the boundary. You didn't provide any recommendations at your last meeting on that. Shown in Figure 5 are the corner coordinates for this new site. This is the existing site; and all we're doing is taking the same size box and sliding it inshore 1.4 square miles, so that would be the new box. That is the area that is now permitted by the Corps of Engineers, so that is the official site for that artificial reef.

MR. COVINGTON: So move, Mr. Chairman.

MS. MARHEFKA: Second.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion on the motion? **I'll read the motion: choose Alternative 2, which is moving the existing Charleston Deepwater Artificial Reef MPA 1.4 to the northwest as preferred. All in favor of this motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion carries 13 for and none against.**

MR. WAUGH: And the final item in here deals with anchoring and transit. We've got a lot of verbiage in here under the transit provision. What I would recommend is if you support transiting, just indicate that with a motion. The council has directed us to work this wording and the wording for transit that we have for other managed areas and make them all consistent. Alternative 3 would prohibit anchoring by fishing vessels in the spawning SMZs.

MS. MARHEFKA: I will move we do what you said; use the existing transit provisions for the spawning SMZs.

MR. ATACK: Red seconds the motion. **The motion is the AP supports transit provision and anchoring prohibitions in the spawning SMZs; and the preferred alternative is 2 and 3. Any discussion? All in favor of the motion raise your hand; any opposed raise your hand. That's 14 for and none against. The motion carries.** We're going to break for lunch and let's be back here at 1:30.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed at 12:25 o'clock p.m., April 14, 2015.)

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened in the Cypress Room of the Hilton Garden Inn, North Charleston, South Carolina, April 14, 2015, and was called to order at 1:30 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Jim Atack.

MR. ATACK: We're going into the System Management Plan for the Deepwater MPAs.

MR. WAUGH: This is more an informational briefing now. You all have this material. I'm just going to outline what is in it for you. Certainly, if you want to offer any input at this stage, you're more than welcome to. We'd appreciate it; but also after you have a chance to look at it, you can send us in some comments.

This is Attachment 5. This was e-mailed out to you afterwards. Some people had difficulty opening it. It was a PDF portfolio. Then we've sent some of you individual files; so we can resend that if you are having trouble opening it. Again, in terms of the timing for completing this, the IPT is still working on this.

The SSC and Socioeconomic Panel of the SSC will provide comments in April; and we will have a subgroup of the Information and Education Advisory Panel provide information prior to June. The council will review this in June. We will revise the document and get some public input during hearings. The council will give us more guidance at September. We're aiming for a more detailed near-complete document for the SSC to look at in October and your next October meeting.

Then they will review and approved the final System Management Plan in December. There are three documents attached to this. One is the draft goals and objections; and I'll go through these in minute. This is just at the higher level of what our draft goals and objectives are. The draft outreach action items are in a little more detail.

Then Attachment 3 to that document has the system management plan outline that lays out the whole broad list of what we're addressing. We've got the goals and objectives broken out by biophysical goals and objectives; looking at populations of target species – as I said, I'm not going to go through this – where the biological diversity is protected, individual species protected. There is an item in here that deals with invasive species, whether the habitat is protected.

The intent is that under these we will have specific projects as I'll show you in a moment using the outreach that show how we're going to get this information. The socioeconomic goals and objectives have to do with non-monetary benefits to society, benefits from the MPA equitable distributed, environmental awareness and knowledge enhanced.

It is a broad range, governance, goals and objectives, looking at effective management structure and strategies, legal structure and strategy, effective stakeholder participation, management plan compliance by resource users enhance. We look in detail at the law enforcement and the compliance, resource user conflicts managed and reduced; and then again more on outreach.

If we look at the outreach item, again this is still in draft form, but Amber, on our staff, is the one that is leading this outreach part; so if you have questions and input afterwards, feel free to contact her. The goals and objectives; again, environmental awareness and knowledge enhance, effective stakeholder participation.

Let me get to the right to the top priorities; and this we talked about a little bit in the presentation last night. The highest priority is to work with fishing chart manufacturers, both printed and electronic, and/or vendors to improve available information for the Deepwater Type 2 MPAs. What is a little confusing is the system management plan is being written for our existing Amendment 14 MPAs.

For the Spawning SMZ Amendment, the council has asked us to do an appendix to that that will basically cover similar items for the spawning SMZs. Eventually those items will fold into the boarder system management plan that will cover all our managed areas. If you look at one specific item, Action 1, provide the South Atlantic Council Deepwater MPA Regulation Brochures to area fishermen; it will lay out the task, the justification, deliverables.

We'll have specific dates. The schedule will be in detail; the budget will be in detail. We'll lay out potential partners and roles. This will be done for each action item for each goal and objectives. You will be able to see in detail what work should be done for necessary research, monitoring, law enforcement and then evaluation.

It is more a skeleton now for you to see what we're talking about and then we expect the next time you meet you will have a complete document well in advance of the meeting to look at. That's a quick overview and I'll be glad to answer any specific questions you might have right now.

MR. HULL: Gregg, in the system management plan this is where you would have a – it would spell out the groundtruthing of these areas, what are we going to do to groundtruth these areas to move forward with them; the protocols would be in here?

MR. WAUGH: That is correct. What research needs to be done to evaluate whether these areas are working; that will be in here, yes. Here is where the rubber is going to hit the road. We'll have these action items broken out. We'll have the estimated annual cost by each year; and then we're all going to have to work together on how to get funding for this.

As I mentioned, we have a cooperative citizen science effort ongoing in our office. That will involve a lot of you as well; but then we're going to have to squeeze NMFS for as much money as we can get to go towards this, but we all have to recognize the federal budget is limited. We're going to have to be creative on how we identify funding for this. We're running behind so we'll get Myra up here; and I think there is something in red porgy we need to pick up.

MR. ATACK: Yes; we've got to go back to 37 and do something on the red porgy that we skipped over; and then we'll go back to Item Number 7 on the overview.

MS. BROUWER: This topic of discussion on red porgy came up at the request of some council members. It actually isn't yet part of Amendment 37 or Regulatory Amendment 24, whichever one it is going to end up in. We were requested to put together some information that would help you guys talk about this; and I've got Chris Conklin up here who can tell you more about it.

MR. CONKLIN: We've had a lot of discussion amongst the commercial community of trying to open up red porgy January 1st and perhaps do a split season. There is a ton of discards during those months and we just feel like it makes sense to open the fishery when you're fishing for B-liners and trigger fishing.

I asked Myra and Gregg to come up with some options for – really just more information so we could ask you guys to come up with some options on how you might want to manage that and see about splitting the season, coming up with a trip limit or maybe something different than the 120 fish we're on right now so we're not just wasting this resource. It is a very open discussion so have at it.

MR. FEX: I've kicked this around with several people in North Carolina. The split season sounds good to coincide with the vermilion. The fish trip limit might have to be dropped to about 80 to allow for it to go year-round, because you will catch bigger pinkies or red porgies in the beginning of the year. That might have to be something adjusted; but, yes, that is something that I know in my area would be accepted.

MR. HULL: I would agree with that off the east coast of Florida to have it a split season; but again I agree that you'd probably have come on down on the number to make it last. It would be interesting to see what the current average size is that are being landed commercially, for one thing, and the average – you know, if people are catching their 120 regularly on a vermilion trip.

MR. JOHNSON: I guess it is a question for Chris or just maybe it is a question for discussion. Would you consider opening up the second split season to coincide with the B-liners on July 1st? If the intent is to do away with regulatory discards, if it opened up May 1st, you're going to be throwing back B-liners. I guess the other question that I should know the answer to this one; is there a split season on triggerfish? Should we talk about that; or is still as is?

MS. BROUWER: It has not been implemented yet, but it is in Amendment 29, and it was approved.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay, in a perfect world we would have all these small-mouth species opening up at the same time and sort of closing at the same time and then reopening at the same time; but I think with gray triggerfish, you would probably have to adjust that ten-box trip limit in order for that to get a longer season.

MR. CONKLIN: My intent was to split it and have it coincide with the vermilion and gray triggerfish on July 1st. Right now when they open up May the 1st with grouper, ten years past, you know, the triggerfish are already closed and the B-liners are closed; so when you're dropping down trying to catch your 120 pinkies, you're discarding the other fish. It's is a two-way street. You discard the pinkies in first part of the year; and in the second part of the year when pinky is open, you're throwing B-liners and triggerfish. It just doesn't make any sense.

MR. JOHNSON: So the intent would be for it to close when B-liners close as well?

MR. CONKLIN: The intent would be open them together and let it close whenever they want it to close. The intent is to stop wasting the plus, plus try and get as many small-mouthed species caught together at the same time for as long as we can. Now, I'm not saying to have a choke stock or anything like that to close everything if one thing is done. I would think it would greatly reduce the amount of discards on both the red porgy and the vermilion and triggers at different times of the year. That is the intent.

MS. BROUWER: I'm sorry; I just need some clarification. Are you talking then about making the commercial fishing year begin on July 1st for red porgy?

MR. CONKLIN: No, my intent was to split the season, have it open January 1st and then split the season with vermilion snapper and gray triggerfish, because that's about to come up in this, to July 1st.

MR. ATACK: So you're looking at cutting the ACL in half and doing the red porgy, half of it starting January and then a second half starting July 1st, just like the B-liners are?

MR. CONKLIN: That's correct.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes; I see what you're saying especially biologically speaking as far as fishing on those, you're going to catch them all together. Economically worries me a little because for us having that red porgy when we don't have the vermilion snapper is really helpful to keep a market going. I worry about having them at the same time, making the prices go down for vermilion

snapper if we have that much fish on the market at the same time. I'm just throwing that out there for discussion; I'm not opposing what you're saying.

MR. CONKLIN: Well, the first half of the year there aren't any red porgies with the B-liners, so it would just be half of the year. If we had to drop the trip limit down to accommodate and make it last longer, then if we go from 120 to 80 fish or whatever the magic number is, there wouldn't probably be that much fish on the market. I think it would probably level out, but that's why we're here to talk about it. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm trying to understand; but if we're worried about regulatory discards, would we not want to stop the porgies at the same time as the vermilion; because if you leave them open, then guys are going to still go fishing and then you're going to be discarding B-liners. Like what happens now with the triggerfish; guys go out and fish for ten boxes of triggerfish and everything else they're catching they're throwing back, red porgies and vermilions.

MR. CONKLIN: We're doing that right now anyways in May and June. When we're targeting the red porgy, we're discarding triggers and B-liners, anyway; so it at least would give us a little bit more retention.

MR. JOHNSON: I understand and I'm just wondering so if you go to that 80-fish limit and the B-liners close like this year on the 15th and red porgy are still open and triggers are still open, you'll continue to fish those two species until either half of the ACL on red porgy – I'm just trying for clarification – so you would continue to fish on triggerfish and red porgy even though vermilion were closed until those ACLs were met; is that correct?

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, that is correct.

MR. ATACK: Well, that and then other fish open up May 1st; so if your B-liner is closed in March or the 1st of April, then May 1st grouper open back up.

MR. CONKLIN: In our area in South Carolina usually the B-liners are pretty far up in the water column; and if you want to catch a pinky, you just drop to the bottom. If you're targeting the pinkies, you would just drop it on down to the bottom, and I think that is the way to target them.

MR. ATACK: So you're looking for input from the panel on a suggested route here?

MR. CONKLIN: Well, this is just an easy kind of gimme to kind of relieve a lot of tension and pain amongst the commercial fishermen. We want to be able to catch our fish or small mouths, I guess you would say, together to reduce all the discards that we have now.

MR. ATACK: So you're really looking for like a motion to split the red porgies into two seasons, ACL in half, and then maybe even have a smaller trip limit of 80 or whatever, looking at the council running some numbers and see what those alternatives look like, projected closings based on that information?

MR. CONKLIN: I guess that would be my intent. Myra, this was more of some options for something we could stick into Amendment 37 that could be done easily and pretty quickly. I think our timeline is around April of 2016 or somewhere I've read; but to come up with some ways to do this and kind of piggyback on some other management measures that's already in place.

MR. HULL: Yes; it would be nice for me to see a bullet point of vermilions and the current ACL and the split seasons; and augmenting your red porgy, what is the ACL; triggerfish, what is the ACL; and then you can put an idea to how long they're going to last, what we're dealing with as far as the ACL to make better reasoning of what we're doing. I don't know if we have time to do that today, but we don't, I know.

MR. FEX: The reason I brought dropping the trip limit to 80 is because I was thinking more along the lines of starting it in January and let it run through the year. As you guys know, without four months at the beginning of the year we're almost meeting the quota in that eight months. That is why I thought the idea of dropping to 80 – it wasn't to hurt anybody – from 120. I would like to make a motion to go ahead and get this started; a motion to split season red porgy and consider trip limits to be analyzed –

MR. ATACK: Does somebody want to second his motion?

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second.

MR. ATACK: Anymore discussion on this one? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just have a question. I was working with the council when we did Amendment 12, which was the one that did the closure. I can't remember if that long closure was just to reduce effort or I could have sworn was there not any spawning associated with that closure?

MR. BROUWER: That was before my time; but I have heard it referred to as a spawning season closure; so I think the spawning closure as well.

MS. MARHEFKA: So I guess that just would be my question; would we be losing some biological benefit if it was able to stay open all year because we split the season and possibly lowered the trip limit; that there would be now effort on a spawning segment of the population? It would just make me nervous. Other than that, all of my previous things I withdraw.

MR. ATACK: Does anybody know when red porgy spawn?

MR. CONKLIN: The effort is already there. It is not coming to the dock, but the fish are getting killed anyways.

MR. ATACK: Well, if you're only fishing for B-liners, I guess you're not dropping down to the red porgies; so if the season is closed, then there should be less landings in January, February and March when they're spawning the way it is now, right?

MR. CONKLIN: I'm not sure.

MR. ATACK: So should we kind of vote on this motion and then if we're concerned about spawning, make another motion as far as having a spawning season closure on the red porgy?

MR. FEX: January and February are the spawning months; but we've went through the spawning closure for a long time, and I've seen the stock rebuild. The scientists don't seem to see that from their perspective because they're getting headboat landings. Our bigger fish get caught in the earlier time of the year.

January, February, March; I'm out there catching them right now. That is a sampling issue because the samples ain't being brought to the dock. Good data I know is samples throughout the year so you can get the better data that way. If this can go through, then we'll get some sampling from the fish that are bigger at the beginning of the year.

MR. HULL: Just one question; so if this motion was reach fruition, red porgies would be open January 1st and there would no longer be a spawning season closure?

MR. CONKLIN: That is correct.

MR. ATACK: Is that what the panel would want was to kind of go backward on the spawning season closure or should we –

MR. CONKLIN: I think it warrants a further look at least. I would at least vote on it. I mean, you're not opening the season up right now. It is just some more information; so that is all I ask from the panel.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree; I see where he is going with it; and I think all we're doing now is saying let the option be explored and then we get all the information and see what makes the most sense. I forget the timeline for this, but I'm hoping we would have enough time to really figure out the impacts biologically and economically for it. The fishermen are asking for it and I think it is worth at least looking at.

MR. FEX: I've stood for spawning closures for reasons. Grouper I kind of consider more like a bass. He gets in his little burrow and makes his little spot and puts his eggs or whatever; and when you're snatching him off that spot, then he kind of gets messed up in his cycle; whereas, a bunch of pinkies, they're running in herds and herds of them everywhere, and there is no spawning central location. I understand your concern that we did usually go after closing during spawning time, but I think this fish has well rebuilt itself in my anecdotal opinion.

MR. ATACK: Well, Terry, I hear you; I think it is good practice to protect the spawning and the spawning period; and if it is rebuilt, then all the more reason to protect that spawning time. If that is part of the reason the stock are in as good shape as it is, then we should continue to do that. That is my two cents worth. Any other discussion? I will read the motion and take a vote on it.

The AP recommends the council consider a commercial split season for red porgy similar to vermilion snapper as well as a commercial trip limit. All in favor of the motion raise your

hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion carries unanimously; none opposed. We are going to go Amendment 23, the golden tilefish regulatory amendment.

MS. BROUWER: As I mentioned yesterday, this is an amendment that the council gave us direction to begin putting together at the March meeting, and it deals with golden tilefish. They would be reviewing options at their June meeting – not really options. They would be approving it for scoping, and then we would do scoping in the summer.

We would public hearings either in the fall or in the spring. The impetus behind this is to try to lengthen the commercial season for the longliners and also to change the fishing year for the hook-and-line sector for that fishery. That is based on public input and recommendations from this AP. Let's go to Action 1. This deals with the start date for the hook-and-line sector.

The council did give us guidance to include alternatives that would look at shifting that start date to March 1st, April 1st or May 1st. The AP, from what I remember, had recommended a start date of March 15th; so you probably would need to discuss it a little bit; and if that is still something that you would like the council to consider, maybe make a motion for them to add that as an alternative. This is what they gave us guidance to look at. Are there any recommendations that you may have for Action 1?

MR. OSBORNE: Do you know when we closed last year, Myra; was it September or August for the hook and line?

MS. BROUWER: For the hook and line, I don't recall off the top of my head. I think maybe August.

MR. OSBORNE: I think it was August 19th or something like that.

MS. BROUWER: August 29th.

MR. OSBORNE: So you closed four months before we really wanted to start fishing; so, yes, March or April I think would get us back to the fall fishing, which is what we all want. Either one, March or April I'm good with.

MS. BROUWER: Is this a sufficient range of alternatives, though? Are we encompassing the options that the AP would like to see analyzed or are we missing any?

MR. OSBORNE: I think the whole object of this thing with everyone I talked to that is involved in it wants to get the fall fishery back. Whatever happens after that happens. It may roll all year, but we need to guarantee our fall – personally I wanted to start it later than any of those, but I threw March out there because that's everybody kind of wanted – not everybody, but some of them wanted to start it earlier, so that was like my compromise. I mean, anybody else who participates in that; tell me. But March or April; what do you think, Jimmy? Well, let's go with the March 15th; that is my recommendation still.

MS. BROUWER: So would like to then reiterate that the AP supports a March 15th opening and include that among the alternatives to be analyzed?

MR. OSBORNE: Yes.

MS. BROUWER: Is that a motion?

MR. OSBORNE: **That the council consider March 15th as the start date for the hook-and-line tile fishery, commercial sector tile fishery.** Didn't we also get a teeny-tiny increase this year or no?

MS. BROUWER: I don't believe so. Without looking at the numbers, from what I call Regulatory Amendment 12 established the ACL at the equilibrium of 75 percent of Fmsy; so you're not getting those increases every year like some other stocks do because they're not based on yearly projections; so the ACL doesn't change.

MR. HULL: Just to comment, Scott, if you want it to be open later in the year, why not choose a later opening date? You're representing the hook-and-line tile fishermen here and most of that activity is right there in the back of your house there. If you guys want it to stay open later in the year and more in the fall fishery, then obviously wouldn't you want to start it later to be a guarantee to that? That would just be a comment.

MR. OSBORNE: Everybody wasn't on board with that late start. Some of them wanted it a little bit earlier, so I just kind of went – I have options in January and February and March. I don't have to catch tilefish the first of the year, and I don't want to catch them the first of the year with the longline fishery open.

That date kind of coincided with the end of the longline fishery the last few years; and I know they may lengthen it out and we may have to address it again at some point for marketing issues. It may get to the point where this thing goes all year, anyway, and it will probably will, but I'm just looking to get those fall months in when there is nothing going on.

MR. FREEMAN: As far the longline sector, we average 47 days; so by mid-February we're done. Jimmy, as far as a wholesaler or a retailer, do you want to have the hook and line available for Lent or do you want to push it back?

MR. FEX: I know of one hook-and-line guy that he would like it to stay January 1st like it is now. Like you said; some of them want it earlier and some of them want it late. I know of one of them that would prefer to stay the way it is.

MR. OSBORNE: With this start date, it is a tossup, but you're probably going to still fishing January 1st; but you're going to ensure the fall fishing, which is our historical good fishing on the east coast. Where it goes after that, when it closes, is anybody's guess, but it could go all year or it close a couple months before the new start date. It all depends on participation, but we definitely don't want to open it January 1st.

MR. FEX: To you, Scott, I support your idea here. The only concern I might see is as we go through this amendment we're going to look at trying to get the longliners to extend the season. I'm just throwing that out there; because if we go to one week on and one week off, it might make it to your point.

MR. OSBORNE: Yes, and that is very possible but we have the option to fish or not to fish. The main point is to get our fall fishery back. It is not all about marketing. That's just a byproduct of it, the longline fishery being closed and we're fishing, that's good for us. When they open back up again, we can stop. We don't have to catch those all the time; but in the fall we're probably going to catch them no matter what just because that's the best of the fishing. After that, we go on to other things. To make up our own mind what we do, that's what we do.

MR. ATACK: If there is no further discussion, I'll read the motion. **The AP requests that the council also consider a start date for the hook-and-line sector of March 15th. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed. The motion carries unanimously.**

MS. BROUWER: So let me ask you then how you feel about Alternative 3? This is one that we put up there because there has been some comments from the AP saying, well, maybe the hook and liners should just start fishing when the longlines shut down; but then some folks are really opposed to it. I don't know if it should remain; should we keep it there for analysis purposes; or is it something that you don't think would work at all and so we don't need to spend our time looking into it.

MR. OSBORNE: No; I don't want my fishing triggered by the longline fishery. It might not ever close, but that is not going to fly. It is just getting back to fishing again at the right time of the year is the main purpose of it. The rest of it, how it works out, is just going to do what it does, but we can put more effort when they're not fishing. If we have to fish with them again, we will; but at least we have our own quota that we can work on. We don't have to worry about being shut down by the longline fishery.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, I'll pass that along to the council. Action 2 would extend the fishing season for the longline sector or look at ways to do so. The alternatives that we have here are the ones that were already analyzed back in 2013 when the industry came to the council and said would you please look into fishing on and off two weeks or one week.

We did some preliminary analyses, which are included in your paper. Another alternative that we just threw out there is perhaps the industry would consider a trip limit step-down like we have in some fisheries. I don't know if that is feasible for the longliners; so again here I think is where the council would like some of your input. I included in here as well – well, as I said, the analyses for the two weeks on and two weeks off, which didn't show that the season would be extended very long. It was on the order of days. The regional office did some modeling did some modeling; they did some projection scenarios; and then fishing two weeks on and two weeks off projected the season closing some time in April, which is –

MR. ATACK: That is better than February.

MS. BROUWER: It is better than February. Back then when we talked about this, the industry basically said, well, this is really not going to help unless the ACL goes up; so let's just not even consider it anymore; but now we're back to considering these same options. Do we want to, again, reanalyze, with new information, of course, this same sort of scenario of two weeks on and two weeks off or are there other things that perhaps the industry would feel more comfortable with, such as the step-down trip limit? Those are my questions for you.

MR. FREEMAN: As of right now, I would like the council just to look at no action and leave it the way it is. Industry is getting ready to fund a third-party assessment and do a full stock assessment on the golden tile. That's in the works now, give us our time, let us get it done, and see what that presents. That may increase our ACLs or whatnot. If that happens, then we can have a better handle on this.

MR. ATACK: Do you know when that assessment will take place?

MR. FREEMAN: We're working with it right now. We've already got our scientist in place. He is just trying to coordinate all of his – get his ducks in a row here.

MR. ATACK: So do you mean like this year it will be done?

MR. FREEMAN: Yes; we're hoping to have it completed, depending upon our funding. As far as the industry, we have a good core group right now; so as long as everybody continues taking part in it, we should have a better handle on it here in the next month or so as a time frame.

MR. MUNDEN: I have a question for staff. Myra, in Alternative 4 you have a step-down to a thousand pounds and 500 pounds; but if you look at the 2013 analysis, it looks like the step-down was 300 pounds. My question is whether or not the council considered a third alternative under 4 of being 300 Pounds?

MS. BROUWER: Red, the council hasn't even talked about any of this. They basically just said let's go back to the drawing board and let's see if we can come up with some alternatives that the industry supports us considering. They haven't really talked about it, but certainly that would be something to include as well.

MR. MUNDEN: I move that we include an additional alternative for 4 and that be Subalternative 4C, 300 pounds.

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second it for the sake of discussion because I have a couple of questions for Jimmy. The trip limit is 3,500 pounds now – 4,000 pounds. I mean, you're not going to be profitable at 300 pounds. You're not even going to fish, probably. What would be a trip limit? Say your stock assessment doesn't come back, if you're lengthening the season; would you still be profitable at 3,000 pounds or 2,500 pounds? I guess the question is would you rather catch your fish quick and be done or would you rather stretch them out and try to keep the price up?

MR. FREEMAN: This last season, as far as the longline season goes, it was the highest price we ever got for the entire season. I would rather just leave it the way it is; don't do any step-downs

on it. Naturally, you're going to have weather affect you or whatnot; and it is just the way the nature of the beast is with this one, unfortunately.

MR. HULL: With the motion that is before us now, I wouldn't be able to support that because of the input from the longline industry that 300 pounds is totally inadequate for them to go fishing.

MR. ATACK: Any other discussion? **We'll vote on the motion; include a subalternative to Alternative 4 under Action 2 for a trip limit step-down to 300 pounds once 75 percent of the ACL is met. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all not in favor of the motion raise your hand. The motion fails; one for and like ten against.**

MR. HULL: Could someone make a motion for the status quo; no action? **I'd like to make a motion that the Snapper Grouper AP recommends no action on the golden tilefish season extension options.**

MR. COVINGTON: Second.

DR. DUVAL: Can you guys just expand upon why you're making the motion for status quo? Is it because, as Jim said, the industry is funding a stock assessment? It is just going to help the council a little bit more to hear a little bit more of what the AP's rationale is. This is something we get beat up about a lot is that the implementation of the longline endorsement program has not done anything to help with the derby fishing season and that the council has not considered any means to lengthen the season.

In March we put something forward to try to look at some options to lengthen the season; and then when we hear you guys say let's have a motion for just status quo, it helps us when we come back in June to discuss this again and get beat up some more in Key West – thank you very much – as to what the rationale was.

If it is because there is an expectation that there is going to be a completed update to the stock assessment for golden tilefish and you prefer that the council wait until that comes out; then we'd like to know that because we alternatively get beat up for taking action before an assessment and then we get beat up for not taking action until after an assessment with hogfish; so just a little bit more conversation about why would be great. Thank you.

MR. HULL: I may want to amend the motion, but I think the conversation before such an amendment would be – I mean, the longline industry, for their benefit, they're conducting the fishery, they're catching their ACL, they're catching full trip limits, and they're getting done and finished and it is profitable for them.

As Jim Freeman said, they had the highest price they ever received this year on that in a very short amount of time. Basically until there is an increase in ACL, as he says the nature of this fishery, with the longline fishery of a lot of production, it is very efficient. Until they can extend the season with more quota, this is the way they're prosecuting the fishery. I'm not a longline fisherman; and for me as a retailer or restaurateur and a wholesaler, it hurts me to not have tilefish for a longer period of time; but, unfortunately, that is how the fishery is conducted.

I think we have to – I hope maybe we can amend this to say so the council realizes at this time, until we can get an updated stock assessment, perhaps that could be added to the motion. We would prefer no action. We really can't do anything with the current ACL with the options that are there until we can either more ACL or we don't get anymore and then at that time let's go back to this at that time. So, it is the old story, give me a stock assessment and then we can do something. I would be willing to amend it to state that, if we can do that.

MR. ATACK: Jim Freeman; wasn't it just a couple of years ago where they were coming in and they were getting left on the dock because of too much getting caught at that time, and the prices were dropping. I understand maybe this year you got a high price for your fish, but wouldn't it still be better for that to be coming in at a more normalized rate than the derby fishing that's going on?

MR. FREEMAN: No; they weren't being left on the dock. We did take a little bit of a price decrease for about 13 days. There was a little bit of a price decrease, and then after that the price rebounded once that influx got off the market. We ended up putting some in the freezer or whatnot at that point in time, like we do with all fisheries; you know, king mackerel and everything else.

MR. ATACK: I'm not talking about this year. I meant like just in the last few years I remember reading about that was kind of an issue.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would just speak up as a wholesaler, we use golden tile the time of year that longliners catch it to make up for the grouper that we don't have for our restaurants. Our restaurants can't get enough it; they love it. They'd have it all year. I don't think it would be a problem to have it all year; but as far as it being a glut this year because there was a derby fishery on our end, on the wholesale end, I did not see that. We can move every bit of it for a good price as well.

MR. COLLIER: With that third-party assessment that is being done, the SSC has a new review policy for third-party assessments. They want to be involved as soon as possible with the review of the assessment to make sure that it is going to meet the best scientific standards. From that, it is the data collection protocol and everything. They'd be willing to work with them, but they just have to submit a document to the SSC about what they're planning to do and what information is going to be used.

MR. FREEMAN: John Polston was in talks at the last St. Simons meeting with the SSC and with Ben and Bonnie and whatnot. That ball has started. It is just we have to get our end lined up to bring it to you with here we go; now how do we work it all out where it meets your criteria?

MR. LORENZ: I don't have a dog in this fight; but in the interest of what I'd like to see is gentle conservation and always moving forward with consequently allowing people to fish as much as possible reasonably, I'd like to get kind of a pulse check against what was Red's motion. I would like to make a motion to support Alternative 4, Subalternative 4A.

MS. BROUWER: There already is a motion.

MR. HULL: I would like to amend my motion, the AP recommends Alternative 1, no action, for Action 2 until a new stock assessment is completed and the SSC's recommendations for the ACL are accepted.

MR. COVINGTON: Accepted.

MR. ATACK: The seconder approved the amendment. Anymore discussion on this motion? I'll read the motion. **The AP recommends Alternative 1, no action, for Action 2 until a new stock assessment is completed and the SSC's recommendations for ABC are accepted. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion carries; ten for and two against.**

MR. OSBORNE: I would think that with 20-something boats in a fishery, I would hope that you could extend it by yourselves without having to have any council intervention. A few phone calls that we're not going to go for a few days and stretch it out. That is something you should really be able to figure out. We're all out of grade school here.

MR. ATACK: Yes; let me know how that goes, Scott.

MR. FREEMAN: We have tried it and we've got 90 percent on board; but it is the 10 percent that sit back and say, "You're not going to tell me what to do." Then you can't ask for other people to be sitting at the dock when they're got the other 10 or 15 percent out there and they're working.

MR. LORENZ: And to respond, what I wanted to make or repeat my motion; I say in light of the decision and vote that just came, I just want to thank everybody for listening and I have nothing else to say.

MS. BROUWER: One more thing that is sort of along the same lines that was brought up to the council in March by the golden tilefish longline fishermen was this issue of why do the endorsements not – why is the catch history not attached to the endorsement; why does it have to remain with the permit?

The council directed staff to go back to their discussions when they were putting together the endorsement program for black sea bass and for golden tile and find out why it was done that way. I've put together this little summary of discussions that took place at the Snapper Grouper Committee and council level that detailed the rationale behind that decision.

I don't know if the AP really wants to get into any discussions. The council hasn't had a chance to talk about this. But just so everybody is on the same page, the way things work now is the catch history remains attached to the permit. It does not have anything to do with the endorsement. The endorsement basically just gives you the right to fish using a particular gear; but all your catch history remains with the permit. When you sell that permit, the buyer gets that catch history with it. That is the way the council has designed both of the endorsement programs that are currently on the books.

MR. FREEMAN: Just to maybe clarify and make it easier, current endorsements bounce anywhere from 50,000 to \$100,000. For instance, you buy an endorsement for \$100,000, you don't get any catch history. The catch history remains with the previous owner because it is under his snapper grouper. That has to be addressed.

There is no way you can make an investment like that and not have any landings. If does go down the road and goes to a catch share system, the snapper grouper permit holder gets all your catch shares and if you've got an endorsement, then you've got to lease now catch shares. That doesn't make any sense to me.

MR. ATACK: Yes; unless you buy the permit with the endorsement, right?

MR. FREEMAN: No; that is not the option. They're willing to part ways with the endorsement, but they're not going to part ways with the grouper snapper permit.

MR. FEX: A minute ago you just old me that like 90 percent of the guys were on board with your one idea. Do you think they're going vote catch shares to them guys and they're going to be on board with it?

MR. FREEMAN: No, the majority is not on board for catch shares. However, depending upon the council level, if it gets handed down to us, then we don't really have much of an option.

MR. ATACK: Right; I guess the option is either buy the permit with the endorsement; or when you buy your endorsement, then I guess your history starts compiling once you buy the endorsement, right, because that is going to be your catch history then, right?

MR. FREEMAN: Yes; but if you've bought that endorsement, why wouldn't the previous history go on that? That previous history is what created that endorsement.

MR. ATACK: Well, I guess part of it could be hook and line and part of it could be longline, right, on the landings.

MR. FREEMAN: If it was entered in the computer system properly, yes.

MR. JOHNSON: I think Myra brought up a good point. I don't think any of us at this table can handle this. I think this needs to be hashed out among – I understand your concern, Jimmy, but I don't think anybody here could figure out how to handle this. I can't.

MS. BROUWER: Right; and I just wanted to bring your attention to this Attachment 6B, which I've sort summarized the main gist of the conversations that the council had about this issue in these bullet points. Then you have the verbatim minutes attached as well, so I would encourage you if this something that you feel strongly about that the council needs to addressed, go through the minutes. The rationale for why things were designed the way they are is pretty well detailed in the minutes and in the summary. Just so the AP knows, the council will be talking about this in June and then just stay tuned, I guess.

MR. ATACK: We're going to go to Item Number 8 now, the Joint SA/GM Amendment.

MS. BROUWER: No, we have the update on blueline tilefish that is on the agenda. The next item on the agenda is Item 9 in the overview. Basically, I wanted to give the AP an update on the situation with blueline tilefish. As you know, there was a stock assessment conducted in 2013 with data through 2011 that determined the blueline tilefish stock was undergoing overfishing.

The council received a letter that they always receive from NMFS when a stock is undergoing overfishing that gives them two years to put in management measures. If the stock is overfished, they have to put in a rebuilding plan. The issue is that although the stock is currently treated as a unit stock, the assessment right now is for the entire east coast of the U.S. so it encompasses the Mid-Atlantic Region as well.

There have been concerns in recent years that there have been a lot of landings for the area north of Cape Hatteras, which is in the Mid-Atlantic Council's area of jurisdiction where there are no federal management measures for blueline tilefish. There are two states, Maryland and Virginia, that do have some restrictions for commercial and recreational fishing for blueline, but there is nothing at the federal level.

Because these landings popped up that were pretty substantial, rivaling what we currently had in place for a temporary ACL for the entire South Atlantic, that same quantity of fish were being landed up in New Jersey. That prompted the Mid-Atlantic Council to request emergency action from the agency to implement the trip limit of 300 pounds for the commercial guys up there and the recreational possession limit of seven fish per person in the Mid-Atlantic Council's jurisdiction.

Our council then was left with the conundrum of we already had Amendment 32 that was submitted to NMFS, and that one has much more restrictive management for the South Atlantic Region. What Amendment 32 is proposing, because it has not been – well, I take that back; it was implemented very recently. I believe it was last week that it actually went into place.

It put in place a 100-pound commercial trip limit for blueline. The total ACL for the entire South Atlantic went down to 35,632 pounds. Essentially the fishery is no longer in our region. Then there was a one per vessel per day just in May through August recreational limit that was put in place.

What is going to happen now is our council, when they met in March – and there were representatives of the Mid-Atlantic Council there as well – our council made a motion to request that the Scientific and Statistical Committee, when they convene at the end of this month, take another look at SEDAR 32 and give them a recommendation for whether they still think that the assessment should apply to the entire east coast of the U.S. or whether there has been any more information that would lead them to recommend that perhaps there needs to be either a new stock assessment done or that the stock can be split essentially so that the Mid-Atlantic Council could manage their portion of blueline tilefish up there and then our council would be responsible just for managing south of Hatteras.

This is getting ready to happen, like I said, when the SSC meets here in a couple of weeks; and then based on their recommendations, our council would request emergency action for the agency to consider extending the same regulations that have been put in place for the South Atlantic into the Mid-Atlantic Region. At that point, the Secretary of Commerce is going to have two requests for emergency action; and then basically it is going to be up to the secretary to decide how to proceed. That is where we are on blueline. I just wanted to make sure everybody was aware of that situation. Any questions?

MR. WAUGH: Okay, what I'm going to do is walk you through this and for various actions we have varying levels of analyses. The two councils have each acted on this separately. Where the Gulf Council has some differences, I'll point those out as we walk through this. The two councils are going to meet together in June and try and hash out the differences so that we have common actions to go out to public hearings.

The original intent was to approve this for public hearings at the June meeting, and I think that is going to be delayed some. Where you can provide some additional input for our council to inform their deliberations with the Gulf Council in June; that would be good. Page 5 lays out the actions. The first action is partial delegation of commercial and/or recreational management of yellowtail snapper for the state of Florida for federal waters adjacent to the state of Florida.

We'll go through this by species. There has been a lot of recommendations from some of the folks who put these documents together to try to organize it differently. The councils felt most comfortable dealing with it on a species-by-species basis; so you will see a little bit of repetition as we go through.

The idea here is that were this to be approved, Florida would put together something to what be called an implementation plan, laying out what they are proposing, and the councils would see that. Alternative 2 would determine specific recreational management items for delegation to the state of Florida; and those things are size limits, season limits, bag limits, minor modifications to existing allowable gear; for example, circle hooks.

There has also been some confusion. The councils in this amendment are considering some changes to some size limits; and then if you're doing that in this amendment, why are you then talking about delegation to the state of Florida? We're doing an amendment now, so there are some measures we want to change so we're changing them now. This would give the state of Florida the ability to make these changes in the future.

Alternative 3 deals with commercial management items. Why are we considering this? We're trying to simplify management for species that are harvested primarily in the state of Florida. There are a few measures that will apply outside of Florida. We're also trying to get consistent regulations between the two councils and the state of Florida, which really affects fishermen in extreme South Florida, as you all well know.

If you look at Tables 3 and 4, this shows the percent of recreational landings in Table 3 by species and state; and for commercial, the same information. You can see that for yellowtail virtually 100

percent of the recreational and 99.9 percent of the commercial landings come from the state of Florida.

You can see for mutton snapper, which we'll talk about in a minute, and black grouper, the level of landings from within Florida are extremely high. Black grouper, you get some on the commercial in Louisiana, some in North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas. Given that the vast majority of landings are off Florida particularly for yellowtail, the councils are considering for future changes to regulations, delegating those to the state of Florida. Any questions or comments on this?

MR. HULL: Gregg, I have a question. Would the council be transferring allocation between sectors over to the state of Florida?

MR. WAUGH: No. What we're considering is what is laid out here; size limits, seasons, bag limits and minor modifications to existing allowable gear, so nothing to do with allocations.

MR. HULL: Okay, I agree with that; and then just one further comment on that. Under our federal system we are managed by a rule of law called the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which I fully support. Under the state level of management, it is pretty much the rule of the commission, which is totally politically appointed.

I would caution that transferring management of these stocks over to the states when people from many states, particularly in the commercial fishery, are benefiting from the commercial fishery that is conducted for yellowtail in the state of Florida. It is to be nice to have the Magnuson Act control it rather than the state for all of the people of this country.

MR. ATACK: So if we go with these alternatives and do the partial delegation, I guess the ACLs don't change; and then what about overages – you know, if they exceed the recreational limit or how is all that handled?

MR. WAUGH: And we'll talk about that in a few minutes, but the council is retaining control of ACLs, ACL overages, accountability measures – all of those things the council is maintaining control of. Jimmy, to your point, if that's your view, the council is looking for input here. If you or anyone else want to make a motion, it would be helpful, because this is one big item that needs to be resolved with the two councils and the state.

MR. HULL: Before I'd make a motion, I would want further discussion. It worries me that we would be taking a resource that belongs to the whole country as a whole – and I'm speaking on the commercial side mostly. Recreationally, people travel to Florida from other parts of the country to recreationally fish.

Obviously for yellowtails they go to the Keys, but that is where all the production is. Again, under the federal system we have a rule of law, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and so I don't know if I should make such a motion that we would require that the state would have to abide by the rule of law, the principles of the Magnuson-Stevens Act when they take over size limits.

Generally the Magnuson Act doesn't talk about size limits that I know of, but I would want the protections of the Magnuson Act to remain if the state was to take over management of these items. I don't know if there is a way I can word that in a motion that everybody could accept, but I open it for discussion.

MR. SNYDER: The top paragraph of Page 6, the last couple of lines say that the state of Florida will be required to submit a management plan outlining changes for review and approval by both councils. It seems very redundant. We're going to hand over control to them and they're going to come back to us with permission. That takes time, energy, effort; leave well enough alone.

MR. WAUGH: Can I respond to that? This is something that needs to be clarified when the two councils are together. That is some text that has been added to the document. What we talked about last when these two committees were together was the state preparing an implement plan and providing that to the council.

I would agree with you, David; that if you read that, if the state has put all this together and provide it to the council for approval, then you're not delegating – well, I guess you could be. You can say you're delegating all the work of going through the public comments and putting all that material together, and then the council has to approve it or disapprove.

The only way the council could approve it is if it was in accordance with the Magnuson Act and other applicable law; so that may be a way to get at the point that Jimmy is raising is to require that. Then it would be up to the state of Florida if they still want to accept delegation with that requirement.

MR. DeMARIA: I thought I remember reading somewhere where this was going to be for recreational catches only that this was going to be split like this with Florida. I don't know how that would work, but I seem to remember that being somewhere. Maybe Ben can explain a little bit of that.

Also, a lot of this problem could be solved if we just moved the line separating the snapper grouper fishery north from the Keys up to that Shark Point area where we had the drawing for the hogfish for all the reasons that were specified by law enforcement. It would just make things much easier and then all those species would basically fall under the South Atlantic's jurisdiction.

They catch a few north of that but not many. Also, that area north of the Keys, just a few miles north of U.S. 1 was historically a commercial snapper grouper fishery area; New Grounds and all that. Now a lot of those guys can't fish there because of the catch share thing that came in and they don't qualify for it. I think just moving the line north would alleviate a lot of problems.

MR. WAUGH: Don, Alternative 2 just deals with recreational and Alternative 3 is commercial; so that is how you deal with separating those two. If the council were to go forward with just Alternative 2, that would just deal with recreational.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm different I guess than anybody else; I support both Alternative 2 and 3. I think the council – we sit here and complain about not doing stock assessments and not doing them

rapidly enough. Everybody has their fish that they want assessed; and this is a way to take three fish off their plate and delegate it to the state of Florida. I think to me that is a good thing, especially for some of the other species.

MR. WAUGH: Just to clarify; it wouldn't be removing the stock assessment part because the council would still be setting the ABC and ACL. What it would remove is having to deal with adjustments to size limits, seasons, bag limits and gear regulatory changes in the future.

MR. JOHNSON: So the council would still be responsible for stock assessments?

MR. WAUGH: Yes

MR. JOHNSON: Well, then I don't see –

MR. WAUGH: But having said that, the state of Florida does the assessments for yellowtail, mutton and black grouper.

MR. JOHNSON: So they're already doing those assessments?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; Florida is already doing them.

MR. HULL: Well, after that discussion, I still would like to see somehow that the Magnuson-Stevens Act has to be followed by the state of Florida as it applies to their ability; and whether that is already done – as David said, that the councils have to approve it; if they're submitting this already and the council has to approve it and the council has to abide by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, then it is already done and it would be a moot motion. I'd need further explanation, but I'd like to see where the federal law has to be upheld when the state makes decisions.

MR. ATACK: I guess one of the concerns I have in looking at this is I guess Florida really doesn't reciprocate the federal rules into state waters. I think there are examples of – I think red snapper on the east coast, you can still land red snapper; under federal waters you can't. If we do this partial delegation and all they're doing is setting size limits, seasons and bag limits; do we really spend much time on these fish in this fishery? I don't really see where we would save much time and effort by partial delegating to Florida.

MR. WAUGH: Florida sees savings because then if they want to see a change to these species that are primarily in Florida; then they've got to deal with their legislative process, their commission, then they've got to get the two councils to agree to the same thing. That is where there are savings for these items.

Then the state of Florida would be able to put together the record for supporting why they think this should be done. They'd put it together in an implementation plan and provide it to the council. According to the wording that is in here, then we would review and approve it. Again, the only way we could do that is if it was consistent with the Magnuson Act.

I think you're covered, Jimmy, in terms of that. The question is do you want to provide any input as whether the council should consider this for both recreational and commercial or just recreational or not at all? That is the kind of guidance that would help the council when it is talking with the Gulf Council in June.

MR. ATACK: And if we go this route, they would still be looking at the Gulf ACL and the South Atlantic ACL. They would be tracking them separately. This is all lumped together here in these landings, but they would still be managing that the way they do now, right?

MR. WAUGH: That's correct, but we've got some other options that might modify that but not under this action.

MR. COVINGTON: Mr. Chairman, I've got a motion, but I've got a question first. Sub-items D on both of these; what is being contemplated by the verbiage there, "minor modifications to existing allowable gear", in particular with regards to recreational?

MR. WAUGH: The one example that has been given thus far is the circle hook requirement, that type of thing. There is a note here asking the councils to talk about this more when they get together in June and give some more guidance as to how far you can go with that allowable gear.

MR. DeMARIA: I'm not sure how they would deal with powerheads as they're prohibited in Florida waters but allowed in federal, so that might be another modification.

MR. ATACK: Is there any guidance we want to give the council on what our preferred or what our thoughts are?

MR. COVINGTON: **Mr. Chairman, I'd move that the panel support Alternative 2 with regards to the recreational only.**

MR. ATACK: Including all the subalternatives?

MR. COVINGTON: Yes, sir.

MR. ATACK: Do we have a second?

Mr. MOSS: No, a comment. As a recreational angler – and I'm probably going to get myself in trouble for saying this, but it does worry me a little bit allowing the state of Florida – and I say this as a native Floridian who loves Florida, but it does worry me a little bit allowing the state of Florida to kind of set rules for anything. We're probably not the best at doing that. As a recreational angler, I would not support that. I would prefer to keep the status quo that we could keep everything here in the council. Like I said, as a native Floridian who loves my state, we're probably not the best at setting rules for ourselves.

MR. ATACK: We have a motion; is anybody going to second the motion? Kenny Fex seconded the motion. Discussion.

MR. LORENZ: I pretty much concur with David having been a resident of Florida. I'm not there anymore, but this whole situation seems that we're leaving in a tremendous complexity. I would like to see it cleaner, to have the councils on one case or the state on the other. Now, to mix it with the state deals with recreational and the councils deal with commercial, it just seems like we're adding a lot of complexity to the situation. I would favor just status quo.

MR. JOHNSON: David, I would take the other side of that argument. The yellowtail snapper had a year-round fishery recreationally and never had any shutdown. Vermilion snapper did; mutton snapper a year-round fishery recreational, higher ACL, higher bag limits than red snapper. We all know what happened to red snapper.

I guess I'm a little more trusting of my state government than a lot of people; but I'm just using those two examples. That always stuck out in my mind when going through this process how those two fish – does anybody really think that they can catch mutton snapper as easily I can catch red snapper? If they have, they've never fished in northeast Florida.

The same thing with vermilion; can you go out and consistently catch your recreational limit of really big yellowtails like I can go catch a recreational limit of two to four B-liners almost every time I leave the dock? I don't know if you're getting my point here, but just food for thought. I'm not so quick to jump on anti-Florida and I've been there a long time.

MR. SMITH: Well, there is a lot to be said about both those comments, David and Robert. I've been there my whole life, too. It wasn't by choice; that was up to my parents. If we amended that and we included the commercial side back into that, I think I would support it. I'm not quite so sure I would support it the way it is. Maybe Robert could open my eyes a little bit more on when you mentioned yellowtail. We do have a great fishery for yellowtail; but how the state of Florida was responsible for that, I might be missing the boat a little bit.

MR. ATACK: I guess the other option is if we go with Action 1, can't the state of Florida just come to the AP and say we'd like to change the size limit or that bag limit and then we could talk about and then handle it at the SAFMC level, right?

MR. WAUGH: And we have done amendments before just to get consistent regulations. We have a framework that can do that; so that is an avenue that would be available.

MR. ATACK: I guess it is either we'll be talking to Florida and tell them what we'd like or they could talk to us and tell us what they want and then even get to the same end result both ways, right?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; it is just a question of then they have to come and talk to the South Atlantic and the Gulf from their perspective. That's why they're looking to simplify this for their fishermen, particularly the ones in extreme South Florida.

MR. MUNDEN: This is a very similar action to the action that was taken by the Mid-Atlantic Council for black sea bass. Basically all the states were bickering as to who got what share of the black sea bass quota. After many years of discussion, finally the National Marine Fisheries Service

said, “Well, we’re going to set the ACL and whatever for black sea bass and the states can divvy it up among the various players.”

However, the real difference is that in the Mid-Atlantic black sea bass as well as a number of other species are managed jointly or cooperatively with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. In this case with black sea bass, NMFS said, “Okay, this is how many fish you can catch. These are all of the measures that will surround the ACL such as accountability measures and whatever, but we’ll leave it up to ASMFC to decide how the states get the various shares.”

But we don’t have that in this situation because this is not a joint plan with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. I would be concerned about the state of Florida just having a stand-alone portion of the catch. Even though looking at the data very, very few black grouper are caught in North Carolina, for example, but what would the fishermen do with those fish? Would they comply with the Florida size limits or whatever, but I think status quo is a better option.

MR. HULL: I agree with Red; I wouldn’t support this. I would definitely support status quo.

MR. ATACK: No more discussion, I will read the motion. **The AP supports Alternative 2 for Action 1, including all the options. All in favor raise your hand; all opposed. The motion fails unanimously.**

MR. SMITH: **I would like to make a motion that the AP supports Alternative 1, no change.**

MR. MOSS: I’ll second.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion? I’ll read the motion, then. **The AP supports Alternative 1, no action, for Action 1. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion carries unanimously.**

MR. DeMARIA: Maybe this the time to make a motion about moving the jurisdiction line. I’ve got it written down here. If somebody can type it in, we can least discuss it. I think it makes a lot of sense to me, and a lot of fishermen that I’ve talked to also it seems to make sense.

MR. ATACK: While he is typing that in, Don, do you want to maybe – some people probably aren’t familiar with the problems you have with the way the line is drawn now and the issues involved with that.

MR. DeMARIA: The line is confusing. It is sort of separating the Gulf and South Atlantic. I thought it ran down the center of U.S. 1 and then when it got to Marquesas it kind of jogged around and then the Tortugas is another world. I talked to a federal agent and he said, “No, that is not exactly right. It is south of the southernmost island.”

There is like confusion of exactly where the line is. If it was just moved up around that Shark Point area or somewhere in there, it would open up a lot of area especially for commercial fishermen that historically fished New Grounds and north of Marquesas and that whole area. It would include a lot more than it excluded.

There are not too many people that come down from Fort Myers to fish the New Grounds and those areas, but there a lot from the Keys that can't go there anymore because of the way the line is drawn and catch shares. It is really confusing; the jurisdictional lines. I think even law enforcement said this would be much simpler.

DR. DUVAL: Don, do you mean the jurisdictional lines separating the councils or the jurisdictional line for snapper grouper only? I think the jurisdiction between the councils –

MR. DeMARIA: No, I know.

DR. DUVAL: – takes an Act of Congress.

MR. DeMARIA: No; if you want to clarify that or reword it just for snapper grouper.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, so just for snapper grouper, so that is a lot different than the jurisdictional line between the councils.

MR. DeMARIA: Maybe that is not worded right. I just meant for snapper grouper fisheries.

MR. ATACK: Any other questions or discussion on this? I know Don has brought this up before. He had some maps at an earlier meeting showing some of the issues with the way the confusion is on how the lines are drawn and where the jurisdiction is.

MR. SMITH: I'll second that and then I want to discuss just a little bit. It seems that doesn't that change – I mean, that changes a lot, though. It makes sense to me, but that doesn't always make sense to the system. It does simplify it.

MR. ATACK: The motion would have the council look at it and see how doable it is and what the ramifications would be, right?

MR. DeMARIA: Correct.

MR. COVINGTON: Maybe this is a question Ms. Duval could answer. I'm not quite sure I follow how a council's jurisdiction cannot be changed due to what is in Magnuson-Stevens but how we could change the management area for a complex. How could we recommend a change in a management area but the jurisdictions are set by Magnuson-Stevens?

DR. DUVAL: If I understand Don correctly, he is just interested in changing the boundary for where the dividing line is between like a snapper grouper and Gulf reef fish fisheries, because right now it runs down the center of U.S. 1; so everything on the north side of U.S. 1 and the Keys is bound by Gulf Council regulations and everything on the south side is bound by South Atlantic Council regulations. Then all in between you have the state of Florida.

The councils have done stuff like that before. An example is mackerel. We've recently had a stock assessment for mackerel that determined that the mixing zone between the Gulf stock and

the Atlantic stock, it is no longer the entire east coast of Florida down through the Keys. It is really just the Keys.

We're actually working on an amendment right now that is looking at shifting those boundaries somewhat. The councils can undertake that kind of action; but the jurisdictional line for everything that they manage, that is set within the Magnuson-Stevens Act. I hope that answers your question somewhat.

I guess the bottom line is when the councils have considered different jurisdictional lines for managing the fishery, it has generally been based on biology. Another example is black sea bass north and south of Hatteras. Fishermen in North Carolina are subject to a 12.5 inch size limit and a 15-fish bag limit for black sea bass north of Hatteras, but they're stuck with a 13-inch size limit and 5 fish south of Hatteras; and don't think we don't get a lot of grief about that because we do. That is another example of how these jurisdictional lines for a fishery management plan are a little bit different than the jurisdiction for the entire council. That is longwinded, but hopefully –

MR. HULL: I would support this. I know at the last council meeting there has been a lot of support for this and a lot of discussion on this. Ever since I've known Don, this has been a very contentious issue and problem for the guys in the Keys, and this would solve a lot of their problems. It would solve a lot problems.

MR. WAUGH: And this is exactly what we're asking the Gulf Council to do for hogfish. There is some precedent. I would think that the intent here, Don – and clarify it for me – is we would look at species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit, find which ones overlap and which ones it is appropriate for or do you want us to try to get this agreement for all snapper grouper fisheries in our fishery management unit?

MR. DeMARIA: I think for all, just the boundary separating the snapper grouper. To try to sort out individual ones gets complex. I want to make it simple.

MR. ATACK: Okay, I think I can read the motion now. **The council consider moving the management boundary for snapper grouper species from the Gulf/South Atlantic Council boundary north to Shark Point for the snapper grouper fishery management unit. All in favor of this motion raise your hand; all opposed to this motion raise your hand. 13 for and none opposed; unanimous; the motion carries.**

MR. WAUGH: The second item under yellowtail – and this is the only other one under yellowtail; and then we'll repeat these so hopefully some of those discussions will carry over and we can just get your intent. Here is to look at a way of dealing with this and simplifying management is to establish and consolidate ABCs and ACLs for yellowtail snapper.

Right now Alternative 1 would be to maintain the commercial and recreations ACLs for yellowtail snapper based on the South Atlantic Council's Snapper Grouper FMP. Where we have separate recreational and commercial, the Gulf just has one total ACL on the Gulf side. Alternative 2 would have us do it all like the Gulf does where it would be one single unit with an overall combined

multijurisdictional ABC and annual catch limit. It wouldn't be separated by recreational and commercial.

Alternative 3 would use both councils agreed-upon ABC for yellowtail snapper and allocate commercial and recreational using three different alternatives. These use different time series. Option 3A is similar to what we have used before with the Bowtie Approach, except there is no overlap in the years. 50 percent covers the landings from years 1993 through 2008 and 50 percent based on the landings from 2009 through 2013.

3B would just use average landings from 2009 to 2013. Alternative 3A would use the full time series from 2004 to 2013. Now what does that mean in terms of how those splits would be? Under Option 3, 3A would be 75.89 percent commercial; 24.11 percent recreational. 3B would be 80.13 percent commercial/19.87 recreational; and 3C would 73.26 percent commercial/27.74 percent recreational. We've got information there on the distribution of landings for you to look at.

MR. JOHNSON: What is the current allocation right now that we're under, commercial and recreational?

MR. WAUGH: Right now the split between jurisdictions is 75 percent of the ABC goes to the South Atlantic and 25 percent to the Gulf. I'll have to pull the recreational/commercial split on the Atlantic side. Myra is going to get what we use on the South Atlantic side. On the South Atlantic side right now it is 52.56 percent commercial and that would 47.44 percent recreational.

MR. HULL: I have to question to ask, too, on both sectors; which one is reaching the ACL? Are they getting closed down; who is leaving fish there; who needs fish; who doesn't need fish? I don't have it in front of me. Obviously, that is my fault for not having it, but it would be nice to see that.

MR. WAUGH: Sorry, Jimmy, we don't have that level of analysis in here yet either.

MR. ATACK: In 2014 yellowtail, according to the website there, is 55 percent of the Atlantic was met recreationally in the South Atlantic.

MR. HULL: It never shut down, then, so recreationally they haven't had a closure. Commercially; Don, do yellowtail commercially shut down in the Keys?

MR. DeMARIA: I think there was a time when it did and then it got reopened. It was misunderstand. Since that misunderstanding, I don't think it has ever shut down, I don't believe.

MR. HULL: So my question would be why are we considering – I know it is a combination but then you're also going to reallocate between sectors.

MR. JOHNSON: As most of you know, I wear both hats, so I look at things through the lenses of commercial and charter fishing. The commercial effort is pretty much capped. The only thing that is not capped is recreational effort; so it is not a bad thing that they're not meeting their ACL

because over time that effort is likely to increase. I'm sure it would be a good idea to reallocate for the state of Florida especially; and for the South Florida tourist industry, I don't know if it would be a good idea to allocate fish to the commercial sector, especially considering they didn't bust their ACL.

MR. WAUGH: And the reason this is in here; one is to deal with – if we're trying to consolidate how we manage these three species that are primarily South Florida and we want the councils to retain control of ABCs and ACLs, then we have to figure out how we deal with the fact that on the Gulf side they don't have a recreational/commercial split.

It is all one ACL; and on the Atlantic we have it split a recreational and commercial. That is why this is here; we've got to do it one way or the other or you just stay with the way it is now, which is Alternative 1, no action, and we continued with our recreational/commercial and the Gulf continues with their combined.

MR. HULL: So with that information, **I would make a motion that the Snapper Grouper AP recommend Alternative 1, no action, status quo.**

MR. JOHNSON: I'll second.

MR. ATACK: Any other discussion? I'll read the motion. **The Snapper Grouper AP recommends Alternative 1, no action, for Action 2, as the preferred alternative. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. 12 for; one against; the motion carries.**

MR. WAUGH: We did that for yellowtail so now we can speed through the others, right, because we're dealing with the same issues, just different species. Action 3, we deal with partial delegation of mutton; so all the same discussion and issues apply. What you did was you supported no action for Action 1.

MR. JOHNSON: **I would like to make a motion for the AP supports Alternative 1, no action, for mutton snapper.**

MR. DeMARIA: I'll second it.

MR. ATACK: Don DeMaria seconds it. Any discussion? **All in favor of this motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. 11 for and none against; the motion carries.**

MR. WAUGH: Action 4 deals with the ABCs and ACLs for mutton; and for yellowtail you adopted Alternative 1.

MR. JOHNSON: **The AP supports Alternative 1, no action.**

MR. DeMARIA: **I'll second it.**

MR. ATACK: Any discussion? If not, we'll vote. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. 11 for and none against; the motion carries.

MR. WAUGH: Action 5 deals with mutton snapper recreational bag limits. Right now mutton snapper is part of the aggregate ten-snapper bag limit in the Gulf, South Atlantic and the state of Florida. Alternative 2 would remove mutton snapper from the recreational aggregate bag limit and change the recreational bag limit for mutton snapper during the regular season, which we're calling July through April, and during the spawning season, which we're calling May through June.

This may not coincide exactly with the spawning season, but that's how we're differentiating it. A lot of concern has been raised over the high catches when these fish are aggregating to spawn. On the recreational side, Option 2A would have ten fish per person during the regular season and two during the spawning season. 2B would be five fish during the regular season and two during the spawning season; Option 2C, four during the regular season and two during the spawning season.

Alternative 3 is similar, but it would retain mutton snapper within the aggregate ten bag limit in the Gulf and South Atlantic, but specify bag limits for mutton snapper within the recreational aggregate. 3A is within the aggregate no more than ten can be in the regular season and no more than two during the spawning season may be mutton; 3B, the numbers are five during the regular season and two during the spawning season; 3C, four during the regular season and two during the spawning season; again, all within the aggregate bag limit.

We've got tables in there that show what is in place now. Table 10 shows what is in place for the – the size limit is 16 inch for the two councils. You can see what the bag limits are there. We've got tables that show the South Atlantic recreational private, charter and headboat mutton snapper landings by wave; then the percent of the status quo harvest remaining under various bag limits.

Under the existing bag limit of ten, they would get the same harvest that they're getting now. You can see moving from right to left – as you lower that bag limit, you can see you've got to get down to about four or three before you see a reduction below 90 percent of the current landings. Table 12 is for headboats; Table 13 is for private/charter. Again, you don't see much of a reduction in catch until you get down around two and one. Again, that is because not many people are maxing out on the bag limit. During the spawning season; I think we have a table that breaks that out.

MR. JOHNSON: I have a question; are yellowtail in that aggregate bag limit? I know mutton are so yellowtail are?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; the composition is shown in Table 9; but, yes, in the South Atlantic yellowtail are included and in the Gulf yellowtail are included.

MR. JOHNSON: Can you go back up to the options?

MR. ATACK: One question I had on the options was I don't see a zero fish per day during the spawning season as an option.

MR. WAUGH: Correct; and there was some discussion about that. The mutton snapper assessment will be reviewed by the SSC and the preliminary results indicate that there is not an issue with the stock status. This is one that we set up originally, calling it a spawning season closure and limiting everybody to the bag limit during the spawning season closure in an attempt to reduce harvest; and we've just never gone back and revisited that.

For a lot of fishermen, particularly on the recreational side, that is when they catch these fish. They're more difficult to catch at other times of the year; and so the council didn't feel it was reasonable to – that the impacts would be too great to include a zero bag limit during the spawning season.

MR. DeMARIA: The problem has always been during the spawning season at various specific sites like Riley's Hump that's taken care of; the Western Dry Rock, which is not, but might be taken care of; those are the two main historical aggregation sites for muttons on South Florida. I'm not sure fishing outside of those areas when they're spawning is really that much of a problem.

It is the kind of a fish that spreads. Just saying no muttons at all during those two months might not be reasonable. The charterboats; they're not selling fish per pound like the commercial guys are. They're selling the anticipation of catching a fish; and if you tell people before they leave the dock you can't even keep one if you catch it, it hurts their business. I think fishing outside those areas even during the spawning season might be agreeable, and that's kind of what we're trying to move towards with these spawning areas is more of a year-round fishery. I don't think zero is fair or even needed.

MR. MOSS: Just to agree with Don and especially from the recreational side, they're such a, for lack of a better term, a spot-specific fish that outside of a lot times the spawning season, it is difficult for the average every day recreational guy to know spots and to go get them. They're certainly a lot easier to get and you're going to get them. Even during the spawning season, I don't know a ton of recreational guys that are coming home with bag limits.

MR. ATACK: Yes; and I guess if they weren't nailed at their aggregates where they spawn, then maybe you would have more fish around to catch in the offseason. I'm just surprised it is an option. It is an option in the commercial sector to have zero and why wouldn't the council consider a zero fish per day as one of the options and go through it during the spawning season. I mean we're all about protecting fish in the spawning season on the other species; so I just don't understand why this gets a special rule.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, they're not overfished; they're not undergoing overfishing, so there is really no justifiable reason to close fishing during the spawning time. I would like to make a motion to support Option 2B, five fish per person. My justification for that is I'm hearing that nobody is making that 10-percent bag limit, anyway. **I would like to see it removed from the bag limit so that they could get their yellowtails and their muttons and their fish as well and not be penalized if they do catch five muttons.**

MR. FEX: Yes; we are talking about muttons right now.

MR. JOHNSON: I know and not penalize them if they catch five mutttons in with their – the way it is set up now if they catch mangoes and five mutttons, they're done, they can't have any yellowtails. Vermilion are not part of your aggregate bag limit.

MR. COVINGTON: I think if that was a motion, I would like to second it.

MR. OSBORNE: Robert, you want to able to catch five mutttons and then ten other snappers; is that what you're saying?

MR. JOHNSON: The yellowtail snappers take the place of vermilion in South Florida. The way the aggregate bag limit is set up now, they could have ten yellowtails and no mutttons or mangoes or gray snapper or they could have a mixture of those three species. All I'm saying is remove the mutttons from that aggregate bag limit, which is what this alternative does, set a recreational bag limit of five fish per person and two fish during the spawning time and that should take care of it.

MR. ATACK: But if nobody is really catching mutton snapper, you're looking at ten snapper as a big limit, right, so now you're saying you want to able catch between ten and fifteen and not have the mutton snapper count as the other snappers, right?

MR. JOHNSON: That's sort of what we do in the rest of the Atlantic. We can keep ten B-liners. When red snapper were open, we used to be able to keep ten and now we keep one during our eight-day season. We can keep five mangroves. We could literally keep five mutttons under this scenario – I catch a lot of mutton snappers in northeast Florida – and five mangrove snapper and ten B-liners.

B-liners are not part of the aggregate limit. Five, yes, I'm sorry, it used to be ten. Thanks, Zack. If some of you are following what I'm trying to say, I think it doesn't penalize them, but it does maybe get mutton snapper harvest down to probably where it should be, because no one is catching ten fish a person, anyway, from what I'm hearing.

MR. MOSS: I think that is kind of a good example of some give and take, too; that you are taking some of the bag limit away, but you're also taking it out of the aggregate bag to where we can still keep our ten yellowtail a day. Like I said, there is not a ton of recreational guys that are hammering ten mutttons a day, anyway. Yes, I would be happy with knocking it down to five and then keeping them out of the aggregate would be great.

MR. ATACK: Okay, anymore discussion? I'll read the motion. **The AP supports Alternative 2, Option 2B, for Action 5. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion carries 13 for and none against.**

MR. WAUGH: Okay, next is dealing with a commercial trip limit for mutttons. This is on Page 22 of your document. Action 1 is during May and June the commercial sector is restricted to ten mutton snapper per day or ten mutton snapper per trip, whichever is more restrictive. There is no bag or trip limit for the commercial sector in the Gulf or South Atlantic from July through April.

Alternative 2 would establish a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper during the regular season, July through April, in the Gulf and South Atlantic of ten fish per person per day or some higher bag limit or trip limit. There is some confusion and interest here in trying to specify the commercial as a trip limit. Recreational we have a bag limit; commercial we have a trip limit.

You'll still see some fish here in terms of numbers of fish and there is some interest in trying to get this to a poundage like we do for our other commercial fisheries. Alternative 3, for the spawning season closure, Option 3A would be two fish again for commercial; five fish, ten fish or not have a bag or trip limit during the spawning season.

Alternative 4 would specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper that is identical to the recreational bag limit during the spawning season in the Gulf and South Atlantic. Alternative 5 would specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper for the handline sector during the spawning season, May and June, in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic two fish, 5A; 5B, five; 5C, ten; 5D, some other trip limit.

Then Alternative 6 is specify a commercial trip limit for mutton snapper for the longline sector during the spawning season, May and June, in the Gulf and South Atlantic. 500 pounds whole weight is 6A; some other trip limit is 6B. You get into the Gulf and mutton is a part of their longline fishery, and so that's why we're dealing with it here.

MR. JOHNSON: I have a question. Those fish are legal for them to sell during the spawning period even though they only retain – presently they can retain their recreational – so they're operating under a recreational bag limit presently, but they can sell that limit? Like in the South Atlantic, when the commercial fish are closed, they can still retain their recreational bag limit. They just can't sell them, but in this case they can sell these fish; is that right?

MR. WAUGH: I believe that's right. I'll have to double-check to make sure.

MR. ATACK: Yes; that was brought up at the last meeting, and we were surprised to hear about that; that you could actually – in a spawning season closure you could commercially sell those fish.

MR. WAUGH: And Ben said, yes, that is correct. Remember, this goes way back when we set this up; and the idea was at that time that if we just limited everybody to the bag limit during the spawning season, that was sufficient at that time. We didn't prohibit sale at that time and we've never gone back to address it for mutton snapper. As we've added spawning season closures, then we have prohibited sale during the spawning season closure; but there isn't a sale prohibition for mutton.

MR. ATACK: So we could consider that as an option if we made that a motion, right, that we could have no sale of mutton snapper during a spawning season.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't know how important that fish is to the longline fishery in the Gulf during that time. There is a lot I don't know about the commercial sector in South Florida; so it would hard for me to – I mean the easy way to handle it would be just say no sale and then they would

automatically be under the recreational bag limit. That would be the cleanest motion, but I don't know how important those fish to the commercial sector during that time of year.

MR. ATACK: Yes; that would be clean because then they could just have the possession is all they could have, right?

MR. DeMARIA: It is not actually a spawning closure. It is just a reduction in the number that you get to keep, so it is not a closure. This fish, it is not like a red snapper that you find aggregated or schooled up year-round and will bite anything. It is a pretty finicky fish; and outside of those two months in those areas, they're spread out over just live bottom.

The only real effective way to catch them was with bottom longlines and fish trips, which are both prohibited in the South Atlantic. I'm not sure it is a big deal outside of the spawning areas. There is not that many of them caught. The most I've ever caught on a trip is like maybe 200 pounds spearing. It is a hard fish to really load up on other than right there where they're spawning at that time.

MR. ATACK: Yes; I think that was what the concern was that was talked about a couple of years ago that during their spawning the charterboats were running out there and they were getting 10-15-pound mutton snappers per person on the boat.

MR. LORENZ: Just for an education for me; I don't know if anybody else needs it; just to think of this just a little better; I'm going through the options as we get down towards six, and most of the options have a limit of fish numbers. You get to the poundage and it specifically speaks with it under the longline sector; so with respect to longlining mutton snapper, are they able to be released and live such that a number limit would make sense? I would presume if it is a number limit, it is almost a bycatch if it is ten fish or under.

MR. HARTIG: Bob, that is good a lead-in for the longline discussion. I'm a member of this workgroup and I was tasked with coming up with a bag limit for mutton snappers when we were talking about this during that time. Once I started looking at the longline landings, that threw a real monkey wrench into the bag limit considerations or the trip limit considerations.

As a hook-and-line fisherman on our side, I could come up with a rational trip limit for mutton snappers, three to five hundred pounds, somewhere around there, that the hook-and-line sector could live with. Unfortunately, the longline sector had some big catches in the Gulf. During some of the times of spawning and not spawning, they have some big trip limits.

If you put some kind of a trip limit in there that would work for us, it wouldn't work for the longliners. Then if they go down there, they're going to have dead discards because this fishery operates in deep waters; and when you catch those muttons in that deep a water, they're not going to survive very well that mortality.

The fishery that is operating now is a pretty healthy fishery. We have one place – Riley's Hump is closed – that has anecdotally has increased the populations all the way up my way off the Jupiter area. Then we heard Rodney talk about Brevard County as well of seeing more mutton snappers.

I think what we've done in this place-based management of Riley's has worked. Don's idea has been that if we can get maybe Western Dry Rocks, we may be done.

If Western is as a special place as Riley's was, and that happens to passed in the Sanctuary Proposal and gets closed, you may be actually done with mutton snappers. You could fish them outside of the areas during the spawning season, whenever, with a reasonable bag limit and a reasonable trip limit and the fishery would do quite well.

There are those of us who can target mutton snappers throughout the year hook-and-line fishing. There are guys that have done it and I do it as well, but it is not an easy fishery and there aren't many of us that actually – he says there is two of us and we're here in this room right now, so that goes to show the dedication it takes and the time and trouble.

It is not an easy fishery to prosecute or to catch any number of those animals. The place-based management works. Riley's has done it. Anecdotally the population is showing signs of increasing throughout a larger range. Like I say, there has been work – you were involved in some other work about some additional spawning areas as well.

Didn't you all look up and down the coast and actually do some flyovers and mapped some areas farther to the north or maybe I'm getting into something that John Hunt was involved in. You guys also did some further investigations of looking where boats were aggregated during when the mutton snappers spawn. I'll let you talk about that.

DR. KELLISON: I was involved with FWC for a few years. Actually last year was our last – about five years, the last three years, maybe, 2012 through '14, we spent looking in the Keys for aggregations. We had a lot of assistance from fishermen pointing us in the right direction. Basically we were just trying to look at areas that people had reported that there had been aggregations.

A lot of places people said they had fished them out, like gag off of Miami, as an example. We did a lot of things on water surveys, even acoustics and divers and aerial surveys in a little Cessna up and down the Keys when it turned full moon when we thought those might be aggregated. But for muttons, mainly there is a place up off Key Largo, kind of near the elbow, Watson's Reef, where something is definitely happening.

We've seen pretty good numbers of them and fishermen tell us they target them up there. But other than Western Dry Rocks where we've seen more than 40 boats at one time fishing that aggregation site, the other main area, which Don knows about, also, is Eyeglass Bar, which is just east of the shipping channel coming out of Key West.

The Eyeglass Bar and Western Dry Rocks are eight or ten nautical miles separated; so one interesting question is whether muttons at Western Dry Rocks utilize Eyeglass Bar side or vice versa. If you set aside spatially Western Dry Rocks but didn't do anything with Eyeglass and those fish move back and forth, you might get yourself very far. There is a lot to learn.

I think where we ended up after a number of years, we learned a lot. Gray snapper aggregations, too, that we consistently saw up and down the bars and some sites. We have still a lot more to learn. It is a difficult science. Will Haymans would attest to that, too. I know the stuff that he did in Belize, which has been awesome, took him a long time to find those aggregations which are pretty site-specific.

MR. HARTIG: This whole thing goes back to what you've been talking about the last day and a half about place-based management. If you set aside the right places, I think you can ameliorate management outside of those areas. In the Keys, you look at the closures, the closures they have, and that's another reason you may give them the opportunity to catch two fish during a spawning season.

The stock is healthy, but you have additional closed areas, Dry Tortugas, Riley's Hump, those types of places and the smaller areas as well. I think if you look at it in that vein, a little bit different than what we've done with a number of our species; that you can be a little more lenient with the considerations.

MR. ATACK: That's a lot of good information. Certainly, if we went down to two fish per day, it would be a lot better than what we were. If you do that commercial and recreational, and then if you only allow the commercial guys to retain the two fish for personal consumption and not sell them, then we would be consistent with what we're doing in the other fisheries.

MR. HARTIG: The interesting thing about it is 68 percent of the commercial catch occurs during the spawning season under a ten-fish bag limit, 68 percent of the harvest. If we can reduce that harvest now, you will be reducing – you know, during a spawning season if you reduce that bag limit, if you keep it the same as the recreational, you'll have a reduction in the commercial catch.

MR. ATACK: That first year.

MR. HARTIG: No, every year because they're not going to target them outside of the spawning season because they're too hard to catch.

MR. ATACK: Well, that is debatable because if you're not whacking them when they're spawning and you have a lot more recruitment and your total stock would go up and they would be easier to catch.

MR. OSBORNE: This is very similar to what we're talking about with our special management zones for these spawning fish and talking about if we can isolate these spawning spots, then we can alleviate some of the spawn closures, get rid of the spawn closures. It is the same thing; we've already protected the spawning areas, so now we don't have to stop catching them during the spawn period when the fish is healthy.

MR. ATACK: Right, and if you pick the right SMZs, then they won't be catching them while they're spawning because that spawning area would be protected.

MR. OSBORNE: Exactly and that's what Ben was trying to say and that Don was trying to say is that we've already protected those spawning rocks where those fish are spawning. We've already seen the repercussions of it. The fishery is improving under our current fishing. You don't really need to change it from what it is right now during the spawn period.

MR. JOHNSON: The last thing I want to do is hurt somebody. My earlier motion on the recreational side; that is not going to hurt anybody. That is not going to put anybody in any kind of financial hardship. Now, when I look at the commercial sector, I look at them a little differently. I'm really torn here. I would like to have similarities, but then also I hear that 68 percent of the commercial harvest comes during that time. I know if Richard Stiglitz was here, we'd be having a lot of conversation about this right now. I'm not sure if maybe no action – and I thought of a commercial guy catching ten beside the recreational guy catching two I know is not going to sit well.

MR. OSBORNE: My point being on the commercial side, close it or don't close it, you're not really saving any fish. The fishery is rebounding under the current level of fishing. You've got Riley's that seems to be feeding this whole fishery. Potentially adding one or two more of them, it can only get better from there. I don't think you're going to see a change in the fishery stopping catching ten fish during one month of the year whether you sell it or not.

MR. HULL: I'd like to make a motion that the Snapper Grouper AP would choose Alternative 1, status quo.

MR. DeMARIA: I'll second that.

MR. ATACK: Anymore discussion? I'll read the motion, then. The Snapper Grouper AP choose Alternative 1, no action, for Action 6. All in favor raise your hand; all opposed. The motion carries; 13 and no opposition.

MR. WAUGH: Action 7 is on Page 30, and that deals with partial delegation of black grouper to the state of Florida. Black grouper is a little more complex because in the Gulf it is a part of their ITQ Fishery on the commercial side. For mutton and yellowtail you chose Alternative 1, no action.

MR. JOHNSON: I make a motion that we choose Alternative 1, no action.

MR. DeMARIA: I'll second it.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion? I'll read the motion. The AP supports Alternative 1, no action, for Action 7. All in favor raise your right hand; any opposed raise your hand. The motion carries 14 for and none against.

MR. WAUGH: Action 8 on Page 32 deals with establishing and consolidating the ABCs and ACLs for black grouper. For the other two species you chose Alternative 1, no action. It is patterned the same as the others.

MR. JOHNSON: The AP supports Alternative 1, no action.

MR. HULL: I'll second that.

MR. DeMARIA: I'd like to say one thing. The black grouper is another one; I guess if we just draw the line up a little bit further north like that, it would solve so many problems. Right now as it stands, some of these guys that fish have got like 20- and 22-foot boats. They don't even have fathometers on them, much less VMS. A lot of them have given up their Gulf permits because they didn't want to put a VMS on them. If the line was drawn up a little bit higher, they could fish on the Gulf side of the Keys again. I guess they would have to buy a permit if they gave it up.

MR. ATACK: The motion is on the board there. **All in favor of the motion raise your hand; any opposed. The motion carries 14 for and none against.**

MR. WAUGH: Action 9 gets into accountability measures. This can be really confusing. Alternative 1 lays out what is in place, and we have slight differences for the Gulf and South Atlantic. Alternative 2 would pattern it more after the Gulf where you look at the total ACL. Alternatives 3, 4 and 5 basically track what the council just approved and I think is either implemented or about to be implemented in our Comprehensive AM Amendment.

What it does in Alternative 3 on the commercial side is if commercial landings are reached or projected to reach the ACL, you close the fishery. There is only a payback if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded. That is how we do it almost across the board on our side now. There are options for dealing with the three species if you wanted to do it differently.

On the recreational side, if landings exceed the recreational ACL, then during the follow year recreational landings are monitored to see if they exceed it again. If necessary, NMFS would reduce the length of the fishing season and the recreational ACL in the following year by the amount of the overage; again, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded. You've got subalternatives for those three.

And then Alternative 5, if recreational landings reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL, NMFS would close the recreational sector for the remainder of the year unless, using the best scientific information available, NMFS determines that a closure is unnecessary; with Option 5A to do that if the species is overfished; 5B, regardless of stock status.

Alternative 6, the councils would jointly set the ACL for recreational and commercial. If the combined Gulf and South Atlantic recreational ACL and commercial ACL is met or exceeded, then NMFS would close both sectors. Under Alternative 6 you're just mooshing all the numbers together; and if that's exceeded, then the sector is closed for the remainder of the fishing year.

There is a little bit of discrepancy in some of the wording in Alternatives 3 and 4; and to a lesser extent 5, with wording that we just recently approved and new wording that NMFS is suggesting. It is not significant. In the past what you have recommended almost across the board for our species is Alternatives 3 and 4; and then I think there is one – is it blueline, Myra, do you recall that we track and close? There is one of them that we track and close, but I can't remember which

one. But almost across the board what you have recommended and we've gone with is Alternatives 3 and 4.

MR. HULL: I guess my question is, Gregg, what is the current accountability measures in place right now?

MR. WAUGH: Alternative 1 shows what is in place now for the most part. It doesn't include that one species that we track and close in season. We recently completed a Comprehensive AM Amendment that has been submitted to NMFS and is currently under review that would implement Alternatives 3 and 4 across the board.

MR. ATTACK: So if we wanted to be consistent, we would prefer Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 is what you're saying?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; that would be consistent with your advice that we received when we were doing the Generic AM Amendment and with what is in our Generic AM Amendment now. If you are uncomfortable dealing with this right now; that's fine. The two councils are going to sort this out and it will come back to you. By that time we will know what happened with our Generic AM Amendment, you have time. As far as the two councils trying to resolve that, I think we have our current position and we'll try and sort that out with the Gulf Council.

MR. ATTACK: Okay, if there is no motion, then we'll just let that stand and move on.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, Action 10 is one that has generated a lot of confusion. This is one that applies to not just South Florida. Part of the rationale was if we make some changes to the shallow-water grouper species' composition or closure in the Keys or South Florida, then we might at the same time want to make an adjustment for the rest of the South Atlantic Council area.

Alternative 1 would retain the existing respective shallow-water species' composition and seasonal closures. Table 21 shows the Gulf; 22 shows the South Atlantic. Alternative 2 would remove the shallow-water grouper closure for all affected grouper species in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic either from the Dade/Monroe County Line on the east coast of Florida to Shark Point on the west coast, so extreme South Florida would remove the shallow-water closure, or throughout each council's jurisdiction; so that would get rid of the closure.

Obviously, you already talked about this under the spawning SMZs, and your intent is to retain that until in the future once we get more spawning SMZs and we look at it, so we can use that input there. The Gulf Council, at their last meeting, removed Option 2B and moved that to the considered but rejected; so we've got to resolve the two differences between the councils there.

Alternative 2 would basically get rid of the shallow-water grouper closure. Alternative 3 would establish identical regulations for shallow-water grouper species' composition; so which species are included in the Gulf and South Atlantic from the Dade/Monroe County Line on the Florida east coast to Shark Point. 3A would adopt the Gulf shallow-water species' composition; 3B, the South Atlantic's. 3C would specify some new mix.

Alternative 4 does the same thing but modifies the seasonal closure. Alternative 5 would establish identical regulations for the shallow-water grouper closures throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic. The Gulf moved Alternative 5 to the considered but rejected. Alternative 6 would modify the shallow-water grouper seasonal closure off just Monroe County, Florida, to allow harvest of other shallow-water grouper species and only close harvest of gag.

MR. JOHNSON: I have a question. When do black grouper spawn; do they spawn the same months as gags?

MR. WAUGH: Black grouper, in the Gulf the spawning season is February through April, and that's shown in Table 21; and January through March in the South Atlantic.

MR. MOSS: Yes; so the literature definitely suggests January, February, March as the Keys and South Atlantic, but in the Keys, Don, I'd be interested in your thoughts about we hear anecdotal reports of them aggregated off – I don't know of direct observations of spawning but definitely aggregations of them in May and June sometimes.

MR. DeMARIA: If you go back to that paper by Bullock and Crabtree, my wife and I supplied a lot of samples for that. We found ripe ones year-round, really, but the peak seemed to be in February around the Keys; but they were, yes, year-round, but with the peak in February.

MR. JOHNSON: I was just trying to determine the logic behind just removing South Florida from the seasonal spawning closure, if there was a reason. I see it in the document in a couple different places.

MR. WAUGH: Part of the feeling is that shallow-water grouper spawning season closure was put in place for gag, and they don't catch very many gag down there. That is part of the rationale for removing it.

MR. JOHNSON: And the black grouper assessment is good; they're not overfished and not undergoing overfishing?

MR. WAUGH: I don't know; I'd have to find out. I think we're waiting on black grouper. I think Florida is doing a black grouper stock assessment, so we don't have that yet. For this one, as I said initially, we can just take your position that you approved this morning that applies to that shallow-water grouper closure and insert that here. We don't have to re-debate this unless you want to add additional information.

MR. FEX: I would like to make a motion to choose Alternative 1, no action, in lieu of what we just talked about.

MR. HULL: I'll second that.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion? All in favor of this motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion carries 13 for and none against.

MR. WAUGH: Action 11 deals with black grouper and you may want to treat this the same since it is included in that spawning season closure. We've got a number of alternatives there to modify that time period. The Gulf Council removed Alternative 6, which is to remove black grouper from the recreational aggregate bag limit.

This does include bag limits, too, fishery closure and bag limit. Alternative 6 would remove black grouper from the recreational aggregate bag limit. The council moved that to the considered but rejected. Under Alternative 8, Option 8C, the three-fish bag limit, they moved that to the considered but rejected.

We've got alternatives – right now the spawning season closure with black grouper included as a component of the shallow-water grouper and reef fish aggregate bag limits. Alternative 2 would remove black grouper from – well, the closure we dealt with. Is the intent here just to look at the alternatives that deal with the bag limits since you already made clear what to do as far as the spawning season closure? If that is the case, then we look at Alternative 6 would remove it from the aggregate.

Again, the Gulf moved that to the considered but rejected. Alternative 7 would remove black grouper from the recreational aggregate bag limits in the South Atlantic. Alternative 8 would deal with bag limits for black grouper. Under 8C, we've got the area off Monroe County, in federal waters off of Florida or the entire Gulf and South Atlantic.

MR. JOHNSON: I'll make a motion that we choose Alternative 1, no action.

MR. FEX: I'll second it.

MR. DeMARIA: I'm going to support that. I think we should just let it be as it is until we see what the Sanctuary is going to do with their closures. Right now they're considering one off of Carysfort Reef where it is probably a black grouper aggregation. At least there has been a lot of them seen there at certain times of the year. I'd rather just wait and see what they're going to do with their closures before we go adding any other restrictions.

MR. ATACK: Okay, no more discussion, the motion is the AP supports Alternative 1, no action, for Action 11. All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. 13 for and none against; the motion carries.

MR. WAUGH: Action 12 deals with trying to get consistent bag and size limits for species in the Shallow-Water Grouper Complex seasonal closures in federal waters adjacent to Monroe County, Florida. This is an attempt to have the regulations be consistent in the EEZ off Monroe County. No action right now is to retain the current bag and size limits for species in the Shallow-Water Grouper Complex.

Alternative 2 says harmonize the bag limits for species included in the shallow-water grouper seasonal closures in the EEZ. It shouldn't say "off the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic". That was my mistake. It should say "in federal waters adjacent to Monroe County, Florida. The same

with Alternative 3 for the size limits; it should read harmonize them in the EEZ in federal waters adjacent to Monroe County, Florida.

MR. ATACK: Gregg, if we move the boundary up to Shark Point; does this take out Monroe County?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; Shark Point would include a little portion of Collier County; doesn't it?

MR. ATACK: So it would solve this problem?

MR. DeMARIA: Well, you'd still have the state water thing. You've still got state waters in Monroe County to deal with; so, no, I don't really think it would.

MR. ATACK: But this is just addressing federal waters, this action.

MR. DeMARIA: Right.

MR. JOHNSON: Just to clarify for me; so you were talking about harmonizing the difference between the Gulf regulations and South Atlantic regulation in Monroe County?

MR. WAUGH: And state.

MR. JOHNSON: And state; all three?

MR. WAUGH: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: To get them all the same?

MR. WAUGH: In Monroe County.

MR. JOHNSON: And which one of these alternatives do that?

MR. WAUGH: You would pick Alternative 2 with a change in the wording to say "in federal waters adjacent to Monroe County". Alternative 2 would do it for bag limits. Alternative 3 would do it for size limits. If you want to do it for both, it would be Alternatives 2 and 3 with that new language.

MR. ATACK: But nowhere does it say anything about the state waters, though, in that action, right?

MR. WAUGH: That is what is meant by harmonize the bag and size limits so we get the three jurisdictional authorities to agree on one set of bag and size limits.

MR. ATACK: Okay, and if we can move the boundary to Shark Point, then the Gulf waters aren't in Monroe County anymore, right? That solves half the problem. Then you've still got to get the state waters with the South Atlantic waters the same?

DR. KELLISON: I just noted that the IPT put yellow, highlighted text there. There are a lot of warnings about implementing any of these alternatives; just notes that they have lots of implications beyond what is immediately apparent there. I just wanted to note that.

DR. DUVAL: Just to Todd's point, that yellow note was included reflective of the language that is in there that, as Gregg pointed out, it is a mistake to say that those would extend throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic; so that is why that yellow note says that. It was really because the action was meant to just refer to harmonizing all these size and bag limit regulations off Monroe County. I would hope that the IPT would probably not have that note in there anymore.

MR. DeMARIA: **I make a motion under Action 12 to adopt Alternatives 2 and 3.**

MR. ATACK: Robert Johnson seconded it. Any discussion? I think it would be good to have all the limits the same and consistent. If you could get the state to harmonize that; and then maybe when they get done with that, they'll do the red snapper on the east coast, too. **If there is no discussion, I'll read the motion: adopt Alternatives 2 and 3 in Action 12 with the wording "in federal waters adjacent to Monroe County, Florida"**. You also mean state waters, right?

MR. WAUGH: Yes, but we only have authority to regulate federal waters; so within this, it would be the state agreeing to implement in state waters whatever the two councils agree to implement in federal waters; or if we had sole authority to that area, then what we implemented in the federal.

MR. ATACK: **Everybody in favor of that motion raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion carries 14 for and none against.**

DR. DUVAL: That was the last action in this amendment; so I guess I just want to point out that the intent of this entire amendment is to do exactly this; is to make sure that there is consistent regulations for fishermen in South Florida by some mechanism. There were several species of importance which you discussed that were major species, yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper, black grouper, that kind of stood out as problem species for the folks in this area.

The AP recommended status quo on everything except for this particular action right here, which is, like I said, the overall goal of this entire amendment. I just want to make sure I'm understanding the AP's recommendations in that you guys are kind of hanging your hat on your recommended motion to move the boundary of the snapper grouper fishery management unit to Shark Point. That is what you guys are hanging your hat on?

Okay, so again that is going to apply in federal waters. Part of the issue with this whole thing is the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in Florida having inconsistent regulations in state waters; so even though we may shift the fishery management unit line to Shark Point, if that should happen, you're still going to have the whole state-waters issue to deal with.

MR. ATACK: Right, and hopefully the joint committee between the Gulf and the South Atlantic and FWC can kind of come to agreement on that and then get things harmonized, right?

DR. DUVAL: We don't control the FWC; so I'll just leave it at that.

MR. WAUGH: The final item is Action 13 that changes the circle hook requirements. No action is retain the current circle hook requirements in the EEZ in Gulf and South Atlantic. Alternative 2 would remove the requirement to use circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for only yellowtail snapper in the EEZ of the Gulf of Mexico – and it is broken out recreational or commercial.

Alternative 3 would remove the requirement to use circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for yellowtail snapper south of 28 degrees north latitude in the Gulf; recreational/commercial. Alternative 4 would require the use of circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for all snapper grouper species south of 28 degrees north latitude in the EEZ of the South Atlantic; again, recreational/commercial.

Alternative 5 would remove the requirement to use circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for all species in the snapper grouper complex north of 28 degrees north latitude in the EEZ; recreational/commercial. Alternative 6 is to remove the requirement to use circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for yellowtail snapper in federal waters from the Dade/Monroe County Line on the east coast to Shark Point on the west coast; again, recreational and commercial. The IPT is recommending removal of Alternative 5 because in their opinion it is outside the side of this amendment.

However, the two committees have been dealing with this with the idea that for a couple of these measures, if we change them for South Florida, we might as well make them deal with it in the whole area.

MR. JOHNSON: The circle hook requirement only goes down to about Cape Canaveral right now, correct? I'm not sure why we wouldn't choose alternative – and we had this discussion earlier. I do know that in SEDAR 41 there was some benefit given in the red snapper assessment to the use of circle hooks for discard mortality and for addressing those numbers. I caution the group trying to remove circle hooks from our gear, because I think we are going to get some benefit. If we do that, that benefit is going to go away.

MS. HELMEY: We fish out of Savannah, Georgia, and we feel like the circle hooks in our case are actually killing more fish than saving them, because we fish a lot for black sea bass. Where we're having to require the use of circle hooks; **I would like to make a motion that we don't have to use the circle hooks for that type of fishing.** I just don't want to have to use them, period.

MR. ATACK: Is that Alternative 5, if you look at the paper?

MS. HELMEY: Just recreation; I don't know anything about the commercial.

MR. ATACK: So that would be Alternative 5, Option 5A, right? Any other discussion?

MR. LORENZ: I would just have a question for Judy. Why do you feel so strongly on removing the circle hooks? Actually in North Carolina we're having other issues like turtles are such a hot

topic with us; and it is extended not only from inshore where the issue has always spawned for more use of gillnets; but with the fishermen actually stating, well, the recreational people are interacting with turtles.

Then we've had other fisheries where some of us in recreational are looking to negate some of the effect when we talk to turtle activists such as the use of circle hooks could help with our recreational interactions with sea turtles such as our May cobia fishery; so we're actually moving towards the increased use of circle hooks and they're quite accepted. I'd be very interested in why you're not liking them and want to move away from them.

MS. HELMEY: I'm only speaking for my area. We use circle hooks and we catch a lot of black sea bass. We kill a lot of our fish because they suck the hook in and we can't get it out; down the gut. That is why I was saying we just have a lot of fish that we kill with our circle hooks.

MR. ATACK: What size circle hooks do you use?

MS. HELMEY: I'm using small ones, 4 ought, 5 ought, 6 ought; and then on the larger fish like the grouper and snapper, I'm using 13, 14 and 15 ought hooks.

MR. COVINGTON: I was going to say in my experience trying to go to something smaller that would work for the recreationals for triggerfish and B-liners and stuff like that, when the circle hook requirement got implemented, I kind of experienced the same thing. If you're not used to it and you don't know how to I guess time it differently, I can see that being a problem. I don't know that I would support removing the circle hook requirement completely for all snapper grouper species, but I could see where Captain Judy is coming from with those smaller circle hooks.

MR. ATACK: We have a motion; has anybody seconded the motion?

MS. HELMEY: I would just like to add, too, these fish that I'm talking about is the blackfish and the vermilion. They suck in everything so that's why we're having such a kill rate is with the vermilion and the black sea bass.

MR. ATACK: No second on the motion; then the motion dies.

MR. MATHIS: I'll second the motion.

MR. ATACK: Okay, Milton seconded the motion. Any more discussion? Robert.

MR. JOHNSON: Just a little bit. I've already said it once, but I'll say it again. I don't know if I'm willing to lose the benefit from what I've seen being involved in a stock assessment that we're gaining from the use of circle hooks. I don't know; I can support it just for that reason because I've seen what those numbers are with and without the use of circle hooks. They're substantial and I like to catch red snapper. I'm willing to give up a few sea bass to get the snapper fishery back.

MR. HULL: I see where you're coming from, but there are an awful lot of benefits that I've seen from circle hook use in a lot of different species. I wouldn't be able to support it at this time.

MR. BROWN: I just asked Chip about the benefits from the circle hooks for SEDAR 41, which we're going to be dealing here real soon. He said the circle hooks being added in there was a 10 percent benefit towards the assessment of red snapper.

MR. ATACK: My experience has been with the circle hooks that we've had very, very few fish inhale hooks. Maybe you might look at the size of the hook for what you're targeting. Maybe there are some other things to do to minimize your mortality of your fish that you're catching. I couldn't support this motion either. If there is no more discussion, I'll read the motion.

The AP recommends removing the circle hook requirements of the South Atlantic for the recreational sector, which would be Alternative 5, Option 5A, under the action. All in favor of the motion please raise your hand; all opposed to the motion raise your hand. Ten opposed; the motion fails.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, that finishes our Joint South Florida Amendment. I've got about ten minutes to cover the next two items because we need to give some time to Amber to cover the visioning. Really, the electronic monitoring and reporting regional implementation plan, which is Attachment 8A, that is an item for your information.

It lays out the council's priorities and take a look at that. It lays out what areas we're interesting in, some of the challenges we're facing. The one item that I would raise your attention to is that in the future the industry may be called upon to do some cost-sharing for electronic reporting and monitoring.

The second thing I want to make clear is that the council – and their comment letters are included in there as attachments being 8A – we are not interested in moving forward with VMS now. Let me say that again; we are not interested in moving forward with VMS now.

What has come out of this; one of our highest priorities is looking at an electronic logbook for the charterboat sector. There is some funding that became available and it is being administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It is five million dollars. There were kind enough to only specify two million of it go the Gulf of Mexico.

If you all remember, Francine Karp demonstrated a tablet system to you at your last meeting. We worked with Francine and the four states (North Carolina through Florida). North Carolina, South Carolina who has an existing logbook program and is in the process of converting to an electronic logbook; so with Amy and Mel and those to make sure we're not stepping on their toes and causing confusing. I know Amy will keep us straight on that.

We're going to test a system for electronic charterboat reporting. That proposal was submitted about 11:30 last night. The deadline was 11:59; and they gave us like two or three weeks, I think, for the proposal to be put together, which is an extremely short period of time. We're also working

with Ken Brennan of the National Marine Fisheries Service to make sure that we cover all the data elements and so forth.

Hopefully, we'll be successful; and if we are, our intent is to try to get four to six participants off of each state, maybe a few less off of Georgia, and we will certainly work with each of our state partners to select those. Our thought process was to also use our Snapper Grouper AP, charterboat folks that are on our Snapper Grouper AP, and Coastal Migratory Pelagics AP to try to get them to volunteer to participate in this so we can get that expertise and get that experience spread throughout the AP.

The intent is to basically implement the same requirements that we have on the headboat with some enhancements; and that is where I would like to take just a couple of minutes and quickly go through Attachment 9, which is our Draft Charterboat Amendment that we're working on with the Gulf Council. Again, this is more for your information right now.

Once we get this put together a little more, you will an opportunity to comment on it. We are trying to get approval to go out to public hearings after our June meeting. On Page 5 of that we have got Action 1, which would amend the Gulf Reef Fish/South Atlantic Snapper Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics and Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo FMPS to modify data reporting requirements for charter vessels.

What we we're looking at is Alternative 4 would track what is being done by the headboats now, require that charter vessels submit fishing records to the Science and Research Director weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified via electronic reporting. The Gulf Council approved a motion at their last meeting to change this "via computer or internet" to say "via a NMFS-approved hardware or software".

Alternative 5 is a slight modification and this would track the recommendations of the technical subcommittee that was convened to look at how we handle charterboat reporting. They would have it sent in weekly but chose a following each fishing week; whereas, what is done for headboats is they have seven days after the end of each week. Action 1 establishes the requirement; and we would have the data elements specified in detail as to what we're looking to collect. Again, it would parallel what is being required in the headboat sector.

Now, there may be some enhancements we want to look at and Action 2 lays some of that out. Action 2 would amend the plans to require vessels or catch-location reporting. The real utility in a logbook is to gather that information, as much of it as you can at sea to get very specific information.

Now, the fishermen are obviously very concerned about getting specific catch-location information; so in this pilot we're going to work with them to explain how these data are going to be treated highly confidential. If any analysis is done and distributed, it will be aggregated to the headboat logbook grids so you're not giving away anybody's specific fishing location.

In order to further refine discard mortality for the assessments, if we could really define what percent of the catch is coming from different depths, then we can apply different release

mortalities; and so that would give you a benefit going into the stock assessment. In addition, with all the activity for gas and oil and wind farm siting, when they come and look for an area to fish, it would be a lot better if we could give them confidentially more site-specific information than just say, hey, in this ten-by-ten mile grid there is some fishing going in there.

It would help you in that long run. How do we get that more specific information? Alternative 2 would require charterboats to report catch location. The way it is done on headboats is now they select either the latitude and longitude or by headboat grid. It is up to the participants. We're interested in looking at requiring the use of an electronic device that automatically records vessel location for later transmission along with the logbook information. This could apply in the South Atlantic or Gulf.

Let me first say this is not VMS. Alternative 4, the Gulf Council is interested in looking at VMS; so that is in there for the Gulf of Mexico only. This charterboat pilot, the tables can have a GPS-enabled device in there so you could be out fishing and say, okay, I'm starting to fish in this location, I'm fishing X number of rods with Y numbers of hooks; and I fished for this long and caught approximately this information. That type of detail would be valuable. Then as you come back in and get within range, that can be uploaded automatically. That is how we would like to pursue trying to get some of this detailed catch-by-location information.

MR. ATACK: Gregg, I guess in that scenario, if you go offshore and you do eight or ten drops in different areas, you're going to record the number of fish you caught that day; but you really won't be recording where you caught which fish, right?

MR. WAUGH: Well, that is how it is done now and that's part of the problem. What we're trying to address is this tablet technology gives you the ability that when you pull up to a fishing spot, hit a button, and it says, okay, I'm recording you're starting to fish here. When you get finished fishing that spot, you hit another button and then it says, okay, I finished fishing that spot, and in that spot we fished rods, reels and we caught approximately this. Then you go to your next spot, you hit the button again, okay, I start here. We're going to explore using this with some volunteer captains to see how difficult this is, how much it interferes with your fishing operation.

MR. JOHNSON: That is the presentation that we saw. The equipment that she had gave that ability to do exactly what you said, correct?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; that equipment can do it.

MR. JOHNSON: And it was just pretty cheap tablets, if I remember right.

MR. WAUGH: Yes; and in this pilot we're going to provide those to the volunteer captains. In developing this amendment, we're going to have to deal with how do we do that with the charterboats. We're pressed for time; and I'm sorry but I've got give Amber 15 minutes, so I've got like four more minutes.

Let me just mention the third item. Again, you guys will have a chance to see this again when it is fleshed out some more. Should this pilot be successful; those of you that are charterboat

captains, we'll be talking to you. The third item is generating a little bit of controversy in that we want to specify certain aspects of the reporting for for-hire vessels.

Alternative 2 takes what was developed and recommended by the technical subcommittee and specifies the data flow. We really shouldn't have this timing aspects because we pulled that out; so it really should be just specifying the data flow. The intent here is we are more interested in having that data go to ACCSP on the Atlantic side or GulfFIN on the Gulf side.

The state of South Carolina has a long-standing system and they would rather have their data come directly to them since they've been running it; and then they do the QA-QC and send it to ACCSP. We will be addressing those types of detail. Then Alternative 3 has some additional aspects of reporting; and this is just to make sure that we get adequate compliance and tracking and so forth.

Again, that is just a quick overview. We'll be back with you when we have some details. We're meeting with the Gulf Council; and I think we'll have this a lot more ironed out for your next meeting. Should we meet this time period and get out to public hearings after June, we will make sure and get this material out to you so you can comment during the public comment period. I've got one more minute if there are any questions. Okay, thank you.

MS. VON HARTEN: Okay, thanks for letting me fill you guys in on what is going on with the Visioning Project. For those new members of the AP, if you're not familiar with this, this is the council's project that they've been working on since December of 2013 to develop a long-term strategic plan of sorts for the snapper grouper fishery.

This is also part of when we went out last spring of 2014 and did the port meetings up and down the coast. We did 26 port meetings, which most of you participated in, to get feedback directly from stakeholders about their ideas for solutions of how to fix some of the things that are a problem with the fishery.

Last October we had a special Council Visioning Workshop with council members; and that is where they actually looked at all of the input that was received from the port meetings, and we kind of broke it out into these seven key issues that you see here, sub-regional management, reporting and data collection, bycatch, access to the fishery, stakeholder engagement, habitat and ecosystems and allocation.

We had a two-and-a-half day in Charleston here and kind of hashed out what we were going to put in the Draft Vision Blueprint, which is the document that will serve as the plan for the future of the fishery. That document is broken up into four strategic goals of science, management, communication and governance.

That is the attachments that you received in your briefing book, 10A through D. Those are the current draft documents as of the March council meeting; so there will be some additional revisions made to those documents based on the council's input at the March meeting. From December 2014 to June of this year, we're reviewing those draft strategic goal documents. Like I said, we met in March and did that.

Then at the June council meeting we are going to reviewing those kind of final draft versions to get ready to take those out for public input. That is kind of what I really wanted to focus our discussion on today is to get your feedback on how we should be getting public input. Given the investment that we put in last year for doing all those port meetings and the public expectation, we're going to come back give them an update and give them an opportunity to provide more input on what the council has come up with.

That's going to happen this summer; so between June and September. Then in September the council will review the public input and in October we're going to have another one of those two-day special council member visioning workshops. That is where they will take the information from the public input and start to prioritize the short- and long-term goals and objectives that they want to work on.

The short-term action items will actually be developed into the next snapper grouper amendment. I'm not sure if 39 is the right number at this point because things keep changing. In December is when the council will take a look at that final vision blueprint and approve it as the blueprint going forward. The idea, of course, is that this would hopefully be reviewed on an annual basis, perhaps every December, to kind of modify and adjust and change the blueprint as the fishery changes over time.

This is kind of the three approaches that we're thinking about doing for public input this summer, kind of a three-pronged approach of webinars – and these webinars would actually be tailored and focused around each of the strategic goals in the blueprint. We'd have one week where we'd have a couple of webinars that week just about science; and then the next week we would have couple of webinars just about management, and so on and so forth.

That would be just a staff-facilitated kind of Q&A kind of presentation on a webinar and then folks can tune in and ask questions and just have a facilitated discussion and we'll take that public input that way. Then we also want to try this comment-station approach, which is what we're going to be doing next week. We're hoping that goes smoothly next week.

The comment station I guess could kind of be considered like what we did last night with the workshop where there is a staff person here in Charleston online giving a presentation about the vision blueprint; and then we'll have these comment stations set up throughout region on different nights where fishermen can come and sit with a staff member or a council member, or both, and listen into the webinar but also have a chance to interact one-on-one in person.

Then we will have in-person meetings as well is what we're hoping. The approach that we're thinking is that you know that every August is our round of public hearings; and given the current schedule, we're going to have a lot going to public hearing in August. My question to you is, first, what do you think about these three different types of approaches?

Do you think that is reasonable to get back to all the stakeholders that participated in the port meetings and this is enough different ways for them to participate that they can feel like they were able to be engaged. Then, secondly, how do you feel about timing these around the public hearings.

This is a draft. The locations have not been firmed up or anything like that, but this is kind of a draft schedule that we were thinking about with having listening stations and webinars starting in July. In August is when we have all these public hearings scheduled. The way it would work is one night we'd have public hearings in a location and then the next night we'd have a visioning in-person meeting.

The idea was that we didn't really want there to be confusion about what amendments were being presented and sought for public comment and then the long-term vision for the fishery. This is kind of a draft schedule. The first week of August we would be in the South Carolina area and then the second week in northern South Carolina and in North Carolina, and then the third week in Florida; and then the last week in Georgia. I would be happy to take comments.

MR. FEX: I was just curious back up in July; are you planning meetings then, webinars?

MS. VON HARTEN: Yes.

MR. FEX: Okay, that is our vermilion opening so you will probably get less commercial guys. I hate to be the mean guy to say that, but I'll definitely tell you I won't be attending that one, probably.

MS. VON HARTEN: And we're also struggling with scheduling our public hearings and the opening of the spiny lobster season in the Keys and then also I believe the South Florida Issues Amendment will be going out for public hearing possibly, maybe, in August as well. That's why we're trying to plan as many opportunities, different types of venues and approaches that hopefully we'll get everybody.

MR. COVINGTON: Thanks, Ms. Von Harten. I really appreciate all the work staff has put into this. I've been involved with this process I guess going on about ten years now. I'm pretty young and maybe I've got a different perspective. A lot of the folks that I talk with, a lot of my contemporaries and a lot of folks that were I guess my mentors coming up and learning to fish, learning about our community, and not just locally in South Carolina where I fish out of.

I fish some out of Florida and some out of North Carolina, too, but mostly South Carolina. I came on during that time when MPAs were being discussed and then came the red snapper. We were looking at 9,500 square miles of bottom fishing closure. I realized all of a sudden I had a lot more in common with my neighbors to the south and my neighbors to the north. I kind of kept in touch with those folks. There has been a theme that I've seen with a loss of credibility with the fishery managers.

I was really disheartened to see some of the things that are in this plan, as a stakeholder-driven plan. To see catch shares in there and to see ITQs in there, to see VMS, to see MPAs in there; what I'm afraid is going to happen is that when you have these stakeholder meetings and you reach out to the public; that is all you're going to hear about. I don't think that is a good thing.

I don't know if this panel needs to go on record again with opposition to VMS or go on record with opposition to catch shares. I don't know what is needed, but I'm just telling you right now it is like *deja vous*. You're going to go through it again where that is what you hear. You're not going to get the positive feedback you need on the issues that we all can work together on.

You will get buy-in on like the SMZs; like as I said earlier today, the targeted things that we can all come together and buy into because we see the need for it and we want to all help. We don't see the need for VMS; we don't see the need for catch shares. We see it as something that would destroy our fishery, and that is just where I'm coming from.

I don't know how else to help staff understand that, to help them understand that is the way the community feels by and large. When you get written feedback and you have 330 responses on VMS and only five are in favor and you have spoken feedback at five different locations on VMS back when you had Amendment 30 and you had none in support; every spoken comment was opposed.

To have it here in the stakeholder-driven vision blueprint is just something that really surprised me and it is really disheartening. I just want to throw that out there. Again, I appreciate all the efforts that have been put in this. It has obviously taken a great deal of thought, energy and effort. I don't want it to be seen as just an MPA, VMS and catch shares document, because that's not what it should be, and I don't think that is what you intended.

MR. DeMARIA: I agree with you on the catch shares and the VMS. I think it should be taken out because that's probably all you're going to hear about when you go to these meetings, but there are council members that are strongly in favor of this. It is almost like this council is being stacked with pro-catch share and VMS people. How you get them to agree to take it out I think is the problem, but I understand what you're saying. When you go to these meetings, that is what is going jump out at people.

MR. LORENZ: I see this a little different. Of course, I cut my teeth – most of my life has been in the corporate world where everything in the end you want to make money so it is always about a strategic plan. Then you have a strategy that is for the upper-level-most people to start feeling where they want to take things.

So with this, I would say there are folks in the council that would wish to have VMS, catch shares, that sort of thing. After that, others, others affected, other stakeholder or the people that actually do the work come up with what you'd call an operating plan of what is actually done. I think in a strategic plan, one of the things a lot of us would like to see is for the next five or maybe ten years where would the council be taking fisheries management.

So strategically you're being told here is what in the bucket of the things we think we want to work on. I don't see it as being a given; that it absolutely happens. We still go through the entire public review and democratic process where some of these things can be thrown out. For instance, catch shares do work in some fisheries. They don't work in a lot of others where they wouldn't work. The strategic plan just says they're going to be looked at; we're going to put people, money, resources, brain power against it.

We're going to aggravate some citizens on each side and in the end there is going to be a decision. Maybe some folks would be more comfortable and I'd like to see the council roll this out as we're trying to give you plan of what we really want to do over the years. The feedback, positive and negative, is very important in the process because it tells them where the council is eventually going to go operationally.

Right now what you might have had looking back is all of a sudden things just pop up. It becomes firefighting, whatever the most important issue of the year is. This allows a very long-term look, which I think can help in the process, which includes getting money for most of these programs. We continually hear with everything here, we can't get funding. You can if the folks in government that carry the purse strings actually know where they think the council may go with all this in the long term.

MR. JOHNSON: Wes, I agree with you as well. When I was chair of this group, I went out to Seattle for an electronic monitoring workshop, and I heard about all the great benefits of VMS. The one thing that stuck in my mind was they were very high-volume, for the most part, trawl fisheries where you were talking about metric tons of fish.

The cost recovery was a big issue that the industry shoulders that burden. For the South Atlantic for a mixed reef fish vertical line fishery, for the most part, VMS just didn't make sense to me. I tried to go in there with an open mind and to listen and learn, and I didn't see the benefit or the need. I think these electronic devices that we're talking about now are probably going to be the future.

Another problem I had with VMS was it didn't address the huge recreational sector that we have. It only burdens just a handful of participants. A lot of these areas in the country, they don't have these huge recreational fisheries that we have in the South Atlantic. It makes sense in Alaska to have VMS because there's not that many guys out there recreational fishing.

Catch shares has always been a very heated topic. You're right; the majority of the fishermen are dead set against it, but there are some people that want it for whatever reason, I'm not so sure. I agree with Wes; if it is in the document, that is what people are going to talk about. They're going overlook maybe some of the benefits. I don't know how you can remove it from the document.

Obviously, you can't, because I'm sure that at visioning there were people that said, "Hey, I think a catch share program would be good". They have a right to have their voice heard as well, I understand that. But I think this AP, we've talked about VMS and we've talked about catch shares. I know we've got some new people on it, but it never has been a very popular thing among this group.

MS. VON HARTEN: I hear your concerns and we've been hearing those concerns since these draft strategic goals have come out. The council is very sensitive to those concerns. One thing about these documents is they are draft documents; and that is the whole purpose of taking it out in draft form with everything that was brought to the table, including also what the council

members want to bring to the table. These documents include everything from the port meetings as well as what council members would like to see in their vision for the future of the fishery.

I just want to make that clear; and now is the time for you to tell us specifically these are things that we are not really in support of. Just because it is in the document, it doesn't necessarily mean, like you said, that this is going to be something that is implemented immediately or ever in the future.

It is just that these are the tools in the toolbox, and we want to have everything available to us in this document to help guide us down the road. Like I said, this would be reviewed on an annual basis, hopefully, so that it can be flexible and change over time as the fishery changes. Please bring those comments to the table. We have modified the language in there. I think you heard Gregg Waugh say today twice the council is not interested in exploring VMS now. There are other types of electronic monitoring besides VMS and that is what is in the document. Those types of things are a little different.

MS. MARHEFKA: Amber, I know what you're asking from us right now is to talk about your plan to take it out to the public; and from my perspective I think it looks good. I think because you have those things in there, you should get more public comment, which is always better. As far as your time frame and how you plan to do it, it looks great to me.

I would be remiss if I had this one moment while we have council members listening to do my normal bug for if we want a vision for this fishery, we need to know what this fishery looks like. We do not have a clear social and economic picture of what this fishery looks like. We haven't had a study done the mid-nineties.

You don't know the average age of the fishermen. You don't know where their income is falling. You don't know, I don't know, all those things that were in that Rhodes Study in the mid-nineties. It needs to be looked again and it needs to be updated because I don't know how you take a fishery somewhere when you don't know what the fishery looks like.

We have biological parameters with the ABC. We are handed that. With the exception of some spawning closures, most of that is a done deal. Every other way we manage this fishery is for social and economic benefits. How can we do that without a complete social and economic picture? I know that is not that what you're asking, but I have a microphone and I'm not afraid to use it.

There are council members here listening. I really think we need to utilize the Socioeconomic SEP more in the future; and if we can find some money to update that study, it would just make me so happy. Then I feel like we can look at what we need to do and those tools should be there and then we'll decide how to use them.

DR. DUVAL: I appreciate the comments that have been made around the table, concerns about VMS and catch shares and MPAs. I just echo what Amber said with regard to the fact that these draft vision blueprints include everything that we heard. There are things that are going to be unpopular and not just catch shares or VMS or MPAs. There are going to be other unpopular ideas

as well. Again, make sure you bring sure you bring that comment when we go out to get this public input. I couldn't agree more with Kerry.

I think we have some strategies in there that address acquisition of social and economic data. I think the one thing I'll put in a plug for is that those studies are only as good as the data that goes into them; so that relies on all of you sitting around this table providing accurate information as well. It is give and take.

I hear fishermen saying researchers are being nosy, they don't want to provide that information, but the only way that we know how management actions are going to impact you guys is if you do provide that information. Just keep that in mind as well in order for us to have an accurate picture socially and economically.

I think we all know here that the fishery has changed socially and economically as a result of management actions. It is being able to quantify that; because just because you put a number on a page that says that someone says, oh, well, that's only 5 percent or 6 percent of an income – well, how would you like it if – you know, it's like January and February paychecks went away.

That is what has happened for a lot of people over the past however many years with management measures is you've lost paychecks. I think the magnitude of the number is not necessarily always the issue. It is how it actually impacts people in their communities that you need to keep in mind; and that is the kind of thing that we've asked for in terms of cumulative social and economic impact analyses.

They tend to focus just on the actions being taken within this fishery but, really, we need a much more holistic view. Nobody participates in just one fishery anymore. I don't know of any fishermen who do. People participate in multiple fisheries, so actions being taken in HMS fisheries, in the mackerel fishery affects people who are participating in the snapper grouper fishery. I'm rambling on a bit, but there is a huge lift, but I absolutely agree with you and it depends on good information from you folks.

MR. FEX: To your point, Kerry, it seems like on our logbooks we have that economical analysis on the bottom of the thing now; and I've had to do it for the last three or four years. It is kind of neat because I look at it now and say, well, dang, that is pretty much what has happened to me and how my trips have gone up maybe or kept the same; my profits have gone down. It is kind of neat that the council has gotten that information to be helpful to do what you're saying, because a lot of times people say, well, I'm losing money or whatever, but at least that is proof.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, but what I'm talking is more than that, and this is what I want them to hear. How many fishermen are now college educated? How many fishermen have internet in their homes? Again, average age; do their children plan on going into the fishery? Those sorts of things help steer the fishery.

You're going to build management plans and maybe whether or not someone went to college makes them – and Mark didn't so I'm not making a plug – makes them behave differently or makes

them more likely to participate in studies. There is just so many factors – I mean, the bigger picture.

We have trip level economic data and I know every amendment – like Michelle said they have to analyze how that amendment affected it. But the big picture of who these people are in the fishery; are they male or female? Has it shifted since 1996? I think that's the kind of information I think you need to have to know how to tailor management/

MR. HULL: I think that we should all be very thankful for the opportunities that we have to participate and to comment as stakeholders in this fishery under the federal management plan that we have through the council. We should be thankful and utilize it and encourage everybody to get involved as much as possible.

We do have those opportunities and we are involved in this AP; the opportunities that we have to influence and that is only because we are managing our fisheries under the current federal management plan so we should be cautious on some of those ideas about transferring these decisions over to the state level where we may not have these opportunities.

MS. VON HARTEN: And that is why I encourage everybody to please get the word out about these meetings when they come up and all the different opportunities people are going to have to participate and provide comments. If they see something in the document they don't like, bring a solution to the table.

It is not too late for that and that is what we're looking for, still, is we need solutions. We need ideas of things that you all do want to see. Also, the Socioeconomic Panel is going to be looking at these draft goals at their meeting in just a couple of weeks, and so hopefully we can get some feedback from them on the types of things that you're talking about. Staff is going to be working on some portfolio work for the fishery coming up soon that the council requested.

MR. JOHNSON: Just one more thing to Kerry's point that would be interesting for me is it would be really interesting to see how many fishermen; that is really what they do and that's all they do. I've heard from some people on this AP about, well, that guy is a fireman, that guy does this, he does that. How many of us are still just fishermen; that's how we pay all our bills?

That would be a really interesting thing to break out the fishery and just see how many people are really – they're into something else; they're making money here and making money there in other businesses and they fish; and just to see, because I think you're going to find a very small number that are just really fishermen anymore.

MR. VON HARTEN: And just if you guys have any ideas about specific locations; if anybody is willing to host another meeting again. That worked really well I think the last time with the port meetings is have you all help us organize the meetings, and it wasn't just at a hotel. We're open to that approach again so just e-mail me. You guys know how to get hold of me and you can give us some feedback.

MR. ATACK: Okay, that is the last item on the agenda. Usually if there are other people that have some other business they want to bring up right now, I guess we have a couple minutes. We're really short on time.

MR. FEX: I just have a general question. One of things up there was talking about regional management. I know Don has talked about the Keys are different than our area. Northern Florida is probably different than the Carolinas in the way we fish. I've kicked this around with the people up in my area. I didn't know how you guys feel about separating management, maybe South Florida to North Florida and the Carolinas would be different. I just want a show of hands yea or nay, hell no.

MR. JOHNSON: I think they ought to take the Florida Keys, somewhere down there, and just make its own place. It would make a lot of people in South Florida very, very happy.

MR. ATACK: Is that a motion?

MR. JOHNSON: No, just a thought, but it is a totally different world down there, and I don't know where you would make those breaks. Maybe some time in the future there will be funding for a Keys Council.

MR. ATACK: Yes; and to that point; another reason I wanted to separate the Carolinas from Northern Florida, it seems like we have arguments that the Florida guys are catching all the fish, the Carolina guys are catching the fish, we've got management issues. I'm throwing that out because I know we all think we can manage it better so I was just making that point. It is just a show of hands yea or nay, please; that is all I'm asking.

MR. JOHNSON: I can't support it because when you start dividing up the pie, it gets really small and then you get into an allocation issue. Then you've got boats that are in Florida that go up and fish off the Carolinas. I don't see how you could make it fair; but in the South Florida instance I think you probably could.

It is probably the only part of our region that you could; but between South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, I'm not sure how you could ever really make – you're not going to make everybody happy. I remember a discussion here about black sea bass. They were talking about doing that, but they were showing the total ACL; and when they broke it out into recreational landings, all of a sudden Terrell was like, oh, that don't look so good now for North Carolina because Florida and Georgia had a lot of landings. You have to be careful.

MR. MUNDEN: I will make it very brief. In North Carolina we have a lot of species that are managed by the states, and the state shares is the tough part, Robert, deciding who gets what slice of the pie. For the most part, for the fisheries that we have state management authority for, such as black sea bass, scup, summer flounder and bluefish, even spiny dogfish, those catch shares were initially determined when the FMP was developed and they looked at catch history.

North Carolina was very fortunate because it had a better data collection system than the other states, for the most part. In many cases we got a larger percentage of the allocations than other

states, but they were all very, very hard-fought battles. But going back to what I said earlier today about black sea bass, the key partner in the state-by-state shares for the most part was the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

We had complementary plans with them or joint plans, and that is lacking, from my perspective, anyway, for almost all of the fisheries that are managed by the South Atlantic Council. It is a great system. Don't get me wrong; it is a great system. In the case of summer flounder, North Carolina gets a share and our state can decide what to do with it. We set seasons, size limits, harvest limits and whatnot, but it takes a tremendous amount of effort on the part of the state fisheries managers. It also takes a cooperative attitude by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

They have to trust the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to hold the states in line, and that is exactly what happens with the management of the stocks that I have mentioned. I support it but it is not an easy road to go down.

MR. ATACK: All right, I have one concern that a fisherman brought to me to bring up at this meeting. He is concerned about some of the deep-water fishing recreational. They do the multi-hook fishing in deep water. I guess he is seeing snowy grouper and the yellowedges are targeted. He is recommending that we change the regulations so that it is like a one-hook requirement for the recreational sector to fish in deeper than 350 feet of water.

His concern is that you've got a one snowy grouper limit, and then also they're going after yellowedge. If it is a three bag limit for yellowedge, they kill a lot of snowy grouper fishing to get the three bag limit on the yellowedge. He has got two recommendations. One is to make the one-hook rule on recreational for deeper than 350 feet. I want to see what the rest of the panel thought of his two suggestions. Any discussion?

MR. DeMARIA: I hear the same concerns in the Keys. I hear recreational fishermen complaining, well, I put down five hooks and I bring up four snowies and they're all dead; what am I supposed to do? Well, that is a lot like going duck hunting. We've got a duck in South Florida, Florida mallard or model duck, and you're only allowed one per day; and just emptying your shotgun into a flight of five or six of them and knocking down three or four and then bitching and complaining that you can't keep all of them because they're all dead.

I mean a real conservation-minded guy would just pick out the singles and shoot them. I think the same logic ought to apply to some of the deep-water fish, too. Why do they need to put down so many hooks if they can only keep one fish? It doesn't make a lot of sense to me. It is supposed to be sport fishing, too. You're not out there meat fishing.

MR. COVINGTON: A concern I would have with articulating something to address that concern would be daytime sword fishing and some people might want to have a trailer hook, so they might technically have more than one hook. Maybe something else to look at that would be more effective would be limiting the type of gear you used; a manual reel versus power-assisted reel, I don't know. I'm not sure that I would want to go from an unlimited number of hooks to one hook. Maybe I would be supportive of a two-hook limit. I haven't really thought about it all that much.

MR. DeMARIA: I think we're just talking about the snapper grouper fishery and not the swordfish fishery. I've also had some recreational guys express a concern about the use of electric reels and whatnot in the recreational fishery. They thought it should be just manual only.

MR. COVINGTON: The problem we have – well, it is not a problem – is we're pulling up wreckfish daytime sword fishing and that is a snapper grouper species. What was my intent; what was I really fishing for? Was I fishing for a day-maker wreckfish that I can keep, what is it, one month out of the year. I think I can keep one per vessel now as a recreational or was I daytime sword fishing? It is just a concern that I think we need to address with any sort of changes.

MR. JOHNSON: I do see Don's point. We really don't have a recreational fishery for snowy grouper. One fish a boat is not really a fishery. I know it is supposed to be a bycatch fishery, but it turned into a directed fishery. I'm not saying that you shouldn't have the right to go harvest that one fish. I'll make a motion that the council does look at a way to address discard mortality specific to gear, gear-specific; in other words, number of hooks and let them fight about it, maybe.

One would probably be preferable. If two is something they think is doable, so be it. It is a valid point. You've got four guys deep-dropping with two or three hooks a rig, the chances of them throwing back a bunch of dead snowy grouper are pretty high – and blueline tilefish now, which is going to be one fish per boat.

MR. ATACK: And it would be like deeper than 350 feet of water or some type of depth.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes; it would have be deeper than, say, 350.

MR. DeMARIA: I'll second that.

MR. ATACK: Okay, any discussion?

MR. COVINGTON: Could we not also look at descending devices and things of that nature?

MR. FEX: Yes; we sent that motion to the council two AP meetings ago, and I don't think it went anywhere. A lot of times it is a feel-good measure. It is one of them things that you don't know if they're using them or not. I figured I would let you know. It isn't like it is deaf ears or whatever.

DR. DUVAL: Kenny, just to that point, we've done research with descending devices. That was one of the last things Chip was doing before he left to come work for the council. That work has continued in North Carolina. The report is final or being finalized in terms of looking at the different descending devices.

Then also North Carolina Sea Grant has sort of – they have a cooperative effort going on with Virginia Sea Grant looking at the use of descending devices and they have actually booked the Ms. Hatteras, which is a headboat off Hatteras, to go look at the use of these different descending devices as kind of a citizen science measure. Please don't think it is falling on deaf ears.

MR. JOHNSON: I just want to make sure that specifies the recreational sector.

MR. ATACK: Okay, any other discussion? I'll read the motion. **The council look at ways to look at recreational gear-specific number of hooks, one or two per line; basically gear-specific ways to reduce discards deeper than 350 feet.** All in favor of the motion raise your hand; all opposed. **12 for and none against; the motion carries.**

Is there any other business that anybody wants to bring up? Okay, with the lack of any other business, I appreciate everybody's hard work and attention and suggestions and everything for the last day and a half. I'll adjourn the meeting.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 o'clock p.m., April 14, 2015.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Graham Transcriptions, Inc.
April 2015

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL

✓ Jim Atack, Chairman
111 SW 20th Street
Oak Island, NC 28465
910/520-8279
Jim.atack@ADM.com
(Recreational) 9/10, 12/13*

✓ Kenneth Fex, Jr., Vice-Chair
122 NE 38th Street
Oak Island, NC 28465
910/620-5847
kensurffex@gmail.com
(Commercial) 12/08, 6/11, 6/14*

Bill W. Cole, Jr.
406 Penrose Court
Greensboro, NC 27410
336/294-3919 (ph)
willardcole@me.com
(Conservation)
6/09, 9/12*

✓ Wesley Covington
41 Gasparilla Circle
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/330-3390 (ph)
wes.covington@gmail.com
(Recreational) 12/14*

✓ Don DeMaria
P.O. Box 420975
Summerland Key, FL 33042-0975
305/745-3045 (ph); 305/745-1235 (f)
dondemaria@aol.com
(Commercial)
3/90, 8/96, 3/00, 3/03, 3/06, 6/09*, 6/13*

✓ James Freeman
122 Springwood Dr.
Daytona Beach, FL 32119-1402
386/882-6151 (ph)
Cfreeman23@bellsouth.net
(Commercial) 12/13*

Rob Harris
3405 16th Terrace
Key West, FL 33040
305/587-6718 (ph)
rw_harris@msn.com
(Rec/Charter) 6/09, 9/12*

✓ Judy L. Helmey
124 Palmetto Drive
Savannah, GA 31410
912/897-4921 (ph)
Fishjudy2@aol.com
(Charter) 12/14*

✓ James G. Hull, Jr.
1258 John Anderson Drive
Ormond Beach, FL 32176
386/547-1254 (ph)
386/615-9333 (f)
hullsseafood@aol.com
(Commercial/Dealer/Retail)
12/13*

✓ Robert Johnson
804 Shore Drive
St. Augustine, FL 32086
904/794-2628 (ph)
jlffishing@bellsouth.net
(Charter/Headboat) 3/10*, 6/13*

Fredrick L. Kruse
1397 Floyd Drive NE
Townsend, GA 31331
912/832-3166 (ph)
darlenekruse@hotmail.com
(Commercial) 6/13*

✓ Robert Lorenz
1509 Meridian Terrace
Wilmington, NC 28411
910/232-4755 (ph)
rjlorenz@ec.rr.com
(Recreational) 12/14*

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL (continued)

✓ Milton Mathis
124 Gloria Dawn Road
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/269-8790 (ph)
(Commercial) 12/14*

✓ Wayne Mershon
1159 Palmer Place
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/421-6440 (ph)
kenyonseafood@sc.rr.com
(Commercial/Dealer) 12/14*

✓ David P. Moss
212 Via Milan Terrace
Davie, FL 33325
305/384-0247 (ph)
david@smoss.com
(Recreational) 12/13*

✓ 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*

✓ Scott A. Osborne
602 SE Prineville Street
Port St. Lucie, FL 34983
772/313-7972 (ph)
Osbornescott23@gmail.com
(Commercial) 12/06, 9/10*, 12/13*

✓ Kerry O'Malley Marhefka
Abundant Seafood
976 Houston Northcutt Blvd.
Suite 3-141
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
843/452-7352 (ph)
abundantseafood@gmail.com
(Commercial/Dealer) 6/14*

✓ Rodney Smith
265 South Robert Way
Satellite Beach, FL 32937
321/750-3374 (ph); 321/777-4928 (f)
irlcoast@gmail.com
(Media) 12/08, 6/11, 9/12*

✓ Richard J. Stiglitz
1068 Lemon St.
Okeechobee, FL 34974
863/467-0234 (ph); 863/467-0234 (f)
ladycrys@aol.com
(Commercial) 6/09, 9/12*

✓ 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*

Robert Thompson
5241 Hwy 17 Bus.
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/602-0910
Capt.Thompson@gmail.com
(Charter/Headboat) 6/11*, 6/14*

AT-LARGE

Emily Helmick
Pew Charitable Trusts
454 Dover Road
Tequesta, FL 33469
561/670-3397 (ph)
ehelmick@pewtrusts.org
(NGO) 12/14*

✓ 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)

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2015 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

COUNCIL CHAIR

✓ Ben Hartig
9277 Sharon Street
Hobe Sound, FL 33455
772/546-1541 (ph)
mackattackben@att.net

VICE-CHAIR

✓ Dr. Michelle Duval
NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell St.
(PO Box 769)
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/808-8011 (ph);
252/726-0254 (f)
michelle.duval@ncdenr.gov

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

✓ 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

✓ Anna Beckwith
1907 Paulette Road
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/671-3474 (ph)
AnnaBarriosBeckwith@gmail.com

Zack Bowen
✓ P.O. Box 30825
Savannah, GA 31410
912/398-3733 (ph)
fishzack@comcast.net

W. Chester Brewer
250 Australian Ave. South
Suite 1400
West Palm Beach, FL 33408
561/655-4777 (ph)
WCBLAW@aol.com

✓ Mark Brown
3642 Pandora Drive
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29466
843/881-9735 (ph); 843/881-4446 (f)
capt.markbrown@comcast.net

✓ Chris Conklin
P.O. Box 972
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/543-3833
conklinsafmc@gmail.com

✓ Jack Cox
2010 Bridges Street
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/728-9548
Dayboat1965@gmail.com

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

LT Morgan Fowler
U.S. Coast Guard
510 SW 11th Court
Fort Lauderdale FL 33315
morgan.m.fowler@uscg.mil

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2015 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)
doughaymans@gmail.com

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

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

Charles 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

JOEY BALLENGER
WILL HEYMAN

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
COUNCIL STAFF

Executive Director

Robert K. Mahood
robert.mahood@safmc.net

Deputy Executive Director

✓ Gregg T. Waugh
gregg.waugh@safmc.net

Public Information Officer

Kim Iverson
kim.iverson@safmc.net

Science and Statistics Program Manager

John Carmichael
john.carmichael@safmc.net

✓ **Fishery Outreach Specialist**

Amber Von Harten
amber.vonharten@safmc.net

SEDAR Coordinators

Dr. Julie Neer - julie.neer@safmc.net
✓ Julia Byrd - julia.byrd@safmc.net

✓ **Senior Fishery Biologist**

Roger Pugliese
roger.pugliese@safmc.net

✓ **Administrative Officer**

Mike Collins
mike.collins@safmc.net

✓ **Fishery Scientist**

Myra Brouwer
myra.brouwer@safmc.net

Financial Secretary

Debra Buscher
deb.buscher@safmc.net

✓ **Fishery Biologist**

Dr. Mike Errigo
mike.errigo@safmc.net

Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator

Cindy Chaya
cindy.chaya@safmc.net

✓ **Fisheries Social Scientist**

Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net

✓ **Purchasing & Grants**

Julie O'Dell
julie.odell@safmc.net

✓ **Fishery Scientist**

Chip Collier
Chip.Collier@safmc.net

✓ **Staff Economist**

Dr. Brian Chevront
brian.chevront@safmc.net

PLEASE SIGN IN

In order to have a record of your attendance at each meeting and your name included in the minutes, we ask that you sign this sheet for the meeting shown below.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel: Monday, April 13, 2015

NAME & SECTOR/ORGANIZATION: AREA CODE & PHONE NUMBER: EMAIL ADDRESS: MAILING ADDRESS:

Walter Bubley SCNR 843-953-9810 bubleyw@dnr.sc.gov

Lea Dunnum DEU 305-393-0834

Amy Dukes SCNR 813-953-9245 AmyD@dnr.sc.gov

Kyle McCann LGL 979-846-7000 kmccain@lgl.com

Will Heyman LGL 179-846-7000 wheyman@lgl.com

Lara Clarke PRU 631-379-6718 lclarke@pru.hustis.org

Michelle Duval NCDNF — —

Jody Balkinger SLDNR — —

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
843-571-4366 or Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10

PLEASE SIGN IN

In order to have a record of your attendance at each meeting and your name included in the minutes, we ask that you sign this sheet for the meeting shown below.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel:
Tuesday, April 14, 2015

NAME & SECTOR/ORGANIZATION:	AREA CODE & PHONE NUMBER:	EMAIL ADDRESS:	MAILING ADDRESS:
Marek Reichert SC-DNR-SSC	CHS		
Lara Clarke Pew	631-379-0718	lclark@prufts.org	
Trouw Smart SC-DNR	953-9224	smart@dmr.sc.gov	
Ann Duker SC-DNR	953-9365	Aduker@dmr.sc.gov	
Walker Bubley SC-DNR	953-9810	Bubley@dmr.sc.gov	
Leda Duvigneau DNR			
Andy Piland	252-216-9273	andy.piland@gmail.com	
Will Heyman	ON-FILE		
Bruce Keim	EKKEFA		
Steve English	772-236-4551		

SG AP 4/14/15 N. CHAS SC

Last Name	First Name	Email Address	Time In Session	City	State/Province	
Cardin	bob	finchaser357@aol.com	1 hour 4 minutes	ft p	Florida	fish
DeVictor	Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov	3 hours 16 minutes	St. Petersburg	Florida	other
H	e	ehelmick@pewtrusts.org	1 hour 43 minutes	Jupiter	Florida	ngo
Helles	Frank	fchelles@verizon.net	7 hours 58 minutes	Tampa	Florida	ngo
MaHOOD	Bob	robert.mahood@samc.net	7 hours	North Charleston	South Carolina	Run a Charter fishing operation for lionfish.
MacLauchlin	Karl	karl.maclauchlin@safmc.net	5 hours 15 minutes	North Charleston	South Carolina	Eating
Malinowski	Rich	rich.malinowski@noaa.gov	4 hours 8 minutes	St Pete	Florida	SERO
McGinn	Rebecca	littleriverfish@yahoo.com	1 hour 26 minutes	Little River	South Carolina	Commerical Fish House
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov	7 hours 50 minutes			
Neer	JULIE	julie.neer@safmc.net	4 hours 22 minutes	Chs	South Carolina	SEDAR
Sedberry	George	george.sedberry@noaa.gov	4 hours 59 minutes			
wyanski	david	wyanskid@dnr.sc.gov	5 hours 8 minutes	Charleston	South Carolina	State gov't biologist
Bonura	Vincent	SailRaiser25C@aol.com		Fort Lauderdale	Florida	commercial
C	M	mac181@yahoo.com		MTP	South Carolina	SAF
Gore	Karla	karla.gore@noaa.gov				
L	I	captaindrifter@belleouth.net		Jupiter	Florida	Commercial, charter
Thompson	Robert	capt.thompson@gmail.com		Murrells Inlet	South Carolina	rec.comme ,charter

SG AP 4/13/15 N. CHAS SC

Last Name	First Name	Email Address	Time in Session	City	State/Province	How do you participate in South Atlantic
Ballenger	Joey	ballengerj@dnr.sc.gov	2 hours 15 minutes	Charleston	South Carolina	State Government Representative
Collier	Chip	chlp.collier@safmc.net	1 hour 23 minutes	Charleston	South Carolina	Staff
DeVictor	Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov	3 hours 2 minutes	St. Petersburg	Florida	other
FARMER	NICHOLAS	nick.farmer@noaa.gov	1 hour 44 minutes	ST PETERSBURG	Florida	Federal
Gregg	Kurtis	Kurtis.Gregg@noaa.gov	3 hours 28 minutes	West Palm Beach	Florida	Other
Helles	Frank	fchelles@verizon.net	2 hours 47 minutes	Tampa	Florida	ngo
Helmick	Emily	ehelmick@pewtrusts.org	2 hours 28 minutes	Tequesta	Florida	NGO
Herndon	Andrew	andrew.herndon@noaa.gov	2 hours 4 minutes			
L	I	captaindrifter@bellsouth.net	5 hours 29 minutes	Jupiter	Florida	Commercial, for hire/charter
MacLauchlin	Karl	karl.maclauchlin@safmc.net	3 hours 13 minutes	North Charleston	South Carolina	heyAmber
Mahood	Bob	robert.mahood@samc.net	3 hours 32 minutes	North Charleston	South Carolina	Dip net fish for red snapper.
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov	4 hours 2 minutes			
Oppenborn	James	oppenbornj@stlucieco.org	1 hour 45 minutes	Fort Pierce	Florida	I am a local government employee.
Peavey	David	peavdl@students.fscj.edu	30 minutes	Jacksonville	Florida	Rec, For hire
Reichert	Marcel	reicherm@dnr.sc.gov	1 hour 43 minutes	Charleston	South Carolina	SSC
Sedberry	George	george.sedberry@noaa.gov	2 hours 30 minutes			
Brewer	Chester	woblaw@aol.com				
Ellis	Robert	robert.ellis@noaa.gov		Washington	District of Columbia	Rec, Other
Gore	Karla	karla.gore@noaa.gov				
Waugh	Gregg	gregg.waugh@safmc.net		Charleston	South Carolina	Staff
c	m	mec181@yahoo.com		mtp	South Carolina	admin