

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL

**Crowne Plaza
North Charleston, SC**

April 26-27, 2016

SUMMARY MINUTES

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Members:

Jim Attack, Chairman
James Freeman
Scott Buff
Robert Lorenz
Wayne Mershon
Red Munden
Kerry O'Malley-Marhefka
Dr. Todd Kellison
Deidra Jeffcoat
Scott Osborne
Don DeMaria

Kenny Fex, Vice-Chairman
Rusty Hudson
Robert Johnson
Andy Piland
Richard Stiglitz
Manny Herrera
Robert Thompson
Jimmy Hull
David Moss
Dave Snyder

Council Members:

Dr. Michelle Duval
Mel Bell
Mark Brown

Zack Bowen
Dr. Roy Crabtree
Charlie Phillips

Council Staff:

Gregg Waugh
Dr. Brian Cheuvront
Amber Von Harten
Myra Brouwer
Dr. Mike Errigo
Julie O'Dell

John Carmichael
Mike Collins
Kim Iverson
Chip Collier
Julia Byrd

Observers/Participants:

Paul Rudershausen

Additional observers attached

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Crowne Plaza, North Charleston, South Carolina, April 26, 2016, and was called to order by Chairman Jim Attack.

MR. ATTACK: I would like to welcome everybody to the April meeting of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting. We've got some new faces here, and I think we've got a new transcriber, and so I would like to remind everybody when we talk today during the meeting to please say your name first, so that when they transcribe it later, they will make sure the comments are associated with the correct person. I would like to start maybe with Rusty. If you just kind of introduce yourself and where you are and what you do. Then we'll go around the table with everybody.

MR. HUDSON: Rusty Hudson, Directed Sustainable Fisheries, consultant to the East Coast Fisheries Section.

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

MR. HULL: Jimmy Hull, commercial industry, seafood restaurant, seafood market, and vessels.

MR. DEMARIA: Don DeMaria, commercial fishing, Key West, Florida.

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

MR. LORENZ: Bob Lorenz, recreational fishing, Wilmington, North Carolina.

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

MS. JEFFCOAT: Deidra Jeffcoat, for-hire, Savannah, Georgia.

MR. ATTACK: Jim Attack, spear fisherman, North Carolina.

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

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

MS. MARHEFKA: Kerry Marhefka, seafood dealer and wife of commercial fisherman.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. OSBORNE: Scott Osborne, South Florida, commercial.

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

MR. ATACK: I would thank everybody and welcome to the meeting. We will start off with Myra and where we are on the amendments that are under development, but, first, I would like to approve the agenda and approve the minutes.

MS. MARHEFKA: I will make a motion to approve the agenda and approve the minutes.

MR. ATACK: Thank you. It's seconded. All in favor; any opposed. The motion carries.

MS. BROUWER: Before we move off of the approval of the agenda, there may need to be some switching around. Paul Rudershausen, who is our speaker this morning, I have not yet seen him. I'm not sure where he is. If he doesn't show up, then we will have to proceed, and the presentation on the black sea bass pot selectivity will have to be postponed until he arrives.

If everybody is okay with that, then what I would like to do is give you first an overview of what amendments are being developed and the ones that have been submitted and where they are and all of that good stuff. I am going to go through things a little bit quickly, but if you want to stop me and have questions about a specific amendment, please go ahead and do that. This is your Attachment 1. Paul is here.

Okay, and so starting out with Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16, this one is the one that addressed the closure that was put in place for the black sea bass pots to protect right whales, and the amendment was submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service in March, and my understanding is that rulemaking on this amendment can't really proceed until NMFS Protected Resources completes a biological opinion on the snapper grouper fishery, and so that is ongoing. There may be some things that can move along in the rulemaking process, like maybe the proposed rule, but it's going to take a little while, and, of course, this is an amendment that affects just the thirty-two folks that have the black sea bass pot endorsements.

The next one is Snapper Grouper Amendment 33. This one was joint with Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 7, and it's one that addresses transport of fillets from the Bahamas through the EEZ and into the U.S. This amendment was discussed at the March meeting. We had the Law Enforcement AP get together and talk about it and make sure that everybody is onboard, especially Florida, obviously. They're the ones that are going to be addressing some of these regulations, and so the Law Enforcement AP had a good discussion about it.

They agreed that enforcing the regulations was going to require a good bit of outreach and education, and so the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission is putting out a rule that is expected to be final this summer. One of the things the LEAP was concerned about is the amendment makes

it so that two fillets are considered one fish, but they were saying what happens if folks decide to cut up a large fillet into smaller pieces for storage purposes, if they don't have a big cooler, and then they're going to get in trouble because they have more than what's allowed. That's one of the things that I remember the LEAP talked about. Again, it's going to require some outreach and education to make sure everybody understands the regulations. This one was effective in January of this year.

Then we have Snapper Grouper Amendment 34. This one addressed inconsistencies in accountability measures, not just for snapper grouper species, but for other species, and so the council, when Magnuson was reauthorized and they to put in ACLs and accountability measures and all that good stuff, it ended up being that we ended up with accountability measures that were not compatible across FMPs, and so this amendment took care of that, and this one was effective in February of this year.

Amendment 35 is one that contains an action to remove four species from the snapper grouper management unit, and it also includes an action that clarifies the regulations for golden tilefish commercial longline endorsements and who can participate or who can actually take advantage of the 500-pound trip limit, and so the council's intent was for the longline fleet to fish on their 4,000-pound trip limit on 75 percent of the ACL, and then the hook and line commercial guys could fish on the 25 percent of the ACL, under a 500-pound trip limit, and so this amendment basically makes that clear.

This one is still undergoing rulemaking. The last thing I heard is that the final rule package I think is going up to NMFS, and so we can probably expect regulations to be effective in the next couple of months for this one. Any questions so far? Okay.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 36, you guys are very familiar with this one. We talked about it for a couple of meetings. It's the one that puts in place the spawning SMZs, and so I'm not going to spend a lot of time going through what's included, and this one is -- The council approved it for submission at the March meeting. It is still being edited, and so the plan is to submit it to the agency before the June meeting. Normally, it will take six months or more for things to become effective, and so we can expect these SMZs maybe to come online in the fall, towards the end of this year.

Then, as you know, as part of the SMZs and area management, the council has developed these system management plans that contain outreach and research components, and there is two of them. One of them is for the SMZs, the spawning SMZs, and so that's being submitted along with Amendment 36, and then the council approved the system management plan for the existing deepwater MPAs, and they approved that for submission in March.

We are going to be talking in a lot of detail about Snapper Grouper Amendment 41. This is mutton snapper, and so we'll get to it later in the morning. That one is early on in the development, and then the other one that you guys will hear a lot about is hogfish. You've already seen this one. This one is a little bit further along, and so we'll spend some time this morning going through the various actions in this amendment.

Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 25 is one of that the council had intended to move quickly. It includes an action to increase the ACL for blueline tilefish and change the management

measures, and so the council actually chose a three-per-person limit. Currently, as you know, there is a one-per-vessel limit, just May through August, for the recreational, and then they upped the trip limit to 300 pounds and increased the ACL.

This amendment was submitted in March, and we are hoping that regulations are going to be effective probably by the end of July, and so this is -- Some folks are concerned about this one, because they are -- The tilefish season for the recreational sector is going to be very short this year, and so I'm keeping tabs on this one, trying to figure out where it is and how quickly it's going to move along.

This amendment also includes the action to increase the bag limit for black sea bass to seven per person, and it also modifies the fishing year for yellowtail snapper, which is another action that the council really wanted to see happening quickly. Everybody is watching this one pretty closely, and so I will keep you guys updated.

Then we have the usual generic amendments. Currently, we're working on one -- This one is a commercial logbook amendment. John is the lead on that, and so he may have some more details on this one when he's here tomorrow, but there is a pilot study that was -- I don't know if it's been completed or it's still ongoing. This one is taking a little while.

Then the other one is -- There is CE-BA 3. That has been in the lineup for a long time. It still contains an action to address bycatch, and I'm not quite sure how this one is going to proceed, whether it is eventually going to become an amendment. The agency, NMFS, is doing a bycatch strategy and issuing guidance on bycatch, and so we're sort of, I think, waiting to see what comes out of that initiative, to see whether the council needs to proceed with this amendment or not. This one is kind of in limbo.

Then here is the for-hire logbook amendment. This is one that you guys have also talked about, and you will get to discuss it some more tomorrow, I think, when John Carmichael is here. He is the lead person on that one, and this is the one that would require -- It would change the frequency of reporting and it would put in place an electronic reporting system for the charter fleet, and it would line up the frequency of reporting with what's already been put in place for the headboats.

I think, right now, what's happening is there is some interest in making sure that the data elements that are going to be included in the items that need to be reported are compatible, and all the agencies that are going to be using this information are happy with that, and so there's some work that needs still to be done to tweak that and make sure it's all good. That's a quick overview of what's been going on with Snapper Grouper FMPs. Does anybody have any questions? No? Okay.

The next item on the agenda is a presentation, and Paul is here to give that to you. This is a presentation that the Snapper Grouper Committee received at their March meeting, and they requested that Paul come back, and he graciously agreed to come back, and give it to you all.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: My name is Paul Rudershausen. I am with the North Carolina State University Department of Applied Ecology, and I work out of Morehead City, North Carolina. I wanted to thank Myra for inviting me back. Like she said, I gave this talk to the full council at their March meeting in Jekyll Island, and so I see a lot of familiar faces here.

If you have seen this talk before, you might pick up some things and some supplemental questions that you have for me since you saw it the first time, and so I'm not sure whether this is an interactive talk or if you want to reserve your questions for the end, but I would be happy to answer anything as I go through the slides, because it is a cumulative talk, and so if I lose you early on, I might lose you for the remainder of the presentation.

As the title slide says, I'm going to be talking about size selectivity by old and new trap mesh sizes in the U.S. South Atlantic black sea bass trap fishery. This is work that I conducted with my supervisor, Jeff Buckel, and Joe Hightower, who is now an emeritus professor at the university, and so I want to acknowledge their contributions and also the contributions of Tom Burgess. Many of you probably recognize that name. Tom served on the council and lives in Sneads Ferry, and he took the cooperative research trips for this project. Also, finally, I want to acknowledge North Carolina Sea Grant that funded this work as part of their Fishery Resource Grant Program.

The other thing I should say, before I leave this title slide, is that since I gave this talk to the council at their March meeting in Jekyll Island, it has now been completely approved and published in the *Journal of Fisheries Research*, and if you have any questions on this product, feel free to shoot me an email, and I can answer any supplemental questions you might have or send you a PDF of the published product.

I will dive right into the slides. You all probably know this, that the traps are the main commercial gear used to harvest bass in this region, and the major motivation for undertaking this study is that the mesh size regulations -- We determined, when we got the study funded in 2013, that those mesh size regulations were not evolving with fish size regulations, and so we wanted to have a closer look.

The two principle goals in the study were to determine whether larger trap mesh would better match the current fish size regulations and, secondly, to head off any future need to undertake a study like this to determine whether we could predict whether an optimal trap mesh size could be predicted from using the fish shape of black sea bass, specifically. Given any future regulatory changes to black sea bass sizes, can we go ahead and predict whether we can predict an optimal trap mesh size, and so we wouldn't have to repeat this study any time duration down the line if the black sea bass size changes again.

Like I did to the full council, I wanted to walk you through, because I'm going to be flip-flopping, unfortunately, for many of us, including myself, flip-flopping between English and metric units for this talk. As you know, before 2011, the minimum black sea bass total length commercially - I will just be in commercial parlance this morning and not recreational, and so the previous commercial minimum size limit before 2011 was ten inches, or 254 millimeters, total length. The current minimum is eleven inches, or 279 millimeters.

As you know, the current smallest legal black sea bass trap configuration, and I know that's a mouthful, but the current configuration has two sizes of trap mesh. The smallest of those sizes is inch-and-a-half on the square, or 37.5 millimeters, and the largest of those sizes is two inches, or 50.8 millimeters.

I'm going to walk you through, over the next half-dozen slides or so, the genesis of us electing to test two new larger trap mesh sizes, and those two new sizes that we tested and are not available -

- Unless we would ask for them, they are not available on any wider commercial market at the time being. The two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh is 57.2 millimeters on the square. The second new trap mesh size that we tested is two-and-a-half inches on the square, or 63.5 millimeters.

I just want to briefly walk you through the timeline that I told you about a couple of slides ago. In 1999, there was a regulation put in place by the council to have a 254-millimeter commercial minimum length limit, total length, for black sea bass. That was followed, in 2006, with this back-panel trap type, and I'm going to be using this word a lot in my presentation, the back-panel trap.

That's the minimally commercially legal trap configuration in our region. It's got five sides of the trap that are inch-and-a-half on the square, and that sixth side, opposite the haul rope, of two inches square, or 50.8 millimeters. Then, as you know, in 2011, the council adopted an eleven-inch, or 279-millimeter, minimum length limit for black sea bass, but, since that time, it hasn't followed up with any updated trap regulations in this fishery, and so that's why we had a look at this issue.

I thought this slide was informative to, again remind you all that -- This photo is informative to remind you all that it's important for this fishery to get the mesh size right for any one minimum size limit on black sea bass, because it's actually the meshes themselves of a trap, unlike, for example, a blue crab trap that's got stand-alone pull rings. In a black sea bass trap, it's the meshes themselves that allow the fish to cull themselves before the trap is pulled.

If the meshes are uniformly too small, you are retaining a needlessly high percentage of sub-legal fish. If the meshes are too large, you are losing a needlessly high percentage of fish that could be marketed, and so it's important to get that trap mesh size right, because, like I said, the meshes themselves are the culling devices in these gears.

Here goes the evolution of our thinking as far as how are we going to decide, for the 279-millimeter minimum length limit commercially black sea bass, what new mesh sizes to try to request from a leading wire mesh maker and then test those in the field? We used a black sea bass mesh shape, and so what I show you here is that green line going right through the head of that black sea bass in the photo. It's the diagonal of the mesh itself that is the largest opening of a mesh, and, ultimately, that diagonal measure ultimately dictates whether fish is going to be retained by the trap or egressed through any one trap mesh.

It's really the body depth. It's not the fish total length, per se. That's the regulatory measurement, of course, but it's the body depth of the fish that dictates whether it's going to be able to egress through a trap mesh or be retained by the trap mesh. It so happens, in a previous version of this investigation, that we published a simple morphometric linear relationship between body depth and total length, and it's explained by that simple algebraic equation at the bottom of the slide.

From that, we can then use that relationship to predict that a minimally-legal 279-millimeter, an eleven-inch, black sea bass is predicted to have a body depth of about seventy-seven millimeters, on average. If we then compare that seventy-seven-millimeter body depth -- The next step is to compare that seventy-seven-millimeter body depth of a commercially-legal black sea bass to the diagonal opening of this back panel, this two-inch trap.

The diagonal opening of any one mesh is in that little equation at the bottom right of the slide, and the actual diagonal opening of this largest trap mesh size of a back-panel trap is about sixty-six

millimeters, and that factors in the gauge wire thickness and also the vinyl coating of wire. What we have is about a -- It doesn't seem like a lot, but hopefully you will be convinced, at the end of my presentation, that we have a pretty substantial disconnect between the body depth of a black sea bass that's minimally legal and the diagonal opening of the largest mesh size available on the back-panel trap of about twelve millimeters.

What we can do with this fish shape relationship is say for any one square mesh size, which is the far-left column in this simple table here, for any one particular square mesh size, what's the 50th percentile of retention, as far as total length is concerned, of black sea bass, which is the far-right column.

Picture the 50th percentile, and I'm going to be talking about this a lot for the remainder of the presentation, is lining all the fish up in your catch and this is the median length of all the black sea bass in a catch. This 50th percentile of retention for this two-inch mesh, or 50.8-millimeter mesh, on the square is a 240-millimeter black sea bass, which is far less than the current minimum length limit of 279.

For these two novel mesh sizes that we elected to test, the two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh and the two-and-a-half-inch mesh, the 50th percentile of black sea bass length of retention are 272 millimeters, in the red circle in the top right of the slide, and 302 millimeters.

We use this predictive relationship to say, okay, this two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh on the square and this two-and-a-half-inch mesh on the square roughly bound the current minimum length limit of 279, and so let's go ahead and see if we can't find a mesh manufacturer to make the two-and-a-quarter and two-and-a-half-inch mesh, and we selected the two-and-a-quarter and two-and-a-half-inch mesh, as opposed to other increments of length, because we thought these would be logical increments, English increments, of length that might have broader applicability on a commercial market, and it might be more attractive, in the logical English increment of length, to elicit the manufacturer to make this for the broader market.

We undertook field sampling in Onslow Bay, with Tom Burgess's help, in 2013, and we fished five different trap mesh types. We fished what I will call a control trap that has uniform inch-and-a-half mesh throughout. It's important to fish a control trap in studies of gear selectivity, because it's the catch in a control trap by which the catch in the experimental gears are gauged.

The four experimental gears that we fished had the uniform thirty-seven-and-a-half-millimeter mesh with a 50.8-millimeter mesh back panel. That's that minimum legal trap mesh configuration that's still in this fishery. We fished a uniform 50.8-millimeter, or two-inch, trap. We fished that uniform 57.2-millimeter mesh trap, and that's the two-and-a-quarter-inch trap, and we fished the uniform sixty-three-and-a-half-millimeter trap, and that's the two-and-a-half-inch trap.

All the traps are a uniform mesh size except for that back-panel trap type, which was the smallest experimental trap type that we fished, the smallest average mesh size. Like I said, we fished in Onslow Bay in 2013, and it's important, when you're estimating gear selectivity of whatever species in whatever fishery, that you fish all the gear types simultaneously in the same area, and we did that in this study.

Briefly, our analysis were to fit a negative binomial catch model, where, again, the control trap is assumed to have a uniform 100 percent selectivity for the full size range over which you're estimating the selectivity by each of the experimental trap types. Then what we can do, using that catch data, is model retention probability as a simple logistic function, which is the middle of this graph, and a logistic function, as some of you may know, has two parameters, a Parameter A and a Parameter B. This is where this stuff gets useful.

We can take those Parameters A and B to estimate the 50th percentile of length of retention, or the L 50, the length at which 50 percent of individuals are retained, and also the L 10. What Jeff Buckel and Joe Hightower, my two co-authors, and myself determined the L 10 as, in this study, was an approximate length of first retention for each of the experimental trap types.

Then, at the bottom of the slide, we can compare some traditional metrics of catch amongst the four experimental trap types, the estimated mass of legal black sea bass, and the number of sub-legal black sea bass. We can compare mass of legal black sea bass among the experimental trap types, because this is, of course, how this species is marketed, and we compared mean number of sub-legal black sea bass, because this is how the fishers have to deal with the short fish. They've got to measure them if they're close, and so it takes it handling time. Mass of legal fish and mean number of sub-legal fish were compared amongst the four experimental trap types.

Now, diving into some results, this is a pretty thick slide, but I will distill it for you. This is the results of the modeling of catch rates. What I have across the X-axis of each of these graphs is total length in millimeters. It's kind of tough to see, but what I have across the Y-axis is the average catch per trap, and the catch per trap data are shown in the black dots for each of the five trap types that we fished.

From top to bottom, it's the control trap type; the back-panel trap type; the 50.8, or two-inch trap; the 57.2, or two-and-a-quarter-inch trap; and the 63.5, or two-and-a-half-inch trap. The black dots are the observed catch data, and the black line is the predicted catch data. The black line has got a couple of smaller gray lines. It might be tough to see, but, if you can see them, those are credible intervals, or the precision around the black line.

The big take-home message that I want to emphasize here is you can see as we increase total length on the X-axis and as we increase mesh size from top to bottom between the five panels, on average, the larger mesh sizes are not retaining the smaller fish and are retaining a higher proportion of larger fish, and so that is, if we have smaller mesh sizes, there is a greater preponderance for the trap to retain smaller fish than if we have larger trap mesh size.

Like I told you a couple of slides ago, from this catch model, we can take these two parameters, A and B, and graph the retention or selection, if you will. I use those terms synonymously. It's the same thing. We can graph the retention or selection of each of the experimental trap types as a simple logistic function, and any logistic function varies from zero, at its lowest, to one, at its highest, or zero to a hundred, if you prefer to use percentages instead of proportions.

What I have here is the retention probability, again that varies from zero to one, on the Y-axis of each of these four graphs. From top to bottom, I have retention probability of the back-panel trap type, the two-inch trap type, the two-and-a-quarter-inch trap, and, finally, at the bottom, again, is the two-and-a-half-inch trap.

A couple of things that I want to bring to your attention here is that the solid vertical black line in each of these graphs is the commercial minimum size limit of 279 millimeters, and so that doesn't change amongst the four graphs that you see here in this slide. What does change is the median length of retention of each of the four experimental trap types, and that's the dashed black line and the credible intervals, or the precision around that dashed line, are the light gray dashed lines around that dashed black line.

A couple of take-home messages here is that the median -- The L 50 value, the median L 50 value, the length at which 50 percent of individuals are retained, is less than the commercial length limit of 279 for the back-panel trap type, and also for the full two-inch trap type, 248 and 259 millimeters, respectively.

Then, when we switch from Panel C, the second panel from the bottom, this two-and-a-quarter-inch trap, this uniform two-and-a-quarter-inch trap, then the median L 50 value goes from less than the minimum size limit to now it's greater than the minimum size limit of 279. It's 292 millimeters, specifically, for that 57.2-millimeter mesh trap.

Then when we switch to the full two-and-a-half-inch trap at the very bottom slide, the median L 50 is far greater than the commercial minimum size limit. In fact, it's 326 millimeters total length, and so, again, the summary of this slide is L 50 is less than the commercial minimum for the back-panel and two-inch traps. L 50 is greater than the commercial minimum for the two-and-a-quarter and two-and-a-half-inch mesh traps.

MR. ATTACK: I have one questions. Earlier, you mentioned like an L 10 versus an L 50. Do you have the L 10?

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: That's a good question. I will get to that in a couple of slides. The next slide I want to show you is comparing catch rates amongst the four experimental trap types, and so ignore the control trap. It's not a legal trap anyway. It's just a trap by which we've got an EFP to examine selectivity of the experimental trap types. In this slide, I just have the catch rates amongst the four legal experimental trap types.

The top graph here is mean estimated mass of legal black sea bass. The bottom graph is mean numbers of sub-legal black sea bass. The colors, denoting the bars, are the same amongst the two graphs. The white bars are the back-panel trap type, the very light gray bars are the two-inch trap, the medium gray bars are the two-and-a-quarter-inch trap, and the dark gray bars in each of the graphs are the two-and-a-half-inch trap.

The big take-home message here is when we did a pairwise statistical examination of catch rates between the back-panel and each of the three larger experimental trap types, as far as mean mass of legal black sea bass, there was no statistical difference. In contrast, when we looked at numbers of sub-legal black sea bass in pairwise statistical testing, there was a significant decrease between the back-panel trap type and each of the three progressively larger trap mesh sizes.

If I have lost you up until now, this result should really, hopefully, break down, in addition to the previous slide, looking at catch rates, it should really help you break down how the traps are performing, the experimental traps are performing, relative to each other, because, again, we're

fishing on the same grounds here. We're not fishing different populations of fish. These traps are all set in the same vicinity and soaked for the same duration.

What I have here is just two categories of legal versus sub-legal fish. Each of the columns adds up to 100 percent, and I've got four columns of data for the back-panel trap type, the two-inch trap, the two-and-a-quarter-inch trap, and the two-and-a-half-inch trap, from left to right. What we have is roughly equal percentages of legal versus sub-legal fish for the back-panel trap type, but then, when we go to this full two-inch trap, about two-thirds of the individuals are legal. In the two-and-a-quarter-inch trap, about 95 percent of the individuals are legal. In the two-and-a-half-inch trap, almost all the individuals are legal fish, and so an increase in legal fish, percentages of legal fish, and a decrease in percentages of sub-legal fish as the average trap mesh size increases.

This speaks to the gentleman's question to my left about L 10 values. This is a difficult slide to follow, and so I'm going to spend a little bit of time on it, and please do ask me if you have questions at the end of the slide.

A couple of questions here. Was this 50th percentile of length of retention successfully predicted for each of the experimental trap types in our study? The answer is no, and I will come back to why in a second, but can fish morphometry, that is fish shape, predict optimal trap mesh sizes, given future regulatory changes to black sea bass minimum size limits? The answer is definitely a resounding yes with this study.

A lot of researchers ask for more money at their conclusion of their present study and say we need more money to do this or that, but this study does not need to be repeated in the future. This is really, really clean data compared to other studies that I've been engaged in, and so the black sea bass are what we call in the research world -- They are well-behaved, because the data is very clean.

What I have here on this X-Y graph is total length on the Y-axis and a center-to-center mesh size on the X-axis. The original fish shape, the body depth, the total length relationship, is shown in the solid black line there. In the gray line above it is what I call a squeezeability line. Referees, or reviewers, to our fishery research publications said that you really need to incorporate the fact that black sea bass, like other species, can compress themselves, to some degree, to try to get through trap mesh to try to escape from the trap.

That's shown in this compressability line. The black sea bass can compress themselves probably about 7 percent, based on other species in other trap fisheries. They can compress themselves to about 93 percent of their original body depth, and so that relationship, the total length to body depth, or mesh size relationship, if you will, is shown in that solid gray line.

Going into this study, we thought we were going to successfully predict an L 50, and what we instead predicted was a size at first retention, and so the size at first retention, by each of the three largest trap mesh sizes, the full two-inch, the full two-and-a-quarter, and the full two-and-a-half-inch traps, are shown in the solid black circles that bound themselves close to the black line, and so those are actually L 10 values.

We went into this study thinking we were going to predict median sizes at retention. Since we didn't factor in squeezeability, which this is happening. These fish are compressing themselves to

try to get out of the mesh. What we really predicted is an L 10, a size at first retention, as opposed to median retention.

I'm going to come back to that black square in a second, and I'm also going to come back to the gray square in a second. The L 50 values, the predicted L 50 values in this study, just so happen to fit very nicely on this squeezeability line, and so, given future regulatory changes, if folks want to predict an L 50, they should factor in the issue of fish squeezing themselves through mesh to try to get out of mesh.

There is a reason why the calculated L 10 and L 50 values in this study don't line up with the predicted black and gray lines, respectively. That is for this back-panel trap type, there is proof that the sub-legal fish -- A high percentage of those sub-legal fish aren't finding the back-panel trap and egressing through the trap before it's pulled, and that's the reason for the back-panel trap type -- The black square is the L 10 value that we calculated from this study, and the gray square is the L 50 value for the back-panel trap type that we calculated from this study. Again, the reason why they're not falling cleanly on the predicted line, like the uniform trap mesh sizes, is because there is percentage of sub-legal fish that are not finding and escaping through the back panel before it's pulled.

Put another way, the back-panel trap type, unlike the uniform mesh trap types, is not optimizing selectivity. That is, it's not simultaneously maximizing the retention of legal fish and minimizing the retention, or maximizing the escapement, of sub-legal fish, and so it's not performing as cleanly as the uniform trap mesh sizes.

If you wanted some further convincing that there might be a better, for the commercial minimum size limit, 279, that this trap is behaving really well as far as its selection and catch rates compared to the back-panel trap type, here is some extrapolated data, and Chip Collier provided me some effort data in the South Atlantic region, so I could construct this table of data.

What I have in the left-hand two columns of this table are the number of discarded and the number of discarded dead black sea bass estimated for the South Atlantic on an annual basis. It's about 208,000 fish that are discarded. If we assume that everybody -- This is not the case, but if we assume for the moment that all the traps fished in the South Atlantic are back-panel traps, the annual number of discarded individuals is about 208,000 black sea bass. The number discarded dead from about half-decade of work on black sea bass discard mortality is about 35,000 fish.

If we then assume, for the moment, that we're switching to this full two-and-a-quarter-inch trap, or 57.2-millimeter mesh trap, the number of discarded individuals would drop dramatically, to about 11,000, and the number discarded dead would drop to about 1,900 per year. Either in reduction of discarded or discarded dead, that's about a 95 percent reduction in this hypothetical scenario of switching from all back-panel traps to all two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh traps.

It's been told to me several times since I've provided results of applied research to the council that the council probably wouldn't move forward with a regulatory change unless the gear was available for fishers to use, given a regulatory change, and the gear is definitely available. This company that kindly helped us in constructing the two-and-a-quarter and two-and-a-half-inch mesh is C.E. Shepherd. They're a worldwide leading wire mesh manufacturer based out of

Houston, Texas. This price quote is of about three months ago, and it was available then for \$110 a roll.

When I gave this talk to the full council in Jekyll Island in March, there was quite a bit of constructive discussion at the end of my talk of how many traps could be constructed from a full roll of mesh. Tom Burgess has informed me, since my talk in Jekyll Island a couple of months ago, that about eight uniform mesh traps can be constructed from a full roll, hundred-foot roll, of wire mesh.

Our major findings from this applied research study is that this uniform 57.2-millimeter, two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh trap, balances both the wire availability, the wire is available, and it optimizes selectivity for the current minimum length limit of 279 millimeters.

Another major finding from our study is that mixed-mesh traps, such as this back-panel trap type, do not optimize selection for any one fish size. Put another way, this is a very important statement. It's our finding that if the council was to condone or regulate a change in trap mesh size to optimize selectivity, it would best be served having a trap of uniform mesh size, as opposed to changing the size of the back panel itself.

This study, like I told you a few slides ago, does not need to be repeated if fish size regulations change in the future. Again, future predictions of optimal trap mesh size should be based on the assumption that black sea bass, like other species, will attempt to squeeze themselves through a mesh to try to egress from the trap before it's pulled. Those are the folks I would like to acknowledge, and I would be happy to take any questions.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Paul. First, congratulations. That's like really, really nice work. I will tell you, it's really nice to see some work that shows how adjusting the mesh size on gear can do what we want it to do. Speaking for Florida black sea bass pot fishermen, I would just like to open up, if I could -- I know there's a lot of conversation that could happen with this, but have the AP make a motion to the council that we eliminate the back panel and require all the pots to be a uniform mesh size, just as a starting point.

MR. ATTACK: Would you like to make a motion for that?

MR. HULL: Thank you, and yes, I would. **I would like to make a motion that the Snapper Grouper AP recommends to the council that the minimal black sea bass pot should have a uniform mesh size of two inches, which is what it is now, or just eliminate the back panel as an option.** If we do change any mesh size, no back panel. It's going to be a uniform trap size, which makes all the difference.

MR. ATTACK: Okay. In other words, you're just basically trying to say that all six sides should have the same mesh size on a trap?

MR. HULL: Yes, a uniform mesh size, the whole trap.

MR. ATTACK: Any discussion on that, while she's typing that up?

MR. MUNDEN: What I would like to hear from the experienced black sea bass fishermen sitting around the table, or in the audience, is how much of an increase in cost are we talking about if we go with the total trap being the same size, as compared to what the fishermen are using today?

MR. HULL: Obviously you're going to have to -- You could probably get rid of your back panel and wire in some two-inch mesh where that was and use your existing gear. You could do that. You could hog-ring in some two-inch square in there, which would be good to do, if you need to do that, but if you -- That's an option for somebody that can't afford to re-gear up. That wouldn't cost too much.

Obviously, if we go to a two-inch, if you look at what you gain in retention and what you gain with the discards that you're throwing away, it's such a winner that it's the best move. It's the way to go, and I think that if you have to do something that you could hog-ring in the back panel and just replace the back panel on that pot.

MR. ATACK: The problem with that is the other five sides are smaller, and so that's why you have the larger back panel of the two-inch right now, and so you would have to really replace the other five sides if you had a back-panel trap, right?

MR. HULL: Thank you for correcting me on that. I had it flip-flopped. Yes, it is going to take - - You're right, Red. It is going to take a total re-gear to go to that, but you're sure going to gain a whole lot more fish in the catchability of the trap. If you look at the work that he did, it's pretty amazing, when you look at it.

MR. ATACK: Yes, and the numbers are \$13.75 per trap, is what the mesh would cost. That's not labor and all, but that's what the material costs would be to build the trap, \$13.75, if you bought the whole roll.

MR. JOHNSON: I was just trying to make sure I understood what he just presented to us. Basically, he's saying that the two-and-a-half-inch mesh is the optimum size under the current eleven-inch size limit, as far as retention. It's going to retain -- Did he say two-and-a-quarter? One was 98 percent and one was -- Both of them were in the nineties, but if you're looking at optimum -- Can you explain that, please, Paul?

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Sure. The two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh on the square, the study is showing -- I don't want to say in my opinion, because the data is showing us that that performs the best for the commercial. It optimizes selectivity for the commercial minimum size limit of 279. The two-and-a-half-inch mesh on the square does not optimize selectivity. Our data is showing that the two-and-half-inch mesh on the square is too big. It's not retaining a high fraction of fish between roughly eleven and twelve inches, like the two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh is retaining. The two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh, I think, would be the -- As far as optimizing selectivity in that 279 minimum length limit, the two-and-a-quarter and not the two-and-a-half-inch mesh would be the gear to consider.

MR. JOHNSON: Basically, you're talking about they would have to replace their gear, all of it. It's not like they could rework any existing trap. It would have to be replaced.

MR. OSBORNE: A question for Jimmy. How long do you get out of a trap?

MR. HULL: I've got pots that we've fished for eight to ten years. I mean the way the fishery is conducted now, this gear doesn't sit there. You fish it like you're fishing a rod and reel. You bring it back to the dock with you.

MR. OSBORNE: Right, but I was just wondering if -- I mean obviously you're in favor and it looks good, but the issue is changing the gear over. I was wondering how long you get out of a trap, so maybe you could think of like phasing it in, but it sounds like you get quite a while out of a trap and it really wouldn't work.

MR. HULL: I personally, and the guys in Florida, we don't have a problem with replacing our gear, because we see the benefit of it, but Red brought up the question of what's this going to cost the fishermen to do this. It's definitely going to cost them something to do it. There's no question about it, but you're going to get -- You get a long life out of these pots, and the life of that pot, the fish that it's going to save, the discards that it's going to save and the pot will catch better, if you look at the work that Paul has done. This pot, the smaller fish won't be filling it up. It will target the fish that you want, and you will catch more of them.

It's worth the effort and the money that you put into it if you can do it. Now, there's probably fishermen that are flat broke that can't do it. Well, we're going to have to try to help them somehow, and I understand that.

MR. OSBORNE: I agree. I was just thinking if you got -- If you're building new traps every year and you took a few years to phase it in, when you start building your new ones, you build them out of the bigger mesh and then eventually you come up with where you want to be, but it doesn't sound like the timeline is right.

MR. HERRERA: How many traps do the fishermen use, on average, more or less?

MR. HULL: On average, in my area, about twenty pots. I mean they fish that good, and a maximum of thirty-five. That's the way the current regulations are. It's a very small-scale, lightweight gear, but it's very effective, and it can obviously be fine-tuned to target the optimum size of the fish that we want.

MR. THOMPSON: I agree with you on doing it, but it seems to me what we went through last time, and that's why we only got the back panel, but it was supposed to be phased in, where you upgrade. I mean at \$13.75 per panel, they could get -- I mean some of these guys don't have a lot of money, but you just do it one time, and if we could get them over five years, they're going to - - Just phase it in somehow, if we could work that out.

I know it goes to the council and it's going to pop out somewhere completely different, but I agree with going to two-and-a-quarter. It needs to come as soon as we can, but I just think we need to get some sort of step-in, to give them a little time. Say if a guy has got twenty-five traps, he would eat up another \$82.50 in material, and that guy is not going to make his traps, more than likely, and so he's going to have to send them off, and so it's a little more expensive than that.

MR. LORENZ: Looking at this, just looking at the potential of a payback or an economic incentive for fishermen to turn over -- If you look at this data, if we're going to get into a fishery where we can have a gear that's going to have a 5 percent or less discard rate, and particularly low on the

dead discard rates, would this gear and this fishery possibly be a candidate for some type of allowance to retain those sub-legal fish?

We all worry about dead discards and that sort of a thing. Maybe the regulation could innovatively be evolved to where they could keep a small percentage of these sub-legal fish, if that's possible and if they're marketable. I don't know the fishery, but I just wanted to bring that to the table. That would be a little extra kicker in there to a new way for fisheries management, where we reduce dead discards and discards, where sensible in this case, and the discard rate is becoming so low.

MR. ATTACK: If there is no further discussion, we'll go ahead and call a vote on the motion. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand. It looks like it's unanimous. The motion carries.** Any other motions that anybody wants to make on this while we've got the black sea bass up here?

MR. HULL: Maybe not a motion yet, but maybe some further discussion. Again, this coming winter -- Our fishery is basically has been closed, because of the right whale situation with protected resources, but we think we've overcome that. This winter, which is when our fishery really is productive and when we can actually produce some fish, we feel like we're going to have the opportunity now to fish again.

If you're looking at where we're at with an eleven-inch size limit, and, again, if you look at the results of Paul's work here, and you can see the difference in productivity of the 57.2 millimeter as opposed to just the two-inch, the two-and-a-quarter as opposed to the two-inch mesh. Now we're starting to talk -- If we get rid of the back panel and we're starting to talk about how you can really see the reality by letting escapement of these undersized fish, because we're at an eleven-inch size limit, which I agree is where we need to be. That's the heart of the fishery for us. That's where the biggest biomass is, and that's the size fish that we want to target.

This is just for discussion, but if you look at this, it's really interesting to see what the two-and-a-quarter does, as far as the volume of legal fish that we catch per pot and also reducing those discards, because you get rid of those smaller fish out of the pot and the bigger fish are retained. They will go in there, because they just get too full.

It's just something to look at, is to see where we're at, and you don't want to make probably too many moves here too quick, but we need to keep the size limit where it is and we need to adjust this mesh eventually, because basically what we have is for -- The size limit went to eleven inches and we had just the back panel.

Before the size limit went to eleven inches, most of us in Florida had been using a uniform mesh. We're not using the back panel. I don't know about North Carolina. I can't speak for North Carolina, but we're all using a uniform sized mesh, and so everything was great at the -- The mesh was geared toward the ten-inch size limit, and we had great results with that when the size limit was ten inches.

When they went to eleven inches, we've had this lag time on the mesh, so that we're now -- We're back in the situation that we shouldn't be in, where we're retaining and discarding all these fish. As they push us further offshore, which is what they're doing in the wintertime, we're going to be

in deeper water and you're going to have more barotrauma on these animals, and so we want them to get out of the trap on the bottom before we haul them to the top.

If you look at it, the two-and-a-quarter is -- You should take some time and really look at the results. It's pretty amazing to me, to see how we can increase our productivity and have a totally clean, pretty much perfectly clean, fishery, probably the cleanest fishery in the South Atlantic, and producing a wonderful food product for people, black sea bass. They're perfect little animals that can be produced by an under-capitalized fishery that is sustainable and everything is beautiful. Just look at that, just for discussion. Maybe the two-and-a-quarter may be something that people would support. I don't know.

MR. JOHNSON: What is the trip limit on black sea bass? Is it a thousand pounds? What percentage of the ACL did these twenty-three boats catch last year? Did they get 80 percent? This is just for discussion. I know there's a couple of AP members other than myself that got pushed out of that fishery, and we're getting ready to open it back up in the winter.

We're doing all these things, and I just wonder how the group feels about some kind of non-transferable, non-sellable gear endorsement to allow those, and I don't even think it was twenty boats that were pushed out of that fishery, back into the fishery. When they changed the fishing year to start on June 1, that was in the heart of my charter season, and that's why I didn't participate. I know there's some other people at this table that had sea bass pot, trap pot, endorsements on their permits that lost that.

I don't want to sell my permit. That was my problem when it went to the gear endorsement. I knew what would happen, because as soon as it was endorsed and went that route, all of a sudden these guys that had to have it to make a living started selling their permits, their endorsements. All I'm asking for is the few people that got put out -- Again, we're only talking twenty-something boats.

If they wanted to, they would be allowed to participate again, under something similar to the 225 non-transferable snapper grouper permit. In other words, it couldn't be sold and it couldn't be transferred, but it would allow people that did historically participate, maybe just for a brief period of time, but were in the fishery and were pushed out of the fishery. I can make a motion to that effect if you all think it's worth discussion.

MR. BUFF: I brought this up the last meeting, and I think went about it the wrong way. You are correct that there's twenty people that didn't meet the minimum requirements, but my suggestion is, being that the stock has rebuilt, maybe the tools that was taken away from the people that had them -- If we went back to if you still held the original permit that that sea bass endorsement was taken from and it hasn't been transferred.

I'm like Robert. I don't want to sell mine. I just want to use it. I had this at one time, and it wasn't feasible for us then, because it really -- You know we did it maybe a month out of the year, when we had to, because something was closed, but now, it's a big deal, and it would help make that four or five-month fishery that we're sitting there twiddling our thumbs, it would bring in some income, not only for the boats, but for the fish house.

I think that this ought to be looked at as well, and if Robert will make a motion, I will make a second. There should be something here to give these tools back to the people that lost it, and it needs to be fair to the people that are still here, and it should go back to the people that have the original permits.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't know exactly to word it, but what I'm looking for is exactly what Scott said, people that still have the original permit that had that gear endorsement on it be allowed back in the fishery under a non-transferable, non-sellable endorsement. I don't know if that makes sense, but --

MR. BUFF: I don't know what the numbers are on this either, but, to my knowledge, a lot of these permits are not even being used by the people that own them. Most of them are being leased out, and so that's a thought as well. I know a lot of them are leased, but I would just like to have mine to use, and it was taken away when it was declining. Now it's rebuilt, and it ought to be given back.

MR. DEMARIA: Robert, don't you think that opens the door for all these other limited-entry permits, the snapper grouper and kingfish, for people to say we want in, and we had a permit and we lost it? That's my only concern, is it just opens the door for all these other fisheries to be looked at again.

MR. JOHNSON: It's not a permit. It was a gear endorsement, and the reason I got into the fishery was Amendment 17A was being kicked around. If any of you are familiar with what that was, that was an area closure, mostly that affected my area in northeast Florida, where we would not even have been allowed to fish.

I was encouraged to get into this fishery, because it was one way that I might be able to provide for a living for my family. I am not asking -- It's not a permit. This was just a gear endorsement. That's all it is. Of course, if we go to two-and-a-quarter-inch, I've got a bunch of worthless traps sitting in my garage that have been there since then.

MR. DEMARIA: I'm going to support you. I just wanted some clarification on it, to make sure we didn't open the doors wide open to everybody else in all the other fisheries.

MR. LORENZ: I think, since this is a recovered fishery, it seems like it's only fair to do this, and any other fishery that goes down, this may happen again, but if it comes back, why not? This seems fair to me.

MR. ATTACK: It's somewhat recovered, but I think there is some debate. I mean you look at the recreational side. They're not catching their landings. There is a lot of discards on that side, and so I'm not sure it's rebuilt to the point that there's not a real -- There's still some concern, I think, with the fishery of why are the -- The recreational side, with all the discards. We heard that at the last meeting, the 95 percent discard rate or whatever in certain areas.

MR. BUFF: I'm not sure. We would have to go back and look at this, but I'm going to say that that's going to be less than ten, and I'm just guessing. There was twenty lost, and so I'm going to say that we're talking about less than ten people, give or take.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm just wondering if we believe that there is some capacity to add these ten to twenty back into the fishery. In full disclosure, I was one of those people. Why would we make them non-transferable or non-sellable? The only other permit we have that is like that would be the snapper grouper 225, and that was put in place to eventually die out, and so if what we're trying to do is let these last ten or twenty get the rest of their life out of it and then it's gone forever, then that's fine, but if there truly is the level to hold this capacity in the fishery, then they should be transferable or sellable. I don't care one way or the other, but I just think we need to justify which way we're going.

MR. BUFF: I brought this up last time, but what if we put a year range on them, that you couldn't sell them for five to ten years? I don't know -- We don't want to make it so complicated that it doesn't make sense, but, at the end of the day, it would be nice to have the monetary value of the permit back, because they are very expensive. At the end of the day, I think the people sitting at this table want to use the permit, and so maybe you put five years, to where you can't lease them or sell them, or something to that effect, and I don't know if that's even possible, but it's just a comment.

MR. MUNDEN: First of all, I have a question for the staff. How many black sea bass permitted fishermen are there in the South Atlantic at this time?

MS. BROUWER: Thirty-two.

MR. MUNDEN: Okay. Let me go back to what I said a few minutes ago, when we were having introductions. I am a retired marine biologist from the Division of Marine Fisheries. I retired about four years ago, but, fourteen years prior to my retirement and since I retired, I have represented the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries on four marine mammal take reduction teams.

Now, you have to keep in mind that the proposals to deal with black sea bass have to be reviewed by Protected Resources and the Marine Mammal Take Reduction Team. I agree with the comments that Robert made that people were forced out of the fishery, but you just need to be aware that if we put ten or twenty more fishermen in that fishery that Protected Resources is going to probably say instead of fishing thirty-five pots that we're going to have to compensate for that number of pots that are in the water in the South Atlantic by reducing it to compensate for additional fishermen.

This is a very big issue to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team, on which I serve, because these pots are being set in calving areas and migration routes that the females use to the calving grounds. We have no documented evidence of any large whale ever becoming involved in a South Atlantic black sea bass pot, but if it does happen, your fishery is probably history.

MR. JOHNSON: I understand that, Red, and I listened to all of the discussion about opening this fishery back up in the winter. If there is no documented case of entanglement -- I mean it wouldn't matter if it was one sea bass pot fisherman. If he gets entangled, it's over, and so I mean I guess you could say we're increasing the odds.

To address the question about why would I want it non-transferable or non-sellable, I want it to use. I am a fisherman. I didn't get in this fishery to get out, and I don't want someone that's in

the fishery to think that I just am wanting to get in so I can cash out, because that was my main -- That was the reason it really rubbed me the wrong way, because I knew that was going to happen. I knew the very people that were screaming they had to have it, as soon as it was worth money, they would sell it, and that's what happened. I don't want to sell an endorsement. I just want it to use, because it was taken from me, and that's all. That's the only reason for the motion.

MR. BUFF: I agree. There is some points, and everybody has them, but there is no documented history, and there is breakaways in place for this exact thing that we're talking about, as far as the whales. He just made comment that they're fishing twenty pots, and so I think the pot reduction could go down to support that. If I could get twenty, I would be tickled pink.

MR. OSBORNE: Did any of the people that got pushed out buy an endorsement and get back in? The same thing happened in the snapper grouper industry too, with the 225. People that wound up with those bought back in. It's pretty sketchy, but if there was room to fit them in, I would only go for it if it was a non-transferable, non-sellable.

If the current participants in the fishery felt -- If the numbers show that you can fit the extra participation in, because I'm like you. I didn't get in any fishery to get out. I hate the fact that you can even sell a permit of any kind or an endorsement at all. I think it should be -- That's a whole other ball of wax, but, anyway, that's the only way I would even entertain it, because I think, under the system that we're at, trying to keep the number of participants like they are until we get the effort right in these fisheries, that -- Yes, I'm all about giving a man his original weapon back to finish out his career. There's been bad things going on there, but I don't want to see it like another permit class or something going. It's a mess.

MR. HULL: Robert, I feel your pain, but I think that if you take into consideration all of the things that like Red brought up -- Until you start really looking at all of the things that are affecting this fishery, I wouldn't really be able to support the motion, until we discussed it further and vetted out a lot of different things that could happen, because we've been -- We've basically been shut down also.

You know you've been run out of it, but we haven't been able to fish either, unless you wanted to scrap during the summertime and waste your time. We're just now getting to where we can get the fishery open again, and, as I say, if we talked about more of these issues and things and tried to really, really think about it, then I would support bringing those guys back in, because I feel your pain. I want fishermen to fish and produce product and be able to make it, but, boy, it would throw -- Right now, you're talking about something that would throw in all kinds of other questions that we haven't even thought of here, and Red brings up some great knowledge.

Basically, I support you, but I think I need further information and further study on what it's going to do. We need to get this fishery back open and productive the way it is now, to just try and get things going.

MR. FEX: IF you endorse twenty more people, the ones that lost it, and you reduce the trap amount down to twenty, you will still be under the current amount of traps we have allowed, and so if you did do that, you would still be under the right whale take numbers, or at least the numbers of traps in the water.

MR. MOSS: In full disclosure, I don't have a dog in this fight, and so I'm just trying to gather some information. In relation to what Kerry said and what Robert said, I just want to make sure that I understand. Robert, what you're essentially saying is that we're okay with almost kind of over the years phasing out this fishery if it's non-transferable and non-sellable. Again, I'm just trying to make sure that I understand it correctly. Eventually, there's not going to be this fishery anymore. Obviously that's long-term, but --

MR. JOHNSON: The fishery wouldn't go away, because some of these permits, the endorsements, and it's an endorsement, that are on some of these permits are transferable, sellable. In the State of Florida, you can't set gear below basically Cape Canaveral anyway, and so you're only talking about a handful of boats.

They just handed this to me. There is two in Georgia, seven in Florida, nine in South Carolina, and fourteen in North Carolina. Again, all I'm asking is for the tool that was taken from me to be given back to me. I have invested in the fishery. I've got haulers and I've got all the stuff I'm supposed to have, and I didn't want this to turn into an all-day discussion. It's just something that I hear that we jump through all these hoops to open this fishery up because they're not catching the ACL, but we eliminated most of the participants, and there was never was many. There never was more than I think fifty-five. It wasn't a huge fishery. That was the only reason I made the motion.

MR. ATACK: I guess what I could see happening is you've got your winter opening up now. You're going to open up that fishery and you're going to probably hit your ACL next year. Then you're not going to have room for more endorsements to come in, or you will be closing it again back in December. If it's only thirty-two endorsements now, and you add another ten or twenty, I mean that's a big increase in what could happen in the fishery.

MR. BUFF: Number one, there's going to be less than ten people, and so let's make sure that we talk about -- It's not going to be twenty more endorsements. It's going to be less than ten, and if I had mine, I might be a little reluctant to let Robert have his, but I'm on this side of the fence. I understand your point too, but remember we all participated in this fishery in the beginning. I missed mine by about 500 to 700 pounds, if I remember. It wasn't that I didn't play the game, but I just didn't catch the amounts.

Back to Osborne's, on the 225, but they lost theirs because they didn't participate at all. I have been in this fishery for almost fifteen years, and I would like my tools back that got taken. I understand that -- We can what-if everything at this table all day long, but the bottom line is the stock is being rebuilt and there should be some leeway to let the people that has been in the fishery have their tool back. Some of this stuff is -- If I had to guess, we're talking about seven or eight boats that is probably -- Maybe not even half of them would even participate, and so we're talking maybe five boats, at the max.

MR. FREEMAN: We also, on our vessel, we also fish black sea bass pots. However, we haven't fished this fishery at all, with the current endorsements that we've got. We're just now opening it back up, where they can fish it, and let's see what they do first before we go adding people on. I lost mine. I didn't get it, but oh, well. That's just part of life. I mean let's see what happens first, and then if we see that the fish is sustainable and the fish can handle it, then we can move on. We

can always add on at a different point, but we don't need to address it now, before it's even been fished.

MR. ATACK: Okay. I think we've probably had enough discussion. Let's go ahead and vote on the motion. I'm going to reread the motion: Recommend that the council consider allowing fishermen who did not qualify for a black sea bass pot endorsement to reenter the fishery under some type of a non-transferable gear endorsement. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. I think ten for and four against. The motion carries.**

Now I would like to move this on. Now would be a good time if somebody wanted to make a motion to have the council consider a two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh size. That would be good to do, or we'll move on.

MR. HULL: Since Robert brought that one up, then I don't know if it would -- I think it would be a consideration, a motion -- This isn't the motion yet, Myra, but just to try to craft something, to where the council would look at the scientific studies on the mesh size and what it's done with our current eleven-inch size limit, as far as the retention and the escapement of discards, and to possibly give it some more to look at it, rather than just make a motion recommending that they go to it. Of course, I know they will do all of that analysis if they do anyway, and so okay. **I will make a motion that the council do the two-and-a-quarter-inch size limit on the black sea bass pots.**

AP MEMBER: Second.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion?

MR. DEMARIA: I think this is a good example of the commercial industry trying to be proactive in doing something that's right for the long term in avoiding conflicts. I am going to support it. I think it's just the way to go.

MR. HULL: I would agree with that. I mean, looking at the study that was done, actually you will have a higher mass per trap landed. You will have a reduction in discards from thirty-some percent down to maybe 5 percent, and so it's like a win-win. You have a 780,000-pound ACL, and this study was showing 208,000 fish are probably discards. That's a big percentage of discards, and so, to me, it seems like it would be a win-win for the fishery.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: When we originally came up with this idea to test these novel mesh sizes, C.E. Shepherd was very accommodating as far as the price per roll to retool their equipment and get this custom wire mesh made for us. Given their track record, and I can't speak for them now, but, given their track record, I wonder if the council might consider, in the future, if they proceed with a two-and-a-quarter-inch mesh size, of talking directly to C.E. Shepherd to see what kind of a price break they might be able to get, because this company seems pretty willing to help out what I will call proactive missions like the council is considering right now.

MR. MUNDEN: Paul, is the two-and-a-quarter mesh that you used vinyl-coated?

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: That's a good question, Red. All the mesh that we tested in this study is vinyl-coated. The two-and-a-quarter, if I'm not mistaken, and this is in the publication, and I would be happy to provide the council with more information, but I believe the two-and-a-quarter

and two-and-a-half mesh was twelve-gauge wire. In the two-inch and the one-and-a-half-inch mesh, it was fourteen-gauge wire, and so a little bit thinner, but yes, it all was vinyl-coated for the full study.

MR. MOSS: What did you say was the price per roll, and the roll did about eight pots, I think you said?

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, \$110. I am almost positive that did not include freight, mind you, but it was \$110 per roll out of the factory, and Tom Burgess informed me last month, or earlier this month, that that produced about eight traps per roll.

MR. MOSS: At the risk is spending somebody else's money, but most people don't have more than twenty pots, I think you said, Jimmy. You're looking at maybe three-hundred-bucks or something to completely re-outfit? Again, at the risk of spending somebody else's money, it seems pretty damned worth it.

MR. ATACK: If there is no other discussion, we will go ahead and vote on the motion. The motion reads: Recommend that the council consider changing the mesh size on black sea bass pots to two-and-a-quarter inches. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; any opposed. It's unanimous. The motion carries.**

Anything else on black sea bass? If not, I want to thank Paul for coming and giving the presentation. I would like for the council members to introduce themselves. There is some new members here at this meeting that may not know who you are, and so Myra asked that each one would stand up and introduce themselves.

(The introductions are not audible on the recording.)

MR. ATACK: Jack was in the back of the room. He stepped out, and Mark Brown also. We are going to move on to Amendment 37 for the hogfish. Myra is going to lead that.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jim. This is Attachment 3 in your briefing book. You will see that there are a few little tweaks that I made to this document that are not in the version that you have in your briefing book. When we get to them, I will make sure I point those out. Basically, it's nothing major. It's just addition information that we can have in front of us to discuss, and it will make things a lot clearer for everybody.

Just to recap the timing of this amendment, we are past the public hearing stage. We held public hearings for this amendment in January and February, and so the council got to hear all the comments that the public had in March. They're going to look at it again in June, and the final approval, however, is probably not going to take place until September.

It's an amendment that is under a statutory deadline, and that means that because the East Florida/Florida Keys stock of hogfish was determined to be undergoing overfishing and is overfished, then there needs to be a rebuilding plan. That has to be put in place within two years of the council receiving notification from National Marine Fisheries Service that the stock is overfished, and so we have until February the 17th of next year to have regulations in place. It's

an Environmental Impact Statement, which means that it's a lengthier process to develop it. There are several, or at least a couple more, comment periods, and so that's where we are.

Another item that's complicating things a little bit is it always comes down to timing. There is a decision tool that was developed by folks in the Regional Office. Basically, it's just a model that helps predict effects, and so you tell the model at this size limit and under this bag limit what are the expected landings, and then you get a result.

It's a really handy tool. We have used it for the analyses that are currently in the amendment, but it's a model that has not yet undergone technical review, and so when the Scientific and Statistical Committee meets next week here in Charleston, they're going to be conducting a review of this decision tool, and so there is a chance that the SSC might find issues with it.

I don't want to say whether it's likely or not, but they're going to review it. We have to wait for the SSC to basically give us the go-ahead and say yes, this model is appropriate for use in management and the uncertainty has been addressed and the assumptions are correct. There is all these little things that the SSC still needs to discuss. With that as a background, if you don't have any questions about that, we can just start walking through it.

What I did here, I tried to prepare summary documents that we can have with the AP to discuss, as opposed to handing you the big, ginormous amendments that have a whole bunch of extra sections that you probably don't want to read through. That takes a lot of time also to create a whole other document, and so what I did here is I just took Chapter 4 of the amendment, which is normally the chapter that has all the details of the predicted effects.

I took that and put the introduction on the front and added some things here and there, and that's what we're looking at. This is not the full-blown amendment, but it is a portion of it, and so you will see things that may not be relevant to the AP's discussions, like a discussion of administrative effects and stuff like that, but it's there because it's part of the amendment.

There is some information on the front-end. The stuff that's highlighted is things that were changed from the version you have, and that was a correction that I just needed to make, but we will get to that when we get to those actions, and so this is just a little summary on the front-end, to let everybody know what this amendment is about, so you don't have to read through the whole thing.

The purpose and need for the actions, like we always have in our amendments, the council has approved those. There is a whole explanation on ACLs and AMs and what that's all about and how they get used in management. Then there is a section explaining how the council uses the definition for hogfish and other assessed species. If you have any questions about that, let me know. I'm not going to go into detail, but basically it says when there is an assessment that we're going to use this metric. When there is not an assessment, in years when there's not an assessment, we're going to use this other metric to determine whether the stock is undergoing overfishing or not.

Then here we get to the actions, and so the first one is on PDF page 9 of your attachment, if you want to follow along. Action 1 splits out the stock into two management units on the east coast, and we've talked about this before. The council's preferred sub-alternative is 2c, and that is for a

line due west of Cape Sable, Florida. You see up on the screen the red line on the map is the preferred alternative. The blue line is the current jurisdictional boundary between the two councils, the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, and the gray line is just the Monroe/Collier County boundary, and so those were the three alternatives the council considered. Their preferred was the line due west of Cape Sable.

The only, I don't want to say issue, but the only thing that needs to be clarified, and we'll do that in the amendment, and, in fact, there is some language at the bottom of this section that talks about the permit requirements, because folks that fish in this area are going to likely have permits that allow them to fish on the Gulf side and then on the Atlantic side, and so there is going to need to be some changes to those permit requirements, I think, to allow for folks that only have a South Atlantic permit to fish in this area here, and so these are things that are going to need to be clarified.

Other than that, it's just the boundary itself is not going to affect how the landings are monitored. The landings are going to continue to be monitored the way they are. Basically, this line just makes it clear where one stock of hogfish belongs to one council and the other one belongs to the other council, and it also aids in law enforcement.

MR. ATTACK: I had a question. If they were to change the GMFMC line and the SAFMC line to align with that red line, would Congress have to do that? First, it's just for hogfish, making that boundary just for hogfish, or just changing that boundary for the whole SAFMC for all the fish stocks? Would that be something the council could do?

MS. BROUWER: No, I think that would -- That would be something that would have to go through Congress, because the jurisdictional boundaries of the councils are pretty much set in stone. Are there any questions on Action 1? If not, we will move on to PDF page 14. That's where Action 2 is. This is to specify the MSY for each of the two stocks. Your preferred, obviously, is the one that would specify it for the entire thing, and, because hogfish is a newly-assessed stock, there wasn't a value tied to the MSY. There was just a proxy.

Now that we have a stock assessment, we can specify the MSY for the Florida Keys/East Florida stock. Another thing, just to remind you, the Georgia/North Carolina stock of hogfish, the status of that stock is still unknown, because the stock assessment was not deemed applicable to that portion of the stock, and so the SSC went through a different process to recommend the ABC for that stock, and so we still don't know overfished or overfishing. Therefore, we cannot specify some of these benchmarks. I don't know if anybody has questions on that action. This is pretty straightforward.

Action 3 is on PDF page 17. This is for specifying the minimum stock size threshold for each of the two stocks. Again, the council needs to -- They have the option of keeping the same formula that they've used to specify MSST or they can use other metrics, and so Alternative 2 is basically the same thing as Alternative 1, but it would apply that existing formula, which is one minus M, where M is the natural mortality, or 0.5, whichever is greater, and it would apply it to each of the two stocks.

Then we have Alternative 3, which actually gives the council the option of putting that minimum stock size threshold at 50 percent of the spawning stock biomass at MSY, and then their preferred is to set that limit at 75 percent of the SSB MSY. This is, again, something that the council took

action to do for several other snapper grouper species that happened to have a low natural mortality value, and hogfish happens to also fall in that category.

There is good justification for the council moving that way, and it's something the SSC has also endorsed. Again, the value for Georgia/North Carolina remains unknown, and then we would specify that MSST for East Florida/Florida Keys. Are there questions on Action 3? No.

Then Action 4 is PDF page 22. This is where we start getting into numbers that mean more to you all. This one would establish the ACLs for the Georgia/North Carolina stock. For hogfish, the council is looking at setting the ACL at 95 percent of the ABC for both stocks, and so that's currently their preferred.

Again, to remind you, the sector allocations had to be recalculated for hogfish because, when you split the stock into the two portions, you needed to make sure that only landings for that geographical area were used to determine the apportionment between commercial and recreational, and so that's why the allocations have changed. For this stock, 69 percent goes to the commercial sector and 31 percent goes to the recreational sector.

Then there is a section explaining how the ABC recommendation came to be, and we've talked about this before. There is this Level 4 of the ABC control rule, which uses landings information in order to arrive at an ABC, and so this table here basically shows you all the different components. The SSC settled on the catch statistic, which is the third-highest landings between 1999 and 2007, and that happened to be the year 2006, and so you've got that 40,818 pounds whole weight.

Then they have a risk of overexploitation. This is something that the SSC recommends, and there's a scalar, a number, associated with that, which is 1.25. Then the council picks their risk tolerance level. For hogfish, through Amendment 29, they picked a 0.7 risk tolerance, and so you multiply all those numbers through and you arrive at this proposed ABC for Georgia and North Carolina of 35,716 pounds whole weight.

Then you apply the allocations, and the allocation formula is included in the amendment, and here's all the landings that you would need to recalculate those percentages if you wanted to do that, and so then you come to this table here, which shows you what the different ACLs would be for each of the alternatives, 2b being the preferred.

We're looking at a recreational ACL, in numbers, of 988 fish, and a commercial ACL, in pounds, of 23,456. To arrive at the ACL in numbers, all we did basically was divide the ACL in pounds by the average weight of a recreationally-caught hogfish from just that part of the world. We looked at the recreational landings and we got that average weight, which is 10.6 pounds, and that's how the recreational ACL in numbers was calculated.

Just to give you some perspective here, here is the new stuff that I put in here. If you look at the average landings from 2010 through 2014, the last full five years of data, and compare that to the proposed ACLs, for the recreational sector, it's 658 fish, and so 658 fish have been landed, on average, in the last five years. Compare that to the proposed ACL of 988, and we don't have any issues there. Harvest doesn't need to be constrained any further.

For the commercial sector, looking at the preferred ACL of 23,456 pounds, compared to average landings in the past five years, which is 27,892 pounds, you're looking at a possible 16 percent reduction in harvest that needs to take place, and so this is what the managers look at, these percentages, and then decide on management measures that will achieve that reduction in harvest. Are there questions?

MR. ATACK: On the recreational landings, what data pools do they come from? How do they calculate those recreational landings? Like in 2014, they showed ninety-five pounds for the whole year, right?

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so this is obviously from the MRIP survey. It's the intercept survey that then gets expanded, but it's just for the Georgia/South Carolina/North Carolina portion. If you want me to go into the details of how those are done, I can.

MR. ATACK: No, that's okay. I just wanted to know if it was just MRIP or if there was other methods applied also.

MS. BROUWER: No, that's the information, and so it's MRIP and headboat. Those are our two sources of recreational information.

MR. LORENZ: A question would be how many of these do you think -- How is it reported for sport diving, recreational diving, harvest, because these are really difficult to catch on hook and line.

MS. BROUWER: I'm glad you brought that up, Robert, because that is something the council struggled with, and they requested -- Recall that hogfish actually closed last year in August, because the landings were so high. The council said, well, wait a minute, these are fish that are caught mostly by spear, and so how is MRIP basically handling that? Does the current intercept survey capture a representative sample of spear fishermen?

The bottom line is we're not sure, and so MRIP is -- The council, I think they even sent a letter and said we're concerned about the fact that for this particular fishery that the recreational effort is from spear fishing, and that doesn't seem to be -- MRIP was not designed to account for those sorts of things, and so it's been brought up. It's been discussed. It's one of those things that I couldn't really elaborate any more on.

MR. LORENZ: This looks like a classic fish, just as a follow-on, where those of us that are recreational anglers are under counted and under reported and that sort of a thing, and so this is a classic example where better documentation of us, a permit or whatever, a license, would probably help out.

MR. HUDSON: The allocation formula mentioned here is the old bowtie rule. How long before we get away from this truncated 2008 terminal year and start using current data in that allocation formula?

MS. BROUWER: I can't really answer that question, Rusty. The council's intent is to look at allocations in a comprehensive manner, and so they've been talking, and this was part of the whole visioning thing. They've been talking about eventually doing an amendment that is going to look

at allocations across the board. Not just for snapper grouper, but for other managed species. That continues to be a plan for the council to do, but I couldn't tell you exactly when this is going to happen.

MR. HUDSON: As a follow-up, that's something Jack McGovern told me a couple of years ago. In order to get away from the 2008 terminal year, we have to do an amendment to get there, and so the vision plan has kind of slowed that up for the time being. When we get there, we can potentially be using current dates instead of that date from almost a decade ago now.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so what I imagine would happen is we would come up -- We might need to guidance from advisors, the SSC or what have you, as to how the council could potentially use a different allocation formula. It may be that it does incorporate more recent landings or who knows, but yes, it would necessitate an amendment to the plan and to whatever other FMPs would also be affected.

This table here was added. This is not currently in the briefing book version of this attachment, and so these are the landings that I just talked about from 2000 to 2014, and so if you want to take time to look through those a little bit better, you can do that.

The next action is on PDF page 32. We're moving away from Georgia/North Carolina down to Florida here. This is the action that would establish that rebuilding plan for the stock that is overfished in Florida and the Florida Keys. Here, the council has several alternatives that basically say we want to take X number of years to rebuild this stock, and we want the fishing mortality rate to be this one, and how long does it take for us to get to where we need to be.

These are tables that come out of the projections from the stock assessment, and the objective, of course, is to get up to this optimal spawning stock biomass of 2.3 million pounds. Their preferred alternative is Alternative 3, which is what the SSC recommended would be a good approach for hogfish, and so it rebuilds the stock in ten years, and so 2017 through 2027, and then here you see the projected spawning stock biomass every year, your overfishing level, your ABC, and then your estimated discards.

This, this is done a little bit differently than what you're used to looking at. The council establishes or specifies ABCs in pounds. For hogfish, for this stock of hogfish, for the East Florida/Florida Keys stock of hogfish, the council is now going to specify ABC in numbers. The reason they're doing that is because there are some actions in this amendment that propose to increase the minimum size.

When you are changing a minimum size limit, the weight, the average weight, of fish is going to go up, which then risks overharvesting, I guess. I don't want to say overfishing, but you could blow through your ABC, or your ACL, in pounds. To avoid that, there was this alternative approach that the SSC actually held a webinar the week before our council meeting in March to discuss, and folks from the Regional Office participated, because they had proposed one way of addressing this issue and council staff had proposed another way. Then we went to the SSC and we said, what do you guys think we should do?

It ended up being that now the ABC for this stock is being specified in numbers. The recreational ACL is also in numbers, and the commercial ACL continues to be specified in pounds, and if you

want any more details as to how that was accomplished, then I would be happy to walk you through it, but I think it's going to take a little while. If you have questions about that, let me know. There is going to be an appendix in the amendment that explains how it was all done and everything.

MR. FREEMAN: I just have one question. The discard numbers, this is 99 percent spearfishing, if not more. Are they just shooting them and leaving them on the bottom?

MS. BROUWER: I don't know. I don't know how those are generated. I don't know if other staff in the room have an answer to that. Here comes Chip.

MR. COLLIER: The discard numbers are reported in MRIP as B2, and that's where some of the information comes from, and also there is a discard logbook that commercial fishermen fill out, and those would be -- A discard mortality rate is going to be applied to the hook and line fishery of 10 percent. Then if there are any discards reported in the dive fishery, that was at 100 percent for those reported discards.

MR. DEMARIA: This might be as good a time as any to share my views on the hogfish. This fishery ought to be an embarrassment to the council. Numerous times over the years, this panel has recommended raising the size limit to avoid a problem down the road, the thought being take a little bit of medicine now, so you can avoid major surgery later on. Now we're having major surgery.

Even, I don't know how many years ago it was, Jerry Ault put out a paper warning us that hogfish were in trouble, and he had some recommendations. That was discounted and rejected, whatever you want to call it, by the council or SEDAR or whoever. It's not very often that sports fishermen, commercial, hook and line, and divers all come together and say the size limit is too small, and they all did that. Maybe there were a few that wanted to still take a twelve-inch size limit, but it was a minority. It's very seldom that you have everybody come together and recommend a proactive action to the council, and we were rejected time and time again.

I think there should be something learned here by the council. I don't know. It doesn't seem like they're learning anything, but this could have all been avoided years ago if they would have taken the AP's advice and raised the size limit. Twelve is just ridiculous. There doesn't seem to be any room for commonsense in this whole process. Commonsense would tell you that twelve inches is too small. The entire industry is telling you it's too small, yet the council does nothing. It's just commonsense, and it's completely ignored.

MS. BROUWER: I guess I can offer a comment. Yes, I do recall, and I think it was back in 2012, when you all started recommending size limit increases for hogfish. In the council's defense, they did include an action in an amendment that eventually fizzled out and got split out into a whole bunch of other things. That's one thing that I recall happening.

Then we had the stock assessment that was in the queue, the SEDAR queue, and, as you know though, the stock assessment queue doesn't really advance very quickly. Oftentimes, the council prefers to wait until a stock assessment on a particular species has been done before they go and change management measures, and so that was another thing that also happened. The same thing with mutton snapper. They had talked about making changes to mutton and then they said, well, wait a minute, there's the stock assessment that's getting ready to happen in a year. Let's just wait

and see what happens with the stock assessment and then take a good look and decide what we're going to do, but I understand your frustration.

MR. DEMARIA: Just one more thing. They're just kicking the can down the road. It's like we're all on this bus and we're heading down the highway and there's a cliff in front of us, and we're arguing about whether there's a cliff or not. The bus goes over the cliff. On the way down, we're arguing about who was right and who was wrong and who is to blame, and clearly we went over the cliff with the hogfish.

We went over the cliff with the red snapper, and we keep going over cliffs. We just argue about who is to blame, who was right and who was wrong, and this hogfish, I think, is a perfect example. We warned them numerous times that there's a cliff. They didn't believe us, or they argued about it. I hope at least they learned something from this, and maybe use some commonsense in managing some of this, instead of just kicking the can down the road.

The commercial fishery in south Florida will be effectively closed. Twenty-five fish, it's not even a -- That, together with a four-month grouper closure and then whatever happens with the muttons, it's going to make it very difficult for anyone to make a living down there commercially snapper grouper fishing.

MR. BUFF: I would like to go back to the guy on the end, Rusty, and his comment earlier about the data and just what Don said now. I've been -- This is my second meeting that I've been to. I've been in this for a long time, but, time and kicking the can is two things that we don't have time for. The data part of it, I thought that we were supposed to be using the best available data available and not waiting on something to pass or something to change until we get that data. If we've already got it, why aren't we using it?

It's just like what Don said. A lot of these things could be avoided, just like that twelve-inch size limit. I mean there's nothing really on a twelve-inch hogfish to start with, and so why do you want to kill it? A lot of this fishery is the same way. It's the timeframe that is killing the people that are involved, and the people that sit at this table are vested in this, but, a lot of times, it's not the people that are actually running the boats or working on the boats or that it affects financially. Time is not on our side, whether it's the fishery or the person in the fishery. I think that's some things that -- When you talk about this, all the time it comes up, the data or the timeframe that it takes to change it, and so, somewhere, that needs to be addressed.

MR. ATTACK: I agree with a lot of those comments, and it kind of reminds me -- We made some motions in the last meetings. Like one of them, another proactive comment, is we talked about African pompano, that we ought to do some size limits on them or some bag limits on them recreational and commercial, because, up our way, they're starting to get targeted. The fishery is pretty good right now, but I don't see any action happening yet at the council level. Maybe there is something that's going to happen, but I would hope that they could take these examples, and, the ones that we've suggested motions on for being proactive, that they could somehow get them to the list, to where we can proactively do something before it's too late. That's just an example, a recent example, that I can throw out.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so I'm going to move along. That's Action 5. Action 6 is on PDF page 38. This one establishes those ACLs for the East Florida/Florida Keys stock. Again, the

allocations have changed for that stock. 10 percent goes to the commercial sector and 90 percent to the recreational sector. Their preferred sub-alternative is 2b, which puts the ACL at 95 percent of the ABC.

Here are the landings that were used to calculate the allocations, using that bowtie law, as Rusty called it, and, if you keep moving down, here is the table that shows you what the ACLs would be under the different sub-alternatives, and so your preferred is 2b, and so the numbers in bold are the ones that you're looking at.

For 2017, since this is in a rebuilding plan, there's a different ACL for each year. As the stock rebuilds, the ACL goes up a little bit, and so, for the first year of management, 2017, the commercial ACL is going to be 3,510 pounds whole weight. The recreational ACL, which is this column here, is specified in numbers of fish, and so the recreational sector would be allocated 15,689 fish for 2017.

Then, if you go further here, this is the information that I added. Again, looking back to the last five years of landings, and just basically taking a straight average and comparing that with what's being proposed, you are looking, for 2017 recreationally -- It compares the average landings from 2010 through 2014. We're at 95,719 fish, and so we have to get from there down to 15,689 fish. That translates to an 84 percent reduction in recreational harvest for Florida/Florida Keys hogfish.

For the commercial sector, looking at the average landings, which were 12,573 pounds whole weight, again, we have to get down to 3,500 pounds, and so you're looking at a pretty significant 72 percent reduction in commercial harvest for that stock, and so this is what we're dealing with. Obviously the cuts that are coming for hogfish in Florida are going to be quite substantial and significant, and here is your table of commercial and recreational landings. Again, the recreational landings are in numbers from 2000 through 2014.

MR. JOHNSON: When does the fishing year start for hog snapper? January 1?

MS. BROUWER: Action 7 puts in the recreational annual catch targets. As you know, this is a target that the councils can choose to use to trigger accountability measures, and it's a way to ensure that catches are not going to get over that ACL. Our council has chosen not to utilize ACTs in that manner, but we still have to go through the motions of setting them, and so there is a formula that incorporates the percent standard error, which basically is a measure of precision in your recreational data. That's what is currently in place.

The current preferred is simply to take 85 percent of the recreational ACL and use that as that ACT level, and then there's a table that would show you what that would be for Georgia/North Carolina and for the Florida Keys/East Florida. Again, because this stock is under rebuilding, those numbers change over time.

MR. HULL: This goes back to the previous table. Under the preferred alternative, the rebuilding plan, that is under the current -- The rebuilding plan there, that shows this rebuild, that's under the current bag limits that are in place now?

MS. BROUWER: Those are just projections from the stock assessment, and so the model just says this is how many fish can be killed every year, and so no, it's not affected by any management.

MR. HULL: So all of that would have to be applied to this to -- Okay. Gotcha.

MS. BROUWER: Here is where we start getting into the management measures. Action 8 deals with minimum size limits for both stocks. For Georgia/North Carolina, the council's current preferred is seventeen inches fork length. For Florida, they have actually changed their preferred. When we went to public hearings, they had picked fifteen inches as their preferred. They have selected to go up to sixteen inches for the Florida Keys/East Florida stock.

Hogfish are protogynous hermaphrodites, and so they're all born female and they become males eventually, when they get big enough and if they live that long. The size at transition for hogfish in Georgia/North Carolina is much bigger than in Florida, and so this curve basically shows you if you take a straight line from the middle of this curve down here, it's about twenty-four inches, and so 50 percent of hogfish transition from females to males at about twenty-four inches fork length. That has to be taken into consideration, of course, when you are messing with minimum size limits, because you need to have a sense of how this is going to affect the population, especially when reproduction is so tied to that size.

These are similar curves for the Florida stock. For hogfish in that part of the world, the size at transition seems to be around sixteen inches, and that was determined a while back, however, and so when a population has been under a lot of fishing pressure, sometimes those biological thresholds shift, and so it may still be at sixteen inches, or it actually may be even lower at this point, because that population has been under so much fishing pressure.

These are graphs that I've showed you before. This one shows you how little information we have for hogfish in Georgia and the Carolinas. This is a size distribution of -- I think this is recreational. Yes, this is using MRIP and headboat. I think MRIP is in the blue and the headboat is the red bars, and so you can see that obviously hogfish off the Carolinas and Georgia are much bigger, and here is the size distribution for the recreational landings in Florida.

These are just projected landings for the different modes, and this is assuming there is no closures and assuming that MRIP landings are distributed uniformly, which is a big assumption, and this is using mean 2012 through 2015 observed landings, and so you can see, interestingly, here the seasonal nature of the catches in the Carolinas, and then here are the landings by month for Florida.

This is where we start getting into these predictions, using this decision tool. This table shows you, at the various size limits that are being considered, how many days the fishery would be open. For Georgia/North Carolina, the model is predicting that 411 fish would be caught at the seventeen-inch preferred size limit and that 42 percent of the ACL would be landed.

This is what we have so far, and so the next -- As I go through all the other actions, you will see tables that show you these predictions. Again, as I said, these are predictions using this model that was put together in the Regional Office that the SSC is going to be discussing next week.

Then here is for the Florida stock. At the preferred sixteen-inch minimum size limit, without making any changes to the current bag limit -- This is where it gets really complicated for managers to really get a good picture of how all these changes are going to affect the stock, because you're taking it kind of a little bit at a time. You're looking at what does the size limit do and then what

does the bag limit do, but, eventually, when we get to the end, we have to look at what everything that they're planning to do and how everything together is going to affect those landings.

This is predicting that the closure would take place in the beginning of April under the proposed ACL, and so that translates to ninety-five days of being open, and the projected landings would be 15,666 fish. Then it also shows you, like Chip explained, the projected removals, based on discard mortality and whatnot.

These are very busy tables, but just look at the stuff that's in bold. These are projected percent reductions in harvest by month for headboat up here and then private and charter modes. For Georgia and North Carolina, this is a little bit misleading, because it's saying that it would create a 45 percent reduction for the headboats, but if you look at how many hogfish are being landed on the headboats, it's a pretty small number, and so it doesn't look like those folks are going to be affected too, too much anyway, and so that's just how you interpret that. For charter, it's 15 percent, and then for private, it's zero percent. Then, for Florida, we have the same sort of thing. At the sixteen-inch preferred, you're looking at an 80 percent reduction for headboat, 84 for charter, and 75, more or less, for private.

That was recreational, and they're proposing a change in the size limit for the commercial sector as well. Here is the size distribution, in inches fork length, for Georgia and North Carolina and then for Florida, and so it's quite different there as well. Then your percent reductions, by month, at the proposed size limits. For commercial overall, just look at this column on the right. It's a 2 percent projected reduction in commercial harvest for Georgia and the Carolinas and a 47 percent reduction for Florida. Then, of course, there's all this economic information that's included in there as well, and so are there any questions on Action 6?

MR. ATTACK: I guess I've got a comment. Looking at the data, with our preferred minimum size in North Carolina and Georgia of seventeen inches, 90 percent of the landings are spearfishing, I think, or commercial. There would be an 8 percent reduction if you change the preferred size to twenty inches. I think, up our way, we see a lot more pressure on the hogfish than we used to, and I think that's evident in the landings, if you look at the commercial landings.

You're down to 20,000 pounds a year, and there were years where you had 40,000 or 50,000 or even higher pounds per year. I think the reason we're at seventeen now is to minimize discards on the recreational side, but the recreational hook and line is a very, very small percentage of the landings, and I think what would be better for the fishery is if we went to twenty for the commercial and recreational, and I think it would help the fishery bounce back from where it is now.

MR. DEMARIA: Just something to keep in mind is I think some fish can benefit greatly from spawning area closures, like the muttons certainly did with Riley's Hump. Hogfish is probably not one of them. It doesn't form large aggregations to spawn, just small harems. There will be a male and five or six or ten females or so, and they're spread all the way up and down the Keys, and I suspect Palm Beach and all the way up the coast is like that. They don't aggregate in specific places, and so I don't think just having a spawning area closure is going to do too much for them. Certainly there is some that spawn in Riley's Hump and it's going to be helpful, but it's not a great deal.

I'm not sure if there's a peak, a spawning season, or they spawn year-round, but there must be a peak, and if the council would go back to the Johnson and McBride study, there has got to be some data on when they spawn. Maybe some type of seasonal closure, along with a modest size limit, might work, but if you go with a bigger size limit and allow the fishery year-round, which I guess it's not going to be, because it will be closed when the quota is filled, but if you go with an increase in the size limit, you're just going to be constantly taking out the bigger males in these harems, which has got to disrupt the whole spawning thing.

I don't know, and maybe if there is a peak in the Johnson and McBride paper -- If there is a peak couple of months when they spawn, maybe setting those months aside to just leave them alone and let them do their thing, with some modest size limit to fourteen inches or so, but sixteen or seventeen inches will effectively shut down the fishery for about everybody in the southern part of the range. It's just something to think about.

MR. LORENZ: I think for Florida into North Carolina -- I still kind of favor staying more towards the seventeen-inch minimum size, because of the orientation for less discards, particularly dead discards. I think, with respect to the recreational anglers, there is very few, and you can't control what size fish jumps on your hook.

I do believe, with sport diving and things like those types of activities, the sport diver can be selective and, as Don said, could tend to favor even those larger fish, which are ones maybe we don't want to take. With that in mind, that's why I kind of favor staying towards the seventeen inches for the recreational and avoid the discards. The divers have the option of going for the larger fish, but that may not be the best thing to do.

MS. BROUWER: Just to add, the council did consider a recreational season for the Georgia/North Carolina stock for a time, and then they -- They decided that up here the fish are not very close to shore. People need to go a lot further to catch them, and so, in a sense, because of their distribution, they're a little bit more protected up here. In the end, they decided not to consider a recreational season for the northern stock, but there is still an action, and we'll get to it, to put in a recreational season for Florida.

Moving on to Action 9, this deals with commercial trip limits for both of the stocks. The preferred for Georgia and North Carolina is 500 pounds whole weight per trip, and the preferred for Florida is twenty-five pounds whole weight per trip. Here, you have a distribution of commercially-harvested hogfish per trip. This is for the whole South Atlantic, and this is 2012 through 2014, and this is based just on the commercial logbooks.

This is broken down for you by gear, hook and line, and spear is in the purple, and other is in the light green. Then this one shows you the distribution of trips for each of the two stocks, and so Georgia/North Carolina is in the darker bars, and the gray bars are East Florida and the Florida Keys. You can see that you are getting into the 500's over here for some trips for Georgia/North Carolina, whereas, in Florida, the majority of the trips are staying below a hundred pounds.

Here is projected percent decrease in landings for the commercial sector, and so you're looking at, under the 500-pound preferred commercial trip limit, possibly a 5 percent reduction, and that's for all the gears. Then, for Florida, of course, you're looking at a much higher percent, 42 percent, for all gears included commercially.

These are just landings by region, and then here you get to the predictions under the various trip limit alternatives, looking at the column that's highlighted. Under the seventeen-inch preferred, you're looking at projected landings for the commercial sector of 18,956, which is still below the proposed ACL, and so there's no need there to constrain harvest.

MR. ATTACK: I just wanted to make a comment. I actually made it to the council a while back. With a 500-pound trip limit, at 18,000 pounds, that's forty trips. I just had to make that.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and then this table shows you, under the sixteen-inch preferred for Florida and the twenty-five-pound per trip, you are expecting a season to last 181 days. Then these are the projected landings, and so we are aiming for 3,500 pounds, and the projected landings at that size limit and under that trip limit are 3,500 pounds. Again, remember that it's a combination of management alternatives that are being used here to achieve that reduction. Any questions on Action 9?

Remember that, even though we're past the public hearing stage and all that stuff, the AP can still make recommendations to the council, and so if you feel like you need to make a recommendation other than what their preferred is, please do that. Action 10 deals with the bag limits for each of the two stocks. For Georgia/North Carolina, they are considering a two-fish-per-person-per-day limit. For Florida, they're looking at one fish per person per day. Currently, the limit is five.

This basically just shows you the landings in whole weight of hogfish by state during 2012 and 2014, just to illustrate where the bulk of the landings are. Of course, it's going to be in the Keys. Then here is your distribution of trips, MRIP and headboat, 2012 through 2014, in the South Atlantic. Here is hogfish harvested per vessel.

Then here is where we get into percentages. At the two per person per day for Georgia and North Carolina, it would not affect the headboat or the MRIP or the charter. For Florida Keys/East Florida, we're looking at bigger reductions, 22 percent for the charter and 45 percent for the private recreational sector.

Then here is another one of our combination tables. At the preferred seventeen-inch minimum size limit with two fish per angler per day for Georgia and North Carolina, the season would remain open year-round. Again, the percent of the ACL that would be landed would be less than half. Then, for Florida, you're looking at a season that would last through the beginning of July. Again, like I said, this is assuming that a recreational season is not put in place, and so we'll get to that action next.

That is Action 11, which is on PDF page 91, and their preferred right now is to put in a recreational season for East Florida/Florida Keys of July through October. When we did public hearings, what I remember is some folks in the Keys recommended to the council that they consider disallowing harvest of hogfish during the mini-season, because apparently there is a lot of discards and catches of small hogfish that take place then.

The council settled for this chunk of time, July through October, as their preferred. Here is just the distribution of the landings, and so look at the red line, which is the average. You have the peak in the summer. Somewhere in here, we talk about their spawning season. I couldn't remember, off the top of my head, when Don was talking about it, but I will find it for you shortly.

At the preferred sixteen-inch minimum size limit, one fish per angler per day, and taking into consideration this recreational season, that season would remain open for sixteen inches at one per person per day. You would have 64 percent of the ACL that would be landed, presumably, and so you look at the numbers of fish, it's about 10,000 fish, and we're shooting for about 15,000, and so you're staying well below that proposed ACL at that bag limit.

MR. ATACK: Then this would still be open during the mini-season for lobster, right, the way this is estimated? I know you talked about earlier maybe not having it open then.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and that was just something that was suggested to the council during public hearings, but yes, it would open July 1 and go through October 31.

MR. ATACK: Back to the spawning season. I think up in North Carolina, the northern states, the water is colder in the winter, and it seems like they spawn when the water warms up. They get their big spawn and it goes out through the rest of the year, and so there was talk about having the fishing season July 1 to July 1, so that if the commercial ACL was met that the season would close and be closed during their peak spawn, back in May and June, but that didn't go anywhere.

The recreational were also onboard with that, but that didn't go anywhere either, because, that way, if they hit their ACL, they would wind up closing during the peak spawn, which would be like May and June up in the northern waters. In Florida, I think they're year-round, because the water is warmer. They just spawn pretty much year-round, from what I understand.

MR. HULL: Myra, that Table 4.1.1.1, is there other analyses with different size limits in the results, as far as the season? Like say something about a fourteen or a fifteen-inch size limit that is available, to see what it would do to the recreational season, as opposed to the sixteen-inch, where you have no closure and under the preferred you're only catching 64 percent of the ACL, to where maybe if there was a smaller size limit that it would provide a little more catch and still have an open season, because I think that's important that you don't have a closure.

MS. BROUWER: Those tables can be generated. I don't have one to show you, but that's why this decision tool or decision model, whatever you want to call it, is useful, because the council members can say, okay, how would this change if we went with a different size limit, and you can just input that into the model and out comes the prediction, but I don't have those prepared right now.

The problem with an amendment like this is there is so many different combinations when you're looking at various changes in management. It's really difficult to provide a whole picture of what things would look like under all the alternatives, and so we tried to -- Once the council has narrowed down to a preferred, then we take that preferred and then just show that in the amendment, because, otherwise, it would be huge, but certainly the information is there and can be provided if needed.

MR. HULL: But part of the problem with that is the historical data. Right now, there are no sixteen-inch hogfish in Florida. As they grow, and they grow at a pretty good rate, the landings will probably -- They may be higher than what this is predicting, based on the fish getting bigger, since there is no take. Then you may blow through your ACL anyway, and then you've got MRIP involved. There needs to be some cushion below where your ACL is on your management.

MR. HULL: Just to follow up, for a twelve-inch hogfish to grow to sixteen inches, how long of a time in the Florida Keys would that take?

MS. BROUWER: Sorry, Jimmy, but I don't know that.

MR. ATACK: With the take rate right now, it would be a really long time, but if the take rate is way down, it would certainly be quicker, but I think it's about a year, I think, but there is some graphs on that that we can look at.

MR. HULL: So you just said that you thought that in a year they grow from twelve inches to sixteen inches? Is that what you said?

MR. DEMARIA: I don't know, but that should all be in that Johnson/McBride study, the growth rates. I wouldn't want to guess at it, but, as far as them spawning year-round, I see them on the reef, their little harems, year-round, but there's got to be a few peak months. Black grouper spawn year-round too, but there are peak months. I am thinking that any type of closed season might want to take that into consideration, so you get the most bang for your buck, but, of course, the mini-season, too. Just closing it during the mini-season, you would probably get a good bang for your buck also. It's a complicated one. I don't know the answer to it.

MR. COLLIER: I'm sure we can figure that and then get back to you probably.

MR. JOHNSON: I guess this is a question, Don, that maybe you can answer. I know in the Keys that you've got a lot of areas that are closed to fishing down there. Are these areas -- Do you see bigger hog snapper like in Riley's and some of these places that are closed?

MR. DEMARIA: Riley's, you certainly do, and just all the Tortugas you see bigger fish, but the other areas up the Keys are just so small, like Looe Key and those areas. Once the fish venture outside of it, they get whacked, and so it's not -- The closed areas in the Keys really aren't doing too much, other than Riley's Hump.

MR. MOSS: Just to echo what Don said, the Tortugas and going west there, you see bigger fish, but that's mainly, I would think, an accessibility issue. Pretty much all up and down the east coast -- Certainly where I live, any given day, I can look at a webcam of the beach and see the number of dive flags just sitting there a hundred yards off the shore, and just about everybody has got a gun with them, and I know when I go diving that it's pretty difficult to find anything above twelve inches anymore, fish-wise.

MR. HERRERA: I don't know if anyone can answer this for me, but I know whenever I see restaurants, fish houses, the majority of the fish that I see, hogfish we're talking about, are imports. If we change the size limit, is this going to change the import size limit? I would like to know that, as far as any decision that we need to make, because I think -- I know I shared a lot of time with Don with the Sanctuary, and a lot of this fish is coming from Mexico, and so it could be that we're getting -- Those fish are feeding our waters, but I don't know enough about this, and so I just have that question.

MS. BROUWER: Certainly when the demand for your product is still there, and hogfish are pretty popular, something is going to have to come in and fill that gap. During public hearings, there

were some people that voiced concern, not so much about imports, but they did -- They were worried that perhaps the effort is going to shift to the Carolinas to provide product, and that was one thing that the council is aware of. I don't know how feasible or how likely that is to happen, but certainly it's something that was mentioned as a possible consideration.

MR. FEX: To your point, I think you were asking if the size limit was going to change for the imports. Whatever size limit they have, they can import to us. We can't change that. We don't regulate what Mexico does or whatever, and so if that answers your question about them changing their size limit, then no, because their product is brought in overseas, and so we cannot regulate what they do, but we purchase what they have.

MR. HERRERA: I know, as far as yellowtail, I know that several fish houses had problems with fish under twelve inches, and so that's why I was asking, in the case of hogfish, would it change to -- I just didn't know.

MS. BROUWER: I just wanted to point out that, up on the screen, I found where it talks about the spawning season. In Florida and the Florida Keys, apparently December through April is when the spawning is taking place, and so setting the recreational season in the summer would certainly not disrupt the peak of the spawn.

MR. MOSS: Don will probably somewhat agree with me on this. I think that that's perfect then. If the peak spawning season is December through April, that tends to coincide with the peak people season down by us as well. We certainly have more people in the water than any other time of year down there, and so if you make the recreational season later in the year, into the fall, mini-season notwithstanding, I think that that's definitely a big step in the right direction.

MR. DEMARIA: Just a point. Someone asked me about the fish being bigger in the Tortugas. Just about anywhere you dive in the Keys, if you dive up on the flats, the coral heads and seagrass, where it's accessible to everybody, the fish are smaller, but move over a hundred yards or so to a channel, where it's a little dirtier and it's a stronger current, and the hogfish will almost always be bigger.

Now, is it these bigger fish just prefer the channels? I don't think so. I think it's a fishing pressure thing. Dive under Bahia Honda Bridge, where there's not a lot of spearfishing going on, for numerous reasons, sharks being one, but it's dirty and it's strong current, and there is some decent sized hogfish, but go a little further up, where everybody dives, and they're all tiny. It's a fishing pressure thing, definitely. There is no doubt about it.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to Action 12, that's the last one, and that is on PDF page 96. This one just establishes accountability measures for each of the two stocks, and there is really nothing that would be different than what's currently in place, except it needs to be now specified for each of the two stocks, and so it's sort of like a housekeeping sort of thing.

Just to recap, there is alternatives for the in-season and post-season accountability measures and what happens when the ACL is predicted to be met and what happens when the ACL is exceeded. For the commercial landings, there would be an in-season closure, and then if the ACL is exceeded, there would be a reduction in the following fishing year by the amount of the overage, but that

would only be triggered if hogfish is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded, and so both commercial and recreational.

For a lot of species that are unassessed or are not considered overfished, then having this language in here, where a payback would only happen if a stock is overfished, then that can give you some peace of mind that, okay, this stock is not overfished and so there's not going to be a payback. For hogfish, we know it's overfished, and so we can expect triggering of these accountability measures if the landings are not kept below the ACLs.

For the recreational, you have your in-season as well, and their preferred is to have an in-season closure, regardless of stock status. Then, if the ACL is exceeded again, there is only a payback if the total ACL is exceeded and the stock is overfished. That's pretty much is in the books for all the other snapper grouper species. As I said, Amendment 34 took care of making sure that that was consistent, and it's the same thing for hogfish. That is it for this amendment. As I said, the council will look again at this in June and approve all actions. We will continue to tweak it and add to it and make it ready for submission in September.

MR. KELLISON: Based on a previous question about how long it would take for a fish to get from twelve to sixteen, Angela Collins and Rich McBride have a paper from 2010. I am just eyeballing it, but, based on their length at age distributions, it looks like a twelve-inch fish is about three years old and a sixteen-inch fish would be about six years old, with some variability about that. Another one of the Johnson and McBride papers that Don mentioned, the spawning season is December to May, and so it's pretty consistent with what was in the document here.

MR. HULL: Thanks a lot for that, Todd, and the reason I asked that is I had some recreational guys in the Keys that I know, and they were -- When they heard about this, they said, well, I'll never be able to shoot another fish in my lifetime, but that makes it sound like no, there is light. If they grow within three years, three or four years, they grow pretty quick. Thank you.

MR. ATACK: I would agree. I was looking at that same thing. Two to four years was like a twelve-inch, and then four to eight years was the sixteen-inch, because there is a span. It depends on where the fish was and where it grew, and so that's kind of that variability around that. Any other comments on this amendment? We'll wrap that up then.

MR. LORENZ: I would just like to make, in closing, just something a little off topic that this amendment brought us up to conservation here, and that is about say the frustrations before that Don had mentioned with the hogfish conservation measures. Jim, you brought up the potential need to do something about African pompano. Just one thing I would like to bring forward that I have found, as I've been advocating for fisheries, that has become recently extremely frustrating is, and I come from a point where I was running large manufacturing plants, and so I know what happens when you don't have a budget to get the job done and people keep wanting you to do more and more.

I can't totally defend the council before, and I'm not trying to suck up to them a little bit, but one of the issues that continually comes up to me, anywhere I go with the states and in federal fisheries, is this budget situation and money. We can all ask for a lot to be done, but to have even more done in the future, if we're interested in looking at managing other fisheries or doing these special, we

need to start on the side, all of us, that are the citizen stakeholders in this, and go for fiscal support, for budgetary support, of fisheries.

Don, Jimmy, and I just had a conversation on Thursday. There is literally very little focus on any of our congressional or senate reps on fisheries. They really don't care. Try to get money for state parks or try to get money for national parks or try to get money for fisheries. They kind of have a deaf ear to it. They will go to other areas, and so one thing we all can do, at least in APs like this, is we're all just citizens. We can lobby.

We can call our congressmen and we can call our senators and just ask for some money. Maybe we don't know what for, but just start and try. There may be some council members that can do it. I know maybe Roy and Mel behind me can't, but maybe Zack and Mr. Phillips can. I'm not sure, but I think one of the things going forward, if we want more done, is, in addition to sitting here, when we go back -- We're not going to be able to do it in the AP, but as individuals, we have to really look and push for more money for fisheries. Then we can maybe get more done. I know I will have an opportunity to say this a little later, in Citizen Science and all, but I just thought it was appropriate here, and so thank you.

MR. ATACK: We are going to go ahead and break for lunch now, since it's almost noon, rather than getting into Amendment 41. Let's all try to be back here at about one o'clock.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. ATACK: Welcome back from lunch. We're going to reconvene with Amendment 41, Mutton Snapper.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so this is Attachment 4 in your briefing book, and this is the one that I sent you two versions. Last Friday, I sent you what I thought was a complete document, and then, come to find out, it wasn't, and so I sent it again, I believe yesterday.

MR. DEMARIA: Before we get started, are we going to make any recommendations on the hogfish thing or later or --

MS. BROUWER: That's up to you. I thought we had wrapped up that discussion, but we can certainly go back to it.

MR. ATACK: Have you got something you want to do?

MR. DEMARIA: Yes, I think we should make some recommendations. I know you had some concerns.

MR. HULL: That's why I had brought up, Myra, on that one analysis that they did on the sixteen-inch, as opposed to how it played out and you had no closure, and it showed I think it was -- There was still a lot of ACL left. Maybe finding some kind of compromise on that size limit and coming down a little bit on the size limit to increase the productivity a little bit, and so that would be something that I think I would like to see if anybody would even entertain supporting that, some type of a compromise to come off of that size limit somewhat.

MR. DEMARIA: What about something like a spawning season closure of those peak months? In addition, a smaller size limit, like fourteen inches, with the understanding that it will be increased over the years incrementally, and so a fourteen-inch minimum size and a spawning season closure. Would that be acceptable to you? I would make that a motion then.

MR. HULL: I would second it.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion?

MR. FEX: I am not -- I will go either way on your vote or whatever, but one of my concerns would be we've seen this document before and we've sent up our recommendations. I haven't really tried to make anything, because I know it's probably at the end. It's went through public scoping, and so just to make it clear to you that -- Like I said, I'm on your side on things, but this document has been around, and so it might not go very far.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so, just to remind you, even though they haven't considered a spawning season closure, they are looking at a recreational season that would essentially close recreational harvest during the spawn. The other thing is that the size at transition is sixteen inches, and so that's one of the reasons why the council went with sixteen.

As I mentioned earlier, they had selected fifteen inches as a preferred, and then, when they heard from the public, they upped it to sixteen inches, and that was based on public input and also considering the biology of hogfish. Then another thing that I'm going to throw out there is this statutory deadline for this amendment. I can tell you, for sure, that the council cannot be adding any more actions to this amendment at this point, because then they risk missing the deadline.

Some of you were at the council meeting in March. One of the things that Florida attempted to do was to introduce an action to change the fishing year for hogfish, because that's another avenue that you can use to modify the harvest, and the council had a lot of discussion about it at the committee level. I believe it actually came back up during full council, and that didn't get accepted.

MR. ATACK: This was, I think, considered before. There were some options earlier, last year we went through this amendment, for a step-up in size. They were maybe considered or rejected or whatever, but this had gone through as an option before.

MS. BROUWER: That alternative, the step-up increase, is still in there. One thing you could do is recommend that the council switch their preferred. That is something that they still could do at this point. If you would like, I will bring those alternatives back up so you can see them.

MR. ATACK: I think it's on page 55 in your PDF.

MS. BROUWER: Up on your screen, you have the range of alternatives. For the Florida stock, Sub-Alternative 3e would increase the size limit from twelve to fourteen in year one and up to sixteen in year three. That is PDF page 55 in your document.

MR. ATACK: So there is the alternatives. Did you want to make one of those existing alternatives and suggest it be a preferred? Is that what your intent is?

MR. DEMARIA: I think the motion on the floor is pretty much the same thing. It just incorporates the gradual size increase and with the spawning closure. It kind of puts it all in one alternative or option or whatever.

MR. ATACK: Then do you want to modify your motion to say that?

MR. DEMARIA: Yes, it should have something more. There's an incremental size increase from fourteen inches the first year, fifteen the second, and sixteen the third, something like that.

MR. ATACK: Alternative 3e was to increase the minimum size from twelve to fourteen in year one and sixteen in year three. That's what 3e was.

MR. DEMARIA: Yes, I suppose that's the same thing. This just has a spawning season all in one option.

MR. ATACK: The question I've got with your spawning season is you're only having the season open for three months or four months right now, if we go with the season, and so wouldn't that be your eight-month season, as already a preferred option in the paper?

MR. DEMARIA: Whatever the peak spawn is. It doesn't have to be all eight months, but something in there. You've still got a gradual increase or incremental increase in that motion.

MR. ATACK: So your intent would be the peak spawning season closure?

MR. DEMARIA: Yes, I think so.

MR. MOSS: I have a kind of devils-advocate question for you, Don. I will say that I'm all for just raising the size limit to sixteen right now, but when you start doing the twelve to fourteen and then fourteen to fifteen, I know you and I have actually had conversations about this, in particular. When you're underwater, to tell the difference between a fourteen-inch fish and a fifteen-inch fish, and there is pretty much 100 percent mortality rate with these fish, because most of them are being shot -- To me, it kind of begs an enforceability issue when you start doing the incremental changes.

I would just rather see it go up to sixteen right now and be done with it. I mean I understand the impact that that's going to have short-term, but I think that we're going to reap the long-term benefits from that. Like I said, I think that we're going to have a lot of bycatch or people kind of getting into trouble, because you're down underwater, and I can't tell the difference between a fourteen-inch fish and a fifteen-inch fish when I'm underwater.

MR. DEMARIA: Yes, you're probably right. If it's sixteen inches, there's going to be a lot of fifteen and fourteen and thirteen-inch ones shot. Especially in shallow water, they just look bigger, whatever the optics are in shallow water, but no, you're right.

MR. ATACK: Are you withdrawing your motion then?

MR. DEMARIA: **Yes, I suppose I should just withdraw it.**

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Don.

MR. ATACK: Is that okay with the person that seconded it?

MR. HULL: Yes.

MR. ATACK: **The motion is withdrawn.**

MR. FEX: I want to make a comment. Earlier, I was questioning the rationale of why a 500-pound trip limit on hogfish with an 18,000-pound quota. My rationale came back that nobody is really reaching the 500-pound trip limit. My logic is it's a trip limit for a reason. We're trying to keep the fishery open. At 500 pounds, it doesn't seem like it will, because it's really not limiting anybody, and so I just had to make that rationale back, because it just didn't seem like it was logical, because I get limited on my vermilion and I get limited on triggerfish to keep the season open for the dealers. It limits my ability, when you're not limiting on a fish that's only 18,000 pounds, a 500-pound trip limit just doesn't seem rational.

AP MEMBER: What were the other alternatives on trip limits?

MR. FEX: I apologize. I don't want to go into that, but I just wanted to make an example of that, because as we sit here as advisory panels, we put a limit in there for a reason, and so that was just making a point. I don't want to change it, because it's already the council's -- They've already made their --

MR. ATACK: Just for the record, the other options were a 250, and they went with the preferred 500. There was a 750 and a 100. The next step down would have been 250.

MS. BROUWER: Also, there is an alternative that considers no trip limit for each of the stocks, and that was analyzed as well. I should just -- Actually, during public comment, a fisherman from North Carolina came and said that yes, he does actually bring in more than 500 pounds per trip of hogfish sometimes, but he stated on the record that 500 pounds would allow him to continue his operation.

MR. ATACK: Okay. Is there anything else on hogfish?

MR. DEMARIA: The bottom line in South Florida is there's just too damned many people. No matter what you do, there's just so many people down there, especially -- I just don't know what we can do with something like hogfish. We've gone over the cliff and there is too many people. I really don't know.

MR. ATACK: We are going to move on to mutton then, which is another South Florida issue, I think.

MS. BROUWER: Mutton snapper, this is Attachment 4. As I was saying earlier, there is an updated version of the document that was sent to you in your briefing book. This is posted on the website, and so you can download the latest and greatest. The difference is we received some

preliminary analysis for the commercial trip limit alternatives just a few days ago, and so I included those and sent it back out to you all on Friday. This document should be dated April 25. That's the one that we're going to be using to go over stuff.

A little bit of background. This is the first time you guys are seeing this amendment. We went out for scoping earlier this year. The actions on mutton snapper were previously included in an amendment that was targeted to South Florida issues, and we were doing it initially jointly with the Gulf.

Then it was going to address mutton and hogfish and yellowtail, and a lot of time was spent trying to figure out how to put this amendment together, and eventually it sort of disappeared, and mutton got taken out and put in its own amendment to respond to the stock assessment that was recently completed, and so the council needs to take action to adopt the values from the stock assessment.

The stock assessment model that was used for this assessment is a better model than what was used back in 2008, which is the last time that mutton snapper was assessed, and even though the stock is considered healthy and there's no overfishing and it is not overfished, there needs to be a reduction in the ABC, because the previous model seems to have overestimated the size of the adult population, and so you will see that what's being recommended by the stock assessment for mutton snapper, the levels are a little bit lower than what's currently in place.

This is what was implemented for mutton snapper through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment. This is a stock that is assessed as a unit, and the range covers the Gulf Council's jurisdiction as well as the South Atlantic, and so the way the councils deal with it is there is a formula that they use to allocate the ABC between the two councils, and so that formula allows the South Atlantic Council to get 82 percent of the ABC and the Gulf Council gets the other 18 percent.

Then we take our chunk of the ABC and we apply the other allocation formula. That gives you your commercial apportionment and your recreational apportionment, and so that's a just a little bit of background. Here is all the numbers that came out of the stock assessment. You get all your benchmarks, your MSY, your OFL recommendations, and then your ABC recommendations. These are the levels that the council needs to adopt.

Actions start on PDF page 5, and Action 1 deals with specifying the MSY. Right now, it is not specified. There is a proxy that's used for the FMSY, which is F 30 percent SPR, and so the council would basically adopt the language here in Preferred Alternative 2, which would allow them to adopt the MSY out of the assessment and then any subsequent assessments that get done, whatever values come out of those assessments, the council would not need to take action through an amendment to adopt them. It would just be done automatically, and so that's currently their preferred, and you see there what the MSY value would be. Any questions on that action?

The first two are always very straightforward. It's the MSY and the MSST. MSST is next. That's PDF page 6, and here, again, the council's preferred is to set that level at 75 percent of the spawning stock biomass at MSY. This, again, is another species that has that low natural mortality, and so the intent with doing this is to prevent a situation where natural variations in recruitment or what have you are going to cause the stock to be considered overfished and then you would have to put in a rebuilding plan, but it's actually not biologically necessary. It's because of where your

threshold is. Setting it at this level of 75 percent of SSB MSY would prevent that situation from happening. That's their preferred for MSST. Are there questions there? No?

Action 3 is where we get into the ACLs. This is on PDF page 7. The current ABC and optimum yield for mutton is 926,600 pounds whole weight. You've got your commercial at 157,743 and recreational at 768,857. Here again, the council is considering basically the same range of ACL alternatives they consider all the time. For mutton, their preferred is to set the ACL at the same level as the ABC.

You've got this table here that shows you, under the various alternatives, what those ACLs would be from 2017 through 2020, and so the council would adopt -- They can either adopt just one value and then hold it steady or they can adopt the projections from the stock assessment, which is what they're considering in this case, and so your commercial ACL, under the preferred alternative, would be 100,015 pounds. Your recreational ACL, again in numbers of fish, would be 116,127 fish.

Here, we went through the same methodology that I briefly mentioned earlier, where the ABC is actually specified in numbers, and that is to get away from this issue that complicates things when you are also changing the minimum size limit and, therefore, your poundage can vary over time.

Here are your landings, so that you can see that for the recreational sector you've got your mean landings, 2010 through 2014, again the past five years, are at 112,050, and that's in numbers of fish. Your commercial, in pounds, averages 76,684. The recreational landings are bumping a little bit close to this proposed ACL in 2017 of 116,000 fish. The commercial seems to be okay, but, nonetheless, there are some considerations for management measures. Any questions on the ACL action? No?

MR. ATACK: What's the average weight for fish on the recreational, because they look like -- Is it different for that versus commercial?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, it is different. The numbers are in here somewhere, but, in order to get the recreational ACL in numbers, we did not use the average weight of an individual fish. We used this other methodology that I explained to you that actually involves setting the ACL in numbers and then subtracting the commercial ACL in numbers from the recreational ACL in numbers and then converting that to pounds, using the average commercial weight. Does that make sense? I think that's how it works. In order to do that, we did use the average commercial weight from the stock assessment, and if you give me a little while, I can get you that number, but I don't recall what it is right now.

Action 4 revises that recreational ACT. It's the same sort of deal as with the hogfish. We have the current formula that uses the percent standard error to come to that target value. For this species, the council's preferred is to set the ACT at 85 percent of the recreational ACL, but you can see the PSEs for mutton are pretty low. The higher your PSE, the less certain or the less precise your data are, and so if you have low PSEs, then that's a good thing. Here is what your recreational ACTs would be under the various ACL alternatives, and so we're looking at the preferred over here, and those are the values for each of the four years.

MR. ATACK: When you go back to your ACL equals OY equals ABC, I guess the preferred option there is the maximum take, right, on Action 3? I was just trying to run the numbers to see what kind of reduction in the pounds, because it looks like you're going from commercial landings of 157,000 down to 100,000 pounds per year with this action. The other option, Option 2b, I guess, gives you a little bit of leeway. It's 95 percent versus 100 percent of the ABC, right?

MS. BROUWER: I've got the average weights for you. Brian calculated them for me here real quick. For recreational, the average weight of a mutton is 4.34 pounds. This is whole weight. The commercial weight, the average, is 7.68 pounds. Does the AP want to make any motions to recommend something other than what the council has chosen as their preferred? Is that what you were wanting to talk about?

MR. ATACK: Yes, and I guess, as we go through these, if we want to make any input to the council, it would be kind of good to do it while we go through them, versus get to the end of the document and then having to go back, like we did in hogfish.

AP MEMBER: Yes, but I don't think the stock is in trouble. That's why I think they've got it equal to everything. I don't think they're having an issue with it. We haven't met the quota on it, and I think that's the only rationale.

MR. DEMARIA: I think the council is missing the point of this whole mutton snapper thing. I asked Jerry Ault if he had any information on mutton snapper, and he sent me 101 pages of mostly calculus equations, which may as well have been written in Chinese. Actually, it would probably be better. I could have gotten someone to interpret it if it was in Chinese, but nobody could really understand what he sent me.

I asked him, can you just simplify this and tell me what's going on? His work was in South Florida, in the Tortugas, and so if you separate South Florida and the Tortugas out from all this, according to his work, it paints a somewhat different picture. He's got the spawning stock ratio at something like 10 percent. He says it's been overfished and it is currently undergoing overfishing in South Florida, and I think that's significant, especially considering these fish are associated with coral reefs. The majority of them are caught in South Florida. That's where they spawn.

If they are overfished there and the spawning stock ratio is only 10 percent in South Florida, that's something the council needs to consider. When you look at the entire stock, maybe it's not overfished, but the fact that the center of their abundance is South Florida and all this other stuff is going on down there, I think it's -- I think we ought to be listening to what he's saying on the mutton snapper right now. He tried to tell us the same thing on the hogfish and it was ignored, and now I feel like we're on the bus again heading for the cliff, and we're still arguing whether there's a cliff out in front of us or not.

MR. MOSS: Just to echo what Don said, I completely agree with him. The unfortunate truth, and I understand that it's the science that we have, is that the Tortugas kind of gets coupled in with all the other mutton data, and I was speaking with Manny earlier. The Tortugas is kind of like that really smart kid in class that screwed up the bell curve for everybody else.

If you include the Tortugas information in with everything else, it really doesn't give you the correct picture of what's going on in the rest of South Florida. Again, and he said it with the

hogfish, but I think we need to pay attention to it now, before we're at the cliff, and really make the adjustments to it now.

MR. HERRERA: Again, the problem with mutton snapper is not throughout the year. It's basically targeting them during those spawning months, May and June mainly, when they're all rolled up and ready to do their spawn. We really, really have to address the overfishing of the fish when people are setting out to target them when they're ready to reproduce.

MR. DEMARIA: I think Manny is right. Other than right where these fish spawn, when they're spawning, it's kind of a hard fish to catch. The rest of the year, they're spread out over open bottom, and the only way to really effectively catch a lot of them is with bottom longlines and fish traps. Both gears have been prohibited.

I just think if we protect them, either when they spawn or where they spawn, that we could get a lot of bang for our buck without impacting people. I'm not sure it makes any sense to have Robert throw a fish back during a two-month spawning closure or something like that when he's fishing off of St. Augustine and catching fish that probably aren't really contributing to the spawn anyway. The problem seems to be in the Keys, where they spawn, and that's where I think they should focus their attention on.

MS. BROUWER: We'll get to the actions that address the spawning and management measures for that. As far as protecting areas, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission has discussed, at some level, possible protection of Western Dry Rocks and Eyeglass Bar, but that is entirely a state issue, because those areas are in state waters, and so there is really nothing the council could do to step in and put in regulations for those particular areas.

MR. ATACK: Yes, but I guess back to my comments earlier. Usually, this is structured so you have an ACL and then you have some cushion and you do a little bit of a step-down as you go through, and that's the way this whole thing is set up. If we just start setting everything at 100 percent, you really have very little level of conservancy in there for your numbers.

MS. BROUWER: I guess, to that, I can say that the council is aware of this, and, under the Reauthorized Magnuson, when the requirement for ACLs and all that went into place -- Ideally, if you have a lot of uncertainty in your information, you want to have a buffer, but the council has, I don't want to say consistently chosen to set the ACL at the same level as the ABC, but has very frequently done that, because they feel that there has been some improvements in how we monitor our landings that allow them to feel that they can effectively manage at that level, but Jim is right.

It would be biologically better for the fish if there was a bit of a cushion, but that's why they consider the alternatives that they consider, setting it at that same level or stepping it down, and for some species, like we saw for hogfish, they have decided to step it down a little bit.

MR. DEMARIA: One thing I like about Jerry Ault's work is it's not just based on landings and counting dead fish, but it's also observations underwater, and both his observations and his landings work and whatnot all seem to -- They all come together and say the same thing, and so I think we should pay attention to what the guy is saying. He was right about the hogfish and got rejected, and he's saying about the same thing about muttons now, and I think we need to listen to him.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so, moving on to Action 5, this is on PDF page 12. This is where there needs to be some -- I guess FWC came to the council and said in order for regulations to be put in the right time for these fish, we need to rethink whether May and June are the appropriate spawning months, because that was put in place a long time ago. I think it was in 1992, and certainly there has been more information on the life history of the species since then, and so they thought it would be prudent to revisit that and also ask the public whether a different season would work better.

The council is considering these three alternatives, April through June, April through July, or May through July, and so these are the alternatives that we took out for scoping, and they have not settled on a preferred yet, pending more input from this group. We still have to do public hearings on this amendment in August.

The idea is once you designate what constitutes the spawning season, or the spawning months, for regulatory purposes, then you can come in and put in whatever regulations are appropriate to protect the spawners, and so we call the spawning season versus the regular season, which would be the rest of the year.

These are the alternatives that the council is considering, and I should say that the FWC is very interested in going about developing this amendment very closely with the council, to make sure that whatever regulations go into place are going to match in state waters and in federal waters. As you all have pointed out, mutton snapper is pretty much a South Florida thing, and so we're working very closely with them. The FWC came out and did public workshops at the same time that we were doing our scoping for mutton snapper, and they're going to also be out with us when we're doing public hearings in August as well. It would be really useful, I think, for the council, from this action forward, if you all had recommendations or had some discussion about what's being considered.

MR. ATACK: I just didn't know if you wanted to show the tables that are part of this action before they make a preferred.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, of course. We have mostly a lot of descriptive information in this amendment, and, as I said, when we were talking about hogfish, it's difficult when the council is considering several changes to management to just say, okay, if you do this change, this is what's going to happen without considering everything else.

When we get to Action 8, we'll talk about the possible effects of all these different actions combined, and this is basically what we have so far in the way of analysis. If you will just bear with me, it's -- Anyway, it is what it is.

Here is the table with the recreational landings for mutton from 2010 through 2014, broken down by wave. Basically, it shows you the peak there during Wave 3, May through June, and you've got harvest in numbers, harvest in pounds, and you've got your discards, your total catch, number of trips, and the number of anglers. There's lots of information there, and then here's just a visual looking at mutton snapper average landings and discards in numbers and pounds by wave.

MR. ATACK: The alternatives we have look like they all include May and June, and then some alternatives -- If you look at that bar chart, one of the alternatives in April, May, and June and one

is May, June, and July. Those two-month waves in one alternative, it catches half of one wave before and half of one wave after.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and here is just some more visuals for you. These are landings and discards and total catch per angler by wave. Again, it's the same time period, the last five years, and this is just for private and recreational boats. This is total landings, discards, and total catch per trip by wave. Here, we have headboat and MRIP, and so this is catch per angler, angler day in the blue, and the average in the red.

Those are all the recreational descriptives, and here is the commercial stuff. You've got the average monthly catch, again for the last five years, and still the highest catch seems to be in spring, in May. You've got your number of vessels and your number of trips, and here is a visual of landings in pounds whole weight, numbers of vessels, and numbers of trips by month. May is definitely the winner there again. Here is your per trip and per vessel distribution of the commercial catch.

MR. HULL: I'm all for leaving it at May and June. I know we could probably include possibly April and possibly July on either end of that, but if we're looking at doing -- If we're looking at doing this for the purposes of a possible closed spawning season, I think we'll get certainly the bang for our buck with those two months. Then also, if we're doing a step-down as far as take, but I would propose no action and just leave it at May and June.

MR. HERRERA: I agree, to second that.

MR. HULL: **I move to go with Alternative 1, no action, and keep the spawning season as May and June.**

MR. HERRERA: I second.

MR. ATACK: Any further discussion?

MR. DEMARIA: Is this going to be for the entire South Atlantic?

MS. BROUWER: Yes.

MR. DEMARIA: Then I've got a question. Is it really fair? Is it really going to accomplish anything to make someone like Robert throw his mutton snapper back during May and June, when they're probably contributing nothing to the spawn anyway that far north?

MR. ATACK: This is just designating those two months, which is already designated, those two months, May and June, as the spawning season. That's all we're talking about.

MR. DEMARIA: We're not closing anything then.

MR. OSBORNE: Right now, we're allowed to keep our fish though during those spawning months. Is it still going to be like that, or they're talking about not keeping them during the spawning months?

MR. ATACK: That will depend on what we do in these next actions, as we get to them. I will read the motion. The motion is to recommend no action for --

MR. STIGLITZ: I am for the action to do no action, but, before we do something here, I would like to know what's going to come up next, because I think they're wanting to reduce -- That's coming up after this, the reducing the numbers, because, if they're going to reduce numbers, I don't want a spawning closure. I am going to be against the spawning closure if they're going to tell you that you can't take but two fish. If they're going to cut you from ten to two, why is there a spawning closure?

Then, that time of year, the commercial fishermen have to go to recreational rules, and if you go to a spawning closure and you go to two fish, then guys down there are out of business for those months. They can't go fishing no more, and so I mean I'm not going to tell you what to do, but, personally, I would rather wait on this to see what we come up with on the next one, because if you're going to go to a spawning closure and two fish, the commercial guys is really going to take it bad.

MR. ATACK: That's fair enough. This is just to define what the spawning season is. I agree with you that we've got other stuff that's going to -- I think one kind of ties into the other, but this is just to define, I guess for our purposes, what the spawning season is going to be, and then we'll decide later if there's going to be closures or what.

MR. HULL: Yes, and the options were three-month seasons versus a two. It was May and June, or you could have been April, May, and June, or May, June, and July, but, by this action here, you're keeping it to a two-month spawning season, but you're not saying what you're going to do about the spawning season protections.

MR. STIGLITZ: I am all for that if it's just strictly recreational, because then, come May and June, at least maybe we can vote that the commercial fishermen can still have ten per person, so they can still go to work and make a couple of dollars. There is already a designated spawning closure, and all it is is for the commercial sector. The commercial fishermen are shut out in May and June. The recreational sector does not have a closure in May and June, and so if you want to close it to the recreational sector --

MR. HULL: We're not closing anything. This is just to --

MR. STIGLITZ: If you go to a spawning season, that's coming next. It's coming next, and I guess I'm putting the horse right up there in the front there, because I know what's coming next. If you go to a spawning closure, those two months, and then you go to one or two fish, the commercial fishermen are going to lose, and we need to make sure that them guys stay in business too, because the fishery is not being overfished. That's already been told to us. We are not being overfished, and so let's make sure that everybody gets their little portion of it, but let's make sure that the commercial guys don't get destroyed, too.

MR. JOHNSON: I just need to clarify something. This is already designated, and so we're not changing anything. We're not doing anything by this motion.

MR. STIGLITZ: It's only to commercial.

MR. JOHNSON: No, it's -- We're just designating what months the science says they spawn. Is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: For regulatory purposes, yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I just wanted to clarify that.

MR. DEMARIA: The problem, from what I see, from many years of fishing in the Keys, is it's not so much May and June when the fish are getting caught, the actual time, but it's the area. There is only certain areas where these fish aggregate to spawn. Outside of that, even in May or June, I don't think it's a big deal to catch a few of them, like where you're at off of Marathon. It may not even be a problem if there's no big spawning aggregation there.

My concern is right where these fish spawn. That's where they're really getting hammered, and this aggregation off of Western Dry Rocks has been beat, and I know it's state waters and the council can't do anything, but the fish really don't know the difference. It's something to consider. It's an area thing, I believe, is what the real problem is, where they aggregate in these tight aggregations to spawn, and it's not like a hogfish, where they're spread out all over the reef, or yellowtail.

Does it really make sense to penalize Robert and Richard and people that are fishing outside of those aggregation areas when they might not be having a big impact on them? As far as the sports fishermen go, they've built it up into a big thing. Come to Florida and come to the Keys and fish in May and June. If we do, and these other alternatives recommend closing down May and June, it puts them kind of out of business, too. If they just stay away from the actual sites where they spawn, and there's not that many sites remaining, they could still have their May or June mutton spawn thing. Richard could still catch his fish. It's just I believe they've got to be left alone where they spawn. It's an aggregating fish, and that's its downfall, and, like Jerry Ault said, it's a 10 percent SPR in the Keys.

MR. ATTACK: If there is no more discussion, we'll go ahead and vote on the motion. The motion is to recommend no action for Action 5, the spawning season for mutton snapper is May and June. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; any opposed. It's unanimous and the motion is approved.**

MS. BROUWER: Action 6 is on PDF page 17, and so this is where we start getting into the suite of management options that the council is considering. As Richard was saying, there are some restrictions on the commercial sector during May and June. During that time, they are restricted to ten per person per day or ten per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and so that's currently what is in place for the commercial sector. As you know, there are no restrictions for the recreational sector during those two months.

The council is considering a whole bunch of things. Alternative 2 would retain it in the recreational ten snapper aggregate limit, but specify a different bag limit just for the months that are not the spawning months. During the regular season, they're considering a four-fish-per-person-per-day limit, a five-fish-per-person-per-day limit, or a ten-fish-per-person-per-day limit.

Alternative 3 would, again, retain it within the aggregate and then specify a bag limit or a vessel limit during the spawning months. The options there are two or three per person per day or ten or twelve per vessel per day or no retention during the spawning months. Then the other thing they're considering is to, again, retain it within the aggregate and then specify bag limits year-round, and so they're looking at two per person, three per person, or five per person, and so that would be for the entire year.

Currently, I've already said that they're included in the ten snapper aggregate. There is a minimum size limit of sixteen-inches total length, and it's a year-round fishery. The calendar year is the fishing year. This table shows you recreational landings by wave, and I don't know what years -- There they are. Again, it's 2010 through 2014. Jim, I think Robert has a question.

MR. JOHNSON: It's not so much a question as a comment. I watched vermilion snapper go from ten to five. I watched red snapper go from two to zero. I mean, do recreational anglers really need to keep ten mutton snapper a person? I mean, are we going to go down the road five years from now and it be closed, because we're keeping ten per person today? I mean it's just something to -- I do catch quite a few muttons, believe it or not, out of St. Augustine, but I'm one of the few people that do. I just get lucky. I just think we need to think about that. Ten seems pretty liberal, to me. I mean are we reaching the --

MS. BROUWER: You're absolutely right, Robert. This graph here shows you the distribution landed per angler by the two recreational datasets, and you can see that the majority -- People are not catching, obviously, their ten muttons, and so it seems to be below two. That's pretty much the bulk of what's being landed, and so you're right.

Then when we were out during scoping, most of the folks that came out to comment -- Everybody was of that same opinion, that it really was a little excessive to have the option of landing ten per person. In fact, very few people were actually doing that.

MR. HULL: I just noted one thing kind of tricky with what we're doing here now. Based on the last motion we had, we voted in to look at the spawning months. Now there is language going in here where some of these reductions occurring are talking about spawning season versus spawning months. That was actually different, because the spawning season was May and June, which is what we talked about. When the council looked at spawning months, there were some extended months, and so I just want to make sure we keep it clear that we'll be talking about any reductions that are going on would be in May and June, which was previously stated as the spawning season, and not get it comingled with language like "spawning months", which would allow them a much larger time period, if they go with that.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so I will try to help with that. I think we were getting into kind of a grayish area with the council announcing that they were going to decide what the spawning season was for mutton snapper, because certainly a management body can't decide on the biology of a species. For that reason, we're calling them -- It's not that the council is designating the spawning season. They are designating the months during which regulations to protect spawners would be effective, but that's kind of a mouthful, and so we call it spawning months versus non-spawning months, but you're right that the idea is to first define that time period during which, if you want, you can have additional restrictions to protect the spawning population, but you don't have to.

MR. ATACK: I think the question is the verbiage on Action 5 had “spawning season”, and then, in Alternatives 2 and 3, it’s “spawning months”, and so is spawning season and spawning months really the same thing, or is that two different definitions?

MR. HULL: Which, for us, we’re talking May and June.

MR. JOHNSON: This is a question mostly for the South Florida people. So what is reasonable? Is it five per person or three per person?

MR. MOSS: In talking to numerous people, even some guys that run charter boats out of Key West and that fish the Tortugas, almost to a man, and I actually only met one person that is against dropping it down, but three per person is pretty fair, and most people won’t come near that, except during the spawning season.

I would, when we get to that point, if somebody wants to make the motion, or I will make the motion, to drop it to three per person. It has nothing to do with spawning seasons, but I think that that’s more than fair. I mean it’s a pretty heavy fish anyway. If you get three, you’re doing all right.

MR. ATACK: Myra, has there been any analysis done on if we go to four fish per person in the regular season and two per person in the spawning season and what that will do to the annual landings versus the ACL?

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so, as I mentioned earlier, I do have that information, but, because it incorporates all of the actions together, I can’t just show you a piece of it. I have to show it to you altogether, and so it’s at the very end of the document, because another thing that the council is considering is a change in the size limit, and so we’ve got a size limit change and we’ve got bag limit during the season, year-round, no season, per person, per vessel. All of these combinations need to be looked at together in order to give you a realistic picture of the kinds of reductions or increases that you might expect.

MR. STIGLITZ: I’m going to go right back to where I was before. If we’re going to go to different size limits -- If you go from a sixteen-inch fish to an eighteen-inch fish, an eighteen-inch fish is nine to ten pounds. The sixteen-inch fish weighs about four or five pounds, if that. A person doesn’t need more than two eight or ten-pound fish or bigger, and so, before I try to cut you back or give you more fish or whatever, I would like to know what the size limit is going to be or what we’re going to do for a size limit.

If you go to a twenty-inch fish, there is no reason why somebody needs more than one of them. I mean my family can’t eat but one mutton snapper. If I go to my son’s boat and get a fish, I’ve got to give the rest of it away, because I can’t eat it all. I hate to sit there and tell you how many fish we would like you to have and they say, well, let’s keep it at ten, but then we’re going to go to a twenty-inch fish. I’m right back to my same argument. I would rather figure out what size we would like to go to first.

MR. JOHNSON: The only issue I have with that, Richard, is, in the South Atlantic, the for-hire sector is considered recreational, and charter boat needs might be different than just a pure

recreational angler. Dave said he talked to charter boat operators and they felt comfortable with three fish. Again, you don't want to -- I would have to take that into consideration.

MR. STIGLITZ: Right, and so if we can look at this action and decide how we want to go, we have Alternatives 2, 3, and 4. The main difference is that 4 is a year-round thing. 2 is a regular season, and 3 is a spawning season. If we want to consider how we want to do this, or we can, I guess, table this and move down to trip limits and go down to minimum sizes and come back to this. I guess that's an option.

MR. MOSS: I don't necessarily disagree with you, Richard, but I think it's kind of either one could go first. If you decide what your limit is, then you can decide what the size limit is. If you decide what the size limit is, then you can figure out what the limit is. That's one alternative. Again, like I said, most charter guys, and I will name even Captain Yuri, who has made his living fishing muttons. I was just texting with him earlier today. He told me, and he said that I could use his name and that's why I'm throwing it out there, but he told me that he's perfectly okay with going anywhere from two to four fish per day, and he's happy with that and he can still make just fine of a living.

MR. ATTACK: The other option we do have is we do preferred options here and then we get down to size limits and if we want to come back and do a change on a preferred, we also have that ability to do.

MR. DEMARIA: I was out at Western Dry Rocks last year during the peak of the spawn and helping with some tagging work and I was watching the people who were there fishing. There weren't that many boats that were catching two muttons per person. It's beat down that low. Riley's was a similar situation before it was closed.

We're talking about dropping it from ten to two, and it's a bit like having a speed limit of a thousand miles an hour on the interstate, which nobody reaches, and dropping it down to 200. Maybe a few people will reach 200, but the bottom line, I think, is you've just go to leave these fish the hell alone where they spawn. It came back at Riley's and it can come back at these other places too, if you just leave them alone. Bringing it down to two, of course people are going to agree to it, because they're really not even reaching that now anyway, most of them.

MR. STIGLITZ: David, were you talking about Alternative 4, and that would be year-round?

MR. MOSS: I was going to nominate 4b.

MR. STIGLITZ: If you nominate 4b, I will second it.

MR. MOSS: **Then I make a motion for 4b, Sub-Alternative 4b.**

MR. STIGLITZ: I second it.

MR. ATTACK: Any other discussion on this while she's typing the motion?

MR. HERRERA: We seem to have a little bit of confusion going on that we're not all sure about. This is, of course, recreational that we're talking about. However, as I continue to hear, as far as

the commercial and one of the points that Richard tried to make, is with the commercial, in May and June, we're held to the recreational limit. Is that going to be the same case here?

MR. ATACK: I believe the commercial is addressed further down in the document. We'll have to look at it.

MR. HERRERA: Again, I will back David on his motion.

MR. ATACK: Okay. Any more discussion? If not, we'll call the vote on it. The motion is to accept Sub-Alternative 4b as preferred under Action 7, which reads: Retain mutton snapper within the ten aggregate bag limit in the South Atlantic. Reduce the mutton snapper bag limit to three fish per person per day pretty much year-round. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; any opposed. One opposed and the rest are for. The motion is approved.** Any discussion?

MR. STIGLITZ: **I would like to make a motion then that during the May and June commercial closure that the commercial fishermen can still retain their ten fish.**

MR. ATACK: Did anybody second it? I guess maybe you could explain how that works. What do they do now?

MR. STIGLITZ: Right now, there is a closure for commercial fishermen for mutton snapper for May and June. It's a commercial closure for mutton snapper. The only thing they're allowed to retain is the recreational bag limit. During the May and June, the commercial fishermen have always kept ten per person on their boats. If we go to two fish per person or three fish per person with the recreational, now, when it comes to May and June, the commercial sector goes to three fish per person. It's pretty hard to go fishing for three fish per person.

MR. ATACK: Right, but it's a commercial closure, and you say you can't eat more than one fish.

MR. STIGLITZ: No, they can sell them.

MR. ATACK: Myra has got to clarify something.

MS. BROUWER: I just want to clarify, for the record, that it's not a closure. The commercial sector is restricted to ten per person per day during May or June or ten per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and that part of the regulation seems to have been forgotten, and so it's still ten per trip or ten per person, but the "whichever is more restrictive" essentially limits it to pretty much ten per trip.

MR. HULL: I think there is some language right here that's pretty telling. It says that the commercial landings of mutton snapper, for all the Florida counties, are highest during the May/June peak spawning period, despite the current restriction on harvest of ten fish per day per trip. They're catching -- The majority of the harvest is caught with a ten-fish limit during the spawn, and the rationale of what we were reducing the size limit, or the bag limit, on the recreational sector is because we figured that they were only catching two.

Most people were only catching two fish to begin with, and here we have a ten-fish limit, which we're able to do, and more than half the catch is all caught during then, and so we're providing

access to the consumers at that time, when we can really access the fish. Ten fish per boat to supply the marketplace is what we need, and to go down to something lower than that is just ridiculous. It's ten fish total per trip. Isn't what you just said, Myra? It's whatever is most restrictive.

MS. BROUWER: Again, it's either ten per person per day or ten per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and so that little bit of language pretty much says that you can have twenty people on your boat, but you're not going to have 200 mutton. You only can have ten.

MR. HULL: The point I was trying to make was you need to leave the commercial trip limit alone, because this is when their production is at -- The stock is not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring. That is the science that we're living with here, and so just leave that alone. It's been working on the commercial side.

MS. MARHEFKA: Myra, can you clarify -- It's not really a closure, and they're not really retaining a bit limit. It is a reduction, and that fish is allowed to be sold at that time? We were all confused about that.

MS. BROUWER: That is correct.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would suggest that maybe also the motion was worded to reflect that more accurately.

MR. MOSS: Myra, if I'm not mistaken, this is actually Action 7, isn't it, essentially? It's Action 7, I think.

MR. LORENZ: Isn't this truly just retaining status quo then, and isn't that the proper thing for us to say, is status quo, rather than any new language?

MR. JOHNSON: I need to ask one question. Not to throw a cog in the wheel here, but do the state regulations mirror the federal regulations on this fishery? The Western Dry Rocks, where Don is concerned about the harvest on the spawning aggregation of mutton snapper, is in state waters. Does anybody know what the state regulations are on mutton snapper?

MS. BROUWER: The state regulations currently are compatible with federal regulations, and that's why -- Florida wants to keep it that way, and that's why they are working jointly. A lot of these ranges of alternatives actually came from FWC, and they said this is what we want to get input on. The council said okay, and we'll get input on that as well and we'll get it analyzed. Yes, it's the same.

MR. JOHNSON: Myra, thank you for that. Then the other statement, and, believe me, I love killing fish. I've been doing it for thirty years, but if we're concerned about fishing these fish during their spawning aggregations, is it really wise just to -- I mean I'm getting conflict. Don is saying that there's a study that says these fish are overfished and it's a 10 percent SPR, but then everybody keeps saying they're not overfished and the stock is fine, and so which is it? Are they overfished?

MS. BROUWER: Right, and that's the bottom line. The stock assessment is a more inclusive study that includes all of the available information on mutton. The study that was done by Jerry Ault and his colleagues is looking at a smaller portion of the population, and, as you know, the council has to adhere with the procedures, the SEDAR procedures, and so whatever study or stock assessment, it needs to go through a review process that goes through the SEDAR review and goes to the SSC.

The SSC finally says yes, this is suitable and acceptable for management, and then the council can use that information for management. There are established ways that other studies or models or assessments or whatnot can be brought in for the council to consider, but it has to be done through certain steps. I don't know if I kind of went off on a tangent here, but --

MR. JOHNSON: No, and thank you for that. Just one last statement or question to Richard. Is mutton snapper the only thing open during that time for the commercial guys? You kept saying they won't be able to make a living, and I was just curious.

MR. STIGLITZ: **I would like to change my motion and take the word "closure" out.** Thank you.

MR. ATTACK: The one that seconded, is that person okay with the change?

MR. DEMARIA: What we're recommending is ten fish for commercial, no matter how many people they have on the boat, per day? Before that, we recommended three per person per day for recreational, no matter how many people they have on the boat. For a recreational boat that goes out with ten people, they can have thirty, but you can only have ten. Does that make sense?

MS. BROUWER: Richard, that deviates from what is currently in the regulations, and so I just put the words "per person" there, and that gets, I think, at what you intend. Is that okay? Okay.

MR. HERRERA: Again, I want to help clarify some of these questions, like you're saying. I completely agree with Don. Western Dry Rocks, the spawn there has been overfished now for X amount of years. For what it's worth, I do agree with Don that if anything else -- I don't agree to closing Western Dry Rocks all year, but, during the spawn, I couldn't agree more with him, and that, we tend to agree on.

It's that spawn that I believe that's being overfished. Not throughout the year, but if we just let those fish, especially in Western Dry Rocks, do their spawning thing, the mutton snapper stock will be perfectly fine, and so I just want to help clarify, so when we make these decisions -- Richard, I fished Western Dry Rocks and I have fished all throughout Miami to Key West and so forth, the Dry Tortugas, and I have seen that decline in the spawn, which is why I'm here, and I would love to have an input in what goes on with mutton snapper. I hope I can help clarify some of these issues that we have.

MR. MUNDEN: I would like to say that I'm confused. If this motion fails, then what will the commercial sector be able to do with mutton snapper during May and June, if this motion doesn't pass?

MS. BROUWER: There is another action that's coming up that deals with restrictions for the commercial sector, and so there's trip limits and also vessel limits and per person limits as well.

MR. ATACK: Does it make sense then to pass this motion right now, until we go through the other things that are on the table, on the agenda? Is there any more discussion? If not, then we will vote on it and go to the next item.

MR. MOSS: I'm pretty sure that this is coming up in Action 7. Richard, I would be happy to support you on this, but if you want to wait and look at everything in Action 7. It was your motion, and so --

MR. STIGLITZ: We can table it until we get further down the line. That's fine.

MR. ATACK: I think you have to withdraw it, don't you, or we vote on it? You can either withdraw it or we'll vote on it.

MR. STIGLITZ: **I will withdraw the motion.** I can always bring it up again.

MR. ATACK: Is the seconder good with that? Okay. **The motion is withdrawn.**

MS. MARHEFKA: Did we not want to deal with the sort of open-ended number of people on the boat recreational issue? We didn't cap -- It's still at three per person per day. Did we want to put a max number per boat? **I will make a motion, just for discussion. I don't have a dog in this fight. If it was ten for commercial, I would say three per person per day or blank, whichever is most restrictive, but I don't know to fill in that -- Six.**

MR. MOSS: The problem that you're going to run into with that is there's bunch of headboats in that area that fall under the recreational guise, if you will, and I don't know that you can make it first-come-first-served if the first ten people on that boat get their three fish and everybody else -- I will say, with that, in the headboats that I've fished on, not everybody is catching three mutttons, even during the spawn, but I think that everybody should have just as fair a chance to catch their three as anybody else on the boat that paid their money.

MR. JOHNSON: I am like Red. I'm confused here. I just need to make sure that the commercial -- That is ten fish and not ten per person, but ten fish per vessel, whichever is more restrictive. Then, to Dave's point, it is an unpopular thing to do, but the State of Florida already does it with cobia, six fish per person, I mean six fish per boat, and so a headboat goes out and the first six cobia come onboard, and that's it. If you catch another one, you just let him go. That's the law. There is some precedent there.

MR. MOSS: I understand that, and, to be honest with you, I don't entirely disagree with it, but I know that there's a couple of headboats that target mutttons, and obviously they wouldn't necessarily be able to do that nearly as much, and particularly during that time of year. I don't know that -- I mean I know that cobia, you can go target them at certain times of the year, but I don't know that it's as targetable, if that's a word, a fish as mutttons.

MS. BROUWER: Now I'm confused. I just need Kerry to clarify the motion, that this is for three per person per day or X per trip, whichever is more restrictive, year-round. Is that correct?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, that was my intention. While I have the mic, Myra, I'm wondering -- I mean this is just -- We're in the early phase, and so there will be time for staff to analyze what the true impact per trip that this would be, and so it's really just giving the council something to look at at this point, and maybe six per trip ends up not being restrictive, like David was saying. Maybe no one is really even catching that many, but do we not want to make sure that forty aren't coming off at one time? I mean how often does that happen? They can analyze that.

MR. MOSS: I can tell you that I know like the Yankee captains, for instance, out of Key West, they will catch -- Especially during those times, they will get more than probably three per person, average. If they have twenty people, they, I'm sure, get more than probably -- Well, it's pretty close to sixty muttons that will come up with them.

MR. ATACK: This is the motion. Has anybody seconded it?

MR. STIGLITZ: I will second it.

MR. ATACK: Richard. Any more discussion on it? I will read the motion. It's to consider a recreational bag limit year-round of three per person per day or six per trip, whichever is more restrictive. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; all opposed raise your hand. The motion fails seven to eight, seven in favor and eight against.**

MR. JOHNSON: Just a quick comment. I mean we are going from ten fish to three fish already, and so I mean we don't --

MR. FREEMAN: The only reason I didn't agree with that is, if you're going to do that, just make it the ten fish, like what is for the commercial sector right now. That way, if you're on a headboat or whatnot, they can still have up to ten.

AP MEMBER: I will just comment on why I shot it down. As a recreational angler, and if we ever get into any permits, if three of us get together once a year to get together on somebody's private boat, we all probably would want our three fish and not figure that we have to, among us, drop it to two. We're not headboat, but with the private area, that could be a lot of issues, particularly if we ever get to what we want, is permits.

MR. ATACK: Does that mean, if it was reworded to three, or a maximum of ten, that it would be more amenable to everybody?

MR. LORENZ: I don't know, but, by that same token, you can take four of us out on a -- Maybe just doing it once a year on a thirty-foot boat, and so then we would be at twelve. I think when you get to the private boat anglers that it can become a real issue. It's not like a headboat group.

MR. HERRERA: Again, the only reason I shot it down is because I do know some of these headboats, and there's a lot of people going on those headboats that are paying pretty good money. If the boat caught ten and would be done, I think that would really kill those businesses, and so you have to -- There is always an exception to the rule. That headboat becomes a problem. That's the one thing I see with putting a limit on it.

MR. FEX: That's not the only fish you guys can catch at that time. I just had to throw that out.

MR. ATACK: So do we need to have a trip limit for just the headboats separate from the other guys?

MR. MOSS: Just to echo what Robert said, remember that we're taking this down from ten to three. That's a pretty big jump as it is.

MR. ATACK: We're not really though, because look at the landings. I mean nobody is getting that many.

MS. BROUWER: I just want to make sure that everybody understands that this amendment is very early in the process, as Kerry mentioned, and so whatever recommendations you're making here, the council will tell us to go ahead and put that in the amendment, so that we can do analysis on it and then see what the numbers are going to tell us, or not. I don't want you to feel limited that, because you recommended something already, that you may not recommend something else, because the council ultimately -- They're the ones that are going to decide anyway, but they can tell us, okay, we want you to analyze additional stuff.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, would you all be comfortable if we just made not a motion, but a recommendation for -- Well, same difference, but a recommendation from the advisory panel that the council requests that staff analyze what these headboat trips look like and what the average number that's brought in -- Sort of analyze these trips, and then maybe we can figure out -- Because my concern is, God willing, these things start recovering or they -- I guess they're not overfished, but they start spilling over or there becomes more of an abundance of them and there is no upper limit and you have forty people grabbing three and it's a lot, and so we just ask them to look at what these trips look like.

MR. MOSS: I will support that, and there's not -- Don't get me wrong. I mean it's not like there's a ton of boats out of the south that target these things, but the ones that do, they do okay. Like Manny said, I mean some of these people are paying a decent amount of money to go on there to catch their share of fish, but yes, I would absolutely support looking into this further and seeing what the impact would be there and what they're catching.

MR. MUNDEN: We are diverting a lot of time in talking about a motion that failed, but I would like to say that my concern is this motion that just did fail. It's not adding any additional protection for mutton snapper during the spawning months. Looking at the data, there are other months in which mutton snapper spawn other than May and June, and there is no additional protection for those months either, and so I think we need to focus on the spawning months.

MR. ATACK: Let's go back to Action 7, I guess.

MS. BROUWER: Action 7 is on PDF page 20 of your document. It modifies the trip limit in the South Atlantic. As we've been discussing, currently during May and June, the commercial sector is restricted to ten mutton snapper per day or ten per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and sale is allowed. There is no trip limit defined for the rest of the months, and so July through April.

Alternative 2 would establish a commercial trip limit during the regular season, and so outside of whatever the spawning months are, of 300 pounds, 400 pounds, or 500 pounds. Then Alternative 3 looks at commercial trip limits during the spawning months of two fish per person per day, three

per person per day, ten per vessel, twelve per vessel, or no retention at all. These are the exact same alternatives that are being considered for the recreational sector. There were folks that -- I think somebody expressed concern that they were going to be different, but that's why we're looking at the same suite of alternatives for both.

Again, here is the current regulations, which we have already been over. Here is your commercial landings, 2004 through 2014, divided by gear and reported in pounds whole weight. Then we've got this fancy graph here showing you the distribution of landings from 2008 through 2013 by month, and so you can just sort of see the periodicity. As we've stated, landings, even though there are restrictions in place for the commercial sector, landings seem to peak right during May and June.

Some more descriptives. Here are recreational and commercial and total landings. This is 2008 through 2013. As I mentioned earlier, some of the actions for mutton snapper had been included in a previous amendment, and so that's why you see the discrepancy in the years of data that are being used, because we still have some information that was kind of carried over from that other amendment, but we'll make sure that as we develop it that we make sure that all the data are the most recent.

This shows you the monthly distribution of commercial landings in the logbook, percentage-wise, and so the highest percent -- Again, this is another way to illustrate that May is a pretty popular month for commercial landings.

Here is the stuff that you don't have in your attachment, or that you didn't have until I put it in here on Friday and sent it to you, and so this looks at the most recent years of complete data, and so this does look at 2012 through 2014. It looked at about 4,500 trips, and it's showing it right here by pounds per trip, so you can see that distribution there, and on the Y-axis is your percent of trips, and so obviously a large majority are doing small trips, but the distribution goes all the way over here to the 500-pound trip.

MR. ATTACK: How many trips per year are there? Never mind. I see it.

MS. BROUWER: This is where we get into a prediction here. We're looking at percent decreases in landings for the commercial trip limit alternatives, again using the logbook data from 2012 through 2013, and this is looking at what the reduction would be if we imposed a trip limit during the non-spawning months. You can see that the percentages obviously are going to be higher for the lower trip limit, but they're not very high, and here is the number harvested per trip.

Here is the reduction in landings, looking just at those spawning months, and then, of course, since the majority of the harvest does occur during those months, then your reductions are going to be higher, of course, with no retention. That's your highest percent decrease, and then it just goes down from there. Then these ten fish and twelve fish, those are per vessel and not per person.

That's pretty much all we have in the way of analysis. As I said earlier, this is still very preliminary. I just got this information on Thursday, and so by the time the council meets in June, we'll have a little bit more fleshed-out information for them, and then whatever recommendations come out of the AP. Do you want me to continue going through, until we get to the very end, and

then we can look at the projected landings with all these different things put together? How do you want to proceed?

MR. ATACK: The next action is just minimum size limits, right?

MS. BROUWER: Never mind. Yes, we're almost at the end.

MR. JOHNSON: I just wanted to clarify that the commercial sector did not reach -- It didn't close last year, right, and it stayed open?

MR. ATACK: Right, but the new ACL is going to be 35 percent less than what it used to be. It's 157,000, and it's going to be dropped down to 100,000 pounds.

MS. BROUWER: Actually, no. The commercial -- Never mind. I'm looking at the preferred. The preferred ACL for the commercial is around 100,000. The average landings have been around 76,000 for the last five years.

MR. DEMARIA: I think a lot of this depends on what the FWC and the Sanctuary plans on doing with Western Dry Rocks. If they set it aside as a reserve, a year-round reserve, or if they just close it for the two months, then it's a whole different ballgame. Until then, I can't really support any of these limits.

If Western was set aside as a spawning area place for muttons, I would have no problem with Richard or anyone else catching as many muttons as they wanted outside of that area. Take away the ten per person per day limit, but I'm just concerned with right where they spawn. Outside of that, even during May and June, I don't think it's a big problem. It becomes a whole different game, depending on what they do. Until then, I can't really support any of this.

MR. ATACK: Right, but remember what we're trying to do now is to give the council some things to look at, so that they can evaluate it, so when it comes back around that they can get a final decision, versus adding it on later or asking them to look at something else later.

MR. HERRERA: I want to ask, why is that ACL being dropped, preferably being dropped, 57,000 pounds or so, when, again, the stock assessment has come back -- I don't know why. The other thing I want to clarify is we've been having this -- We've been trying to understand. We're not sure ourselves, but currently, during May and June it is ten fish per person commercially, not per boat. That's the way the law enforcement has been handling it, and so we need to clear that up, because that really has thrown a wrench there, to us here, in trying to make a decision. We have always harvested ten fish per person per day during the spawn, and so I need both of those things to be clarified.

MS. BROUWER: On Item 1, the first stock assessment that was done on mutton snapper was done in 2008. That was SEDAR 15A. The latest assessment used a model that is better than the model that was used back in 2008. I don't know the details of why exactly it's better, but it's a few years and you get better products. They've been able to figure out whatever tweaks needed to be made to get a model that works better.

When this latest assessment was concluded, it was determined that even though mutton snapper are not in jeopardy of overfishing and they're not overfished, that the adult population is actually smaller than what the previous model estimated. In order to account for that, the new model gives you projections that allow for a smaller number of total removals per year, and so that's why you're seeing a little bit of a reduction in the ABC, and it comes from that discrepancy in just the technology and the methodology that was used to assess the status of that population.

What I can offer to do is, when we take a break, I can pull up the language that is in the regulations, and I'm pretty sure -- I was confused about this as well when I was doing public hearings, and I got to the Keys and everybody said what we have to do now is just get everybody to come fishing on our boat, because then we can get more fish, because we can get ten per person per day.

Then I said, wait a minute, what about the whichever is more restrictive part? Nobody seemed to really remember that part, and so I can tell you what's in the books. As far as what's being enforced, I don't know, but we can definitely bring that up during the break.

I've got the language here. I can't project it, but I can read it to you. Thank you, Chip, for pulling it up. During May and June each year, the possession of mutton snapper in or from the EEZ onboard a vessel that has a commercial permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper is limited to ten per person per day or ten per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive. It's ten per day or ten per trip. That's the way it's written. It's ten per person per day or ten per trip.

MR. JOHNSON: That's to keep them from making multiple trips. So they can have ten per person. If they've got ten people on their boat, they can have a hundred, but they can only make one trip. I've got it.

MR. MOSS: That also means that they can keep a one-day limit, even if they go for two days. Even if you do an overnight trip to the Tortugas, you can only keep a one-day limit.

AP MEMBER: Right, and so you couldn't make a five-day trip with two people and come in with a hundred mutton.

MR. ATTACK: So how many mutton snappers can I have?

MR. HERRERA: The reason for the per trip is so that you can't say, well, I was out there three days and I had ten guys and come with -- What's the number? A lot. It restricts you to the limit per one trip. Technically speaking, I fish -- For example, I fish myself and someone else, which allows me to bring in twenty mutton snappers, whether I fish for two days or I fish for ten days. That's why the per trip, but not that we are restricted to only ten fish in our boat during those months. It allows us -- Some people take advantage.

Again, there is the professional that does things well and the professional that does things to cheat the system that will bring ten people, ten family members. They will get recreational licenses for them, and they will bring a hundred fish in a boat, and those are the things that, of course, are being abused. Those are the glitches in all of this that we have to deal with.

MR. HUDSON: One fear I have with Action 8, minimum sizes, is I don't see the analysis of dead discards. The more we start increasing that, just like what I see going on with MRIP and APAIS

and everything else here right now with red snapper, we're going to be able to see a whole bunch of discards that are going to be counted against everybody in the next stock assessment, and so I would be real cautionary about trying to jump up on minimum sizes at this time, until we see that analysis.

MR. STIGLITZ: Rusty, I don't know what the discards would be, but most fish, most mutton snappers that you catch, deeper than eighty-foot of water, are going to be eighteen inches or better. Your sixteen-inch fish, the fifteen, sixteen, seventeen-inch fish, you're going to catch them in the shallow waters, at least in the Keys where we are. You will catch them in Hawk Channel, around the patch reefs and all of that, but the majority of the fish that -- Once they get off the deep edge of that reef, that's where you catch those eight or ten or twelve -- Even in the spawn, those fish, when they're spawning, those fish average eight and ten pounds apiece. They're all the eighteen-inch fish and better.

MR. HUDSON: The reason I brought it up is with our twenty-inch red snapper, it weighs four-and-a-half pounds. Mutton snapper is not far removed from that animal, as far as the demographics, and what we had last year was a half-a-million dead or discarded red snappers that counted against the private recreational, which includes the charter boats.

Then you had the headboats separate and the commercial separate, and so I have a little more faith in the numbers over there with the headboat, because of the people out on the boats, and also with the commercial, with that, but, back over here with this unknown characterization, with the charter and the headboat, you start jumping up from sixteen -- Now, in the Gulf of Mexico, your red snapper is a sixteen-inch animal. You get over here on the South Atlantic side, red snapper is a twenty-inch.

I used to fish down in the Keys, from 1977 until 1985. I caught them up to twenty-five pounds, mutton snappers, and you're right that you get out in that twenty fathoms, that region, and you've got a lot of nice animals. I didn't fish much inshore, because that would be where the yellowtail guys would be, and I just didn't mess around there, but the fella down here brought up those headboats.

There were some big boats that was fishing back there in the 1970s and 1980s, and they would see them all the way to the Tortugas. They would do a two-day, two-night trip and stuff like that, and you know, the headboat is a different critter. That's why, when I ran headboats, I wanted to make sure I could accommodate my passengers.

On a charter boat, normally, you have six persons, you think in your mind, but when you look at the analysis that the South Atlantic uses, a headboat could be more than six people, on up to what the Gulf of Mexico starts at fifteen. You know you get into some areas, but I just would like to see some analysis on discards, and I think they can ferret that out of the FWC stock assessment or something that was recently done.

MR. HERRERA: I would like to offer one more comment. As far as size limit is concerned, I have no problem with a sixteen-inch fish. Again, like Richard said, during the spawn, people that target spawn fish, they usually tend to be bigger fish. However, a sixteen-inch mutton snapper is about three pounds. If it's real heavy, it's three-and-a-half pounds. That's a very valuable fish,

commercially, and so I think, as far as size limit is concerned, we don't need to really, in my opinion, do much with it.

MR. JOHNSON: Just something to consider -- I just asked Chip about sexual maturity of mutton snappers, and the fork length males are sixteen inches when they reach sexual maturity and the females are eighteen inches fork length, and so that is something to consider when you're setting size limits. Like on red snapper, the reason for the twenty-inch minimum size was to give them the opportunity to spawn a couple of times before they got removed from the fishery. At sixteen inches, you're removing fish before they have ever spawned.

MR. STIGLITZ: Manny, how many sixteen-inch mutton snappers do you really catch?

MR. HERRERA: It all depends on the winter and how things are going, but, in the shallow water, you can catch quite a few fish, whether it's in the Hawk Channel or in the patch reefs. Again, when it's winter and you can't already catch grouper, those mutton snappers tend to be pretty valuable to you.

As far as for the roe and stuff, I don't know. I couldn't tell you, but it seems like it's pretty similar to what he's saying. Sixteen to eighteen inches would be when they start doing their thing. As far as a number, Richard, it's so hard to give you a number. It all depends from year to year. This year, with warmer waters, we really haven't fished very shallow, as your son and I have discussed previously.

MR. ATTACK: Okay, and so if we want to make any kind of recommendations to the council on a preferred, we can. If we don't, then we don't have to. We will probably see this again in October.

MR. STIGLITZ: I'm assuming this is recreational and commercial?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, that would be for both sectors.

MR. STIGLITZ: Then I will make a motion for Alternative 1, no action.

MS. BROUWER: If you don't mind, there is some analysis, a whole bunch of tables, that you might want to consider before you recommend anything.

MR. STIGLITZ: Then I will wait until Myra is done.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Richard. Again, this is preliminary analysis that was done by council staff, and we attempted to try to capture as many of combinations of the various alternatives as we could, to give the managers an idea of the potential effects. This table shows you projected landings, recreational landings, in numbers of fish for a bag limit and minimum size limit combinations under a year-round season.

For example, over here, your suggested three per person per day, at the current sixteen-inch minimum size limit, we predict that there would be about 98,267 fish -- This is in numbers of fish, and it's strictly for the recreational sector, but we predict that that's what would be landed. At the seventeen-inch minimum size limit, you can see there's quite a bit of a drop, and so going from

sixteen inches to seventeen inches makes a difference. Then, from there on out, the numbers just obviously diminish a little bit. Again, this is just for the year-round season.

Then I have four more pages of tables that are arranged by size limit. The first four that I'm going to show you are for the current size limit, the next four are for the seventeen inches, and so on. We arranged them that way to try to keep some organization here.

These are all for the status quo, which is the sixteen-inch minimum size limit, and then we look at various bag limits during the spawning season as well as bag limits outside of the spawning season. This is for the May/June is Table 15. Table 16 is April to June, and so on. There is a lot of information in these tables, but if you look at the projected landings, there is really not a whole lot of difference among bag limit alternatives until you get to the no retention.

The closing it during the spawning season makes a good bit of a difference, in terms of projected landings. Across the options for outside of the spawning season, again, the landings -- If you're looking at the rows in the table, there's not a whole lot of difference there either. That's pretty much how you look at these tables.

April to June, again, not a whole lot of difference. If those months were completely closed, you're looking at just a little bit less number of fish landed, and then here is April to July. Of course, you're looking at a lot less, but, across, not a lot of difference. Then, going down the columns, until you get to that very bottom row, again, there's not a whole lot of difference. Then this one is for the May to July spawning season.

MR. JOHNSON: Can you go back up to the size limit and not the bag limit, the top table?

MS. BROUWER: All of these tables pertain to the sixteen-inch size limit, and so all of these are assuming a sixteen-inch minimum size limit. The table up here is the one that looks at year-round bag limits.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, that's the one. I just want to make sure that I'm reading this right. Basically, what this is saying is almost 50 percent of the catch is between sixteen and seventeen inches? Is that what I'm reading? 50 percent of the fish are being removed from the fishery before they have ever spawned.

MR. LORENZ: I would like to, at least in addressing Richard for his previous motion, just look at the bang for our buck we can get with just the one-inch change, noting that reduction in the catch, and then also hearing what I've heard from the folks on the commercial fishing side that the larger fish are further out, and so, by leaving the sixteen and go, we're releasing fish from shallower water and less barotrauma and less dead regulatory discards. I feel better with that, with more like seventeen.

MS. BROUWER: This is all recreational. I don't want to spend a ton of time going through each table, but I will just quickly go through them. These are for the seventeen-inch minimum size limit, and so here is your projected landings. They're about 50 percent less than the landings that were projected under the sixteen-inch minimum size limit, and so the size limit does seem to make a good bit of a difference.

Differences, again, in the various bag limits and vessel limits, not a whole lot, either within the season or outside the season, and it's pretty much the same for each one of the spawning season alternatives, and then here are your tables for the eighteen inches and so on.

MR. HULL: Isn't the ACL numbers of fish like 116,000 fish or something like that? If you went to these, you're looking at -- You're only going to produce 36,000, for instance, fish of the total ACL for the fishery, and so the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, and you're going to reduce the recreational harvest down from what the SSC or the council has said they prefer to have, 116,000 fish in numbers, for the fishery. Then if you do these other changes, you're going to reduce it down to 36,000 fish.

MS. BROUWER: Right. The proposed ACL for 2017 would be a-hundred-and-sixteen-thousand-and-some-change fish. The council is aware that the reductions -- There there is no real need to reduce harvest overall. Their interest is in addressing the issue about increasing protection during the spawning months, and so that's how this whole thing got started, and now we're finding ourselves in a situation where we're considering year-round reductions and all that other stuff, but, initially, what the council wanted to respond to was a lot of public input, folks that said you need to do something about increasing protection for spawning fish.

MR. MOSS: I know that this is, again, not going in the direction this was originally intended to go, Myra, but if they spawn at right around eighteen inches, I think is what we said, and we increase the size limit to seventeen, initially, yes, we're cutting down our take by 50 percent, but aren't we really just extending that for a year or whatever it takes for them to get -- You're not really adding anything to the biomass. They're not going to be able to spawn for another inch, we'll say, and so you're just waiting another year or so to then hit that 90,000 fish out. I mean you're just kind of kicking the can down the road to basically take those out. I don't know if that really accomplishes anything.

MS. BROUWER: The other thing that you might want to keep in mind is most of the recreational ACLs that are currently in place are not being taken. It's the same thing with black sea bass and it's the same thing with most of the species, and so yes, there would be unused ACL, if you will, but the idea, or the main point, of the regulations is not really to make sure that the recreational sector harvests their portion, but to put in some protection. The size limit increase would, again, taking into account the life history, and then increased protection for those spawning fish.

MR. ATACK: The increased minimum size should increase your recruitment and all down the road, and so you should get a payback from it as time goes on.

MR. JOHNSON: Again, it's really not my fishery. This is a South Florida thing, and so I have to look at the people from South Florida, but I mean if the science says eighteen inches is when the females reach sexual maturity, and we have a sixteen-inch minimum size limit -- I mean if you're good with that, but it doesn't seem, to me personally, to seem to make a lot of sense, but if somebody from South Florida wants to weigh in.

MR. MOSS: I don't disagree, Robert, but I think Myra hit it, and Don is continuously hitting this. These are all great measures to have in place, but, at the end of the day, with this being such a heavily aggregated fish during the spawn, I think we're kind of all skirting around the most important thing, which is protecting the spawning areas.

I know some of them, like Western Dry Rocks, we, as a panel here, can't do anything about it, but that's going to be the most important protection issue for this fish moving forward, is making sure that the spawning areas, and not the entire state, not even regions, are closed, but specific spawning areas, where these guys aggregate, making sure that we protect those for, at the very least, the two months that we designated as the spawning season.

MR. HERRERA: I second that. I totally back that up.

MR. STIGLITZ: Myra, do you have these charts for commercial landings?

MS. BROUWER: I'm sorry, Richard?

MR. STIGLITZ: Do you have these charts, the very first one? The recreational sector, 50 percent of the fish they catch are sixteen to seventeen inches long, and I'm wondering if the commercial sector is anywhere close to that. Do you have that same chart for commercial?

MS. BROUWER: No, Richard, we don't.

MR. ATACK: No, but what we do have though is when they ran the commercial numbers, the average weight was 7.68 pounds, on the commercial side, and the recreational was 4.3. The average commercial size is almost twice that of the recreational size, and so the commercial size is bigger, for sure.

MR. STIGLITZ: If we went to like seventeen inches on these fish, it won't affect the commercial fishermen at all. It will add fish that will have a chance to spawn. After a couple of years, it will be that many more fish on the bottom. Instead of the recreational sector catching sixteen-inch fish, they will catch seventeen and eighteen-inch fish. They're going to catch a fish that's four pounds and they're going to raise it up to catching fish that are seven or eight pounds, something that's worth catching. To me, it's a no-brainer.

MR. ATACK: Are you making a motion then?

MR. STIGLITZ: **I will make a motion for Alternative 3, to move it to eighteen inches.**

MR. ATACK: Anybody want to second that motion? The motion has been seconded. Do I hear any more discussion on that, while she's typing the motion?

MR. FEX: Because it's a South Florida, mainly, issue, I think Manny said earlier that those sixteen-inch fish were pretty important to the guys that he knows, and so maybe he wants to speak up on that, because, on my end of the world, it's not going to make that much difference up here.

MR. HERRERA: Again, on the commercial side, we don't have that table, to see if that's big of a difference, and so it's kind of hard. I do know, again, that sixteen and seventeen and eighteen-inch fish is a desired fish, because it's not an extremely big fish, but if it means the best for the species, so we can improve it, I will back it.

MR. ATACK: We will look at this again, I think in October, but we'll probably have some analysis by then on the commercial size versus weight and what kind of reduction you would have at that point.

MR. STIGLITZ: Scotty, I would like to hear your input on that. I know you're not down there in the Keys, but I know you catch a lot of muttons up the east coast. How would that affect you?

MR. OSBORNE: The way I fish, eighteen inches is fine. When I used to yellowtail fish, what he's doing, you do catch some of those little fish that get up in your chum, and you know that. They're not big fish, and they are important to the market. I get that. To answer your question, an eighteen-inch size limit on me and Ben -- We're the only two mutton fishermen within a thirty-mile range in our area anyway, and it's not going to make a big of difference.

Ben and I have talked forever that it's way too small. Looking at the fishery in my area, it would help those fish out, but I do understand the importance of those small market fish. When they were twelve inches, guppy rig fishing at night and chum fishing, we used to fill the coolers with those things, and the market loved them. Financially, for me, it doesn't make any difference. It doesn't impact me at all, but I understand, for the yellowtail fleet, that it would make a difference.

MR. STIGLITZ: My son is yellow tailing every day, and almost never can I get a sixteen-inch mutton snapper off of his boat. If he catches one, it's usually big, ten or twelve pounds. Now, I know he's not fishing where Manny is fishing. He's fishing off the deep edge of the reef, and when one comes up out of that eighty or hundred-foot of water, it's a big fish, but I don't think it would affect my son fishing, not one bit, if it went to eighteen inches.

MR. MOSS: For the recreational side, I don't -- The sixteen-inch fish, as everybody said, I mean we tend to get those up in the yellowtail slick, and that's usually on the patch reefs. You're not targeting them. If you get them, it's a bonus. The bigger fish are the ones that you tend to target on the outside of the reef and the deeper stuff. That's the ones that you don't have to measure anyway. I can't imagine that that's going to be a huge issue.

I don't know what's the cause and effect. If there's only smaller fish on the reef because we hammer them with the yellowtail and we keep them all and there's not as many people fishing the deeper stuff and so you don't get them or what the reason is, but whatever the reason, certainly the bigger fish are on the deeper stuff, and it's the patches that tend to get the sixteen-inchers, and usually you're not targeting them there anyway. If you get them, it's an added bonus.

MR. JOHNSON: Obviously somebody is getting them, because 50 percent of the catch is sixteen inches. From the graphs, that's what I read, and so --

MR. MOSS: I'm sure that that, again, is an accessibility issue. It's so much easier to fish -- Certainly down in the Keys, it's so much easier to fish in forty feet and anchor up there than it is to actually target them on the edge of the reef. Everybody who has any kind of boat at all -- I mean you can take a johnboat to forty feet, just about, and throw a chum block out there and start pulling them up.

MR. ATACK: These are also MRIP numbers, and so, depending on what --

MR. OSBORNE: I don't think a lot of people really know much about the nature of a mutton snapper, but the big fish are extremely shy animals. Once they get over that sixteen-inch range, he's a totally different critter. You're not going out there with your sea bass gear or your lane snapper and dropping down and catching mutton. They're not going to bite that.

There are big fish in the shallow reef, but 90 percent of the recreational sector has no idea how to catch those fish. The way that they're rigged up, the way that they're fishing in our area, that's just what they catch. Accidentally, they get lucky and catch a big one here and there, but there is very few people that really know how to target large mutton snappers, and that's a whole other learning curve in itself, and so that's why you're seeing that smaller fish in the recreational sector, because that's just the fish that bite that kind of gear.

MS. BROUWER: Before I forget, I should clarify that these analyses that I just presented do not include the headboat sector, and so we pulled them really quickly. This is a methodology, like I said, that was done in-house. Council staff put these analyses together, and this is not necessarily the way it's going to end up in the amendment or be presented to the council in June. That's the disclaimer, but it's just so that you get an idea of the magnitude of the headboat landings. From 2010 through 2014, 11.4 percent of the recreational landings of mutton came from the headboat sector, and so you can sort of get an idea.

MR. ATACK: Okay. I would like to pull the motion back up and we will read it. I think we've had enough discussion on this. The motion is to recommend Alternative 3 as the preferred under Action 8, an increase in the minimum size of eighteen-inches total length. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; any opposed. The motion carries.**

MS. BROUWER: That is it for the mutton snapper amendment.

MR. ATACK: Unless there is any kind of input we want to give them on the commercial trip limits or the pounds and fish per day, Action 7. We kind of skipped over that.

MR. DEMARIA: I am going to make a motion. Myra, correct me if I'm wrong, but even though Western Dry Rocks is outside of the council's jurisdiction, they can still make recommendations to the FWC and the Sanctuary that that issue needs to be addressed.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, absolutely.

MR. DEMARIA: **I would like to make a motion that the AP recommends that the council recommends to the FWC and the Keys Sanctuary that the Western Dry Rocks issue needs to be addressed.** "Addressed" can be taken however they want. That's the motion.

My rationale is just that I think, if we address that issue and give it some kind of protection, then we could all fish outside of that area in peace, with reasonable bag limits and size limits and whatnot. I don't think the fish outside of where they're tightly aggregated, even in May and June, are a big deal. They're hard to catch, and the council already has gear regulations in place that pretty much takes care of it. The only way that those were caught in great numbers before were with longlines and fish traps. Both of those gears are prohibited.

It's difficult to spear a lot of them out in a hundred feet of water when they're all spread out. It's difficult to catch a lot of them on hook and line, and, outside of these tightly aggregated areas, they're hard to load your boat with them, I think. I really believe that issue needs to be addressed, and so that's my motion there.

MR. MOSS: I will second that.

MR. ATACK: All right. The motion is the AP recommends to the council to recommend to FWC and the Sanctuary to allow no harvest of mutton snapper in Western Dry Rocks when spawning aggregations are present. Any discussion on that?

DR. MARIA: That's not exactly -- I just said the issue needs to be addressed, but if somebody wants to amend it for that, that's fine with me.

MR. STIGLITZ: Manny, I would like to get some input from you on that, because that's in your backyard. I don't know what that would do to the commercial sector down there, because -- My thoughts about that are once they start on it, you're going to be taken out of there forever.

MR. HERRERA: Richard, in my opinion, that spawning aggregation has been -- There's been a dent put in it. As a professional, if I can't make a living outside of that, then I probably don't belong in there. I will back him on that. The only difference that Don and I have is year-round as opposed to spawning. That, I would totally back.

MR. STIGLITZ: Okay. I wanted your input on it, because, like I said, it's your backyard and not my backyard. I have never went to Western Dry Rocks and caught a mutton snapper, but if you will support it, then --

MR. LORENZ: I kind of like this idea. It almost seems like a new concept that could come up, and it may be more palatable to people. Marine protected areas were not all that palatable to some. This is almost like a seasonal or situational MPA. I kind of like that thought.

MR. ATACK: I will read the motion. The motion is the AP recommends to the council to recommend to FWC and the Sanctuary to address the issue of the harvest of mutton snapper from spawning aggregations at Western Dry Rocks. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; any opposed. Motion is approved unanimously.**

MR. DEMARIA: This is addressed at Manny. The only reason I say year-round, is because that seems to be a multispecies spot. There's permits that spawn there and black groupers that spawn there, and they're all out of sync with each other, and so that's -- A seasonal thing, that's fine. That gets the big problem of mutton, and so I think we're basically on the same page. The fish just need a break when they're aggregated to spawn, and some of the other ones, like black grouper, don't really form huge aggregations, at least in the Keys. There's fifteen or twenty here and twenty or so down the reef. It seems like a long area, but the muttons, that's different. They just form these tight aggregations, and so I think we're on the same page.

MR. HERRERA: We're on the same team, Don.

MR. ATACK: Okay, and so back to Action 7. If we want to give anything to the council, we need to. Otherwise, we're going to move on. It had to do with the commercial trip limits and the fish per day on the commercial side. If you all want to give them any kind of recommendations, let's do it. If not, we will move on.

MR. PILAND: Just a question. Is there a limit on the number of people for a commercial vessel?

MR. JOHNSON: Only if it's dually-permitted. If it is just a strict commercial vessel, my understanding is you can have fifty people on it, but if you are a dually-permitted, in other words, you're a for-hire with a commercial permit, then you're limited to four now. It used to be three, but now it's four.

MR. MERSHON: I would just like to add to that. But you're also limited -- If you want to take twenty people out there, you're going to need a twenty-man life raft and all the other survival gear, which a lot of these boats don't have. You can't have a six-man raft and put eight people on your boat. You would be breaking the law.

MR. STIGLITZ: **I would like to make a motion for Alternative 1, no action.**

AP MEMBER: I will second it.

MR. ATACK: The reason, Richard?

MR. STIGLITZ: The fishery is not being overfished. We have just asked for an increase in size limit from sixteen to eighteen. Going from sixteen to eighteen is going to make a great big reduction in it, and so why take it away from them? I mean they're commercial fishermen. They need to be able to catch what they've been catching.

They're not going out and making specific trips, like catching B-liners or catching yellowtails. Most of the year, mutton snappers is a bycatch. When they're fishing, a mutton snapper will come up. Other than during the spawning season -- Scotty goes and targets them. He goes fishing by himself, and there's some wrecks you can go fish and fish muttons, but you don't go fishing mutton snappers seven days a week and just absolute straight target mutton snapper. It's more of a bycatch, and it's not being overfished. It's never been overfished, and why change it if it's working?

MR. ATACK: Right, and I think the only reason you might would be is if you were looking at a closure when you hit your ACL. You know your ACL is smaller now, but, like you say, you are making a size limit change. Reduced trip limits usually try to extend the season, and so if you're concerned about extending the season, then you might look at trip limits, but that's fine with me.

MR. STIGLITZ: I believe Robert asked a little bit ago, and even with the ACL being lowered to a little over 100,000, they're only catching 75,000 a year, and so they're still way below it. If it gets to where it changes, we can always ask for a change.

MR. ATACK: In 2014, you landed 91,000, and so your new ACL is 100,000.

MR. STIGLITZ: If we go to eighteen inches, that's going to cut that back even more, and so we should be right in the ballpark and everything should be A-Okay, and so there is no reason to change it.

MR. OSBORNE: You talk about that eighteen-inch fish, that's right about in line with what the commercial sector has been landing anyway, and so there's not much change in there. There's not a lot of people doing it, and even fewer targeting them, and a few hundred pounds of fish on a trip is about all you're going to catch anyway. My best day of mutton fishing, I barely cracked 300 pounds, and so it doesn't matter if it's by myself or -- More people on your boat doesn't necessarily equal more mutton snappers. Usually you only fish two people anyway catching those things, and so you're pretty much safe with that, I believe.

MR. HERRERA: I would have no problem with that, again, Richard, and I will say, down there, in Key West, I have seen people specifically put ten people in their boat to go and target a hundred mutton snappers commercially. I am okay with it. I think we should put a limit to the number of people allowed on a commercial trip, and probably set it at four, which I don't know anyone that goes commercial fishing with more than four people. Usually, it's three, but four would be the most.

MR. JOHNSON: Manny, up in my neck of the woods -- Maybe not in St. Augustine, but if you get in Jacksonville, there's some boats up there that go out six-handed during B-liner season. I wouldn't have a problem supporting your motion. It wouldn't be very popular, though. They do that so they can turn and burn. They go catch their ten boxes and go right back. It's how the fishery is conducted, but, to Wayne's point, they've got to have the gear now, with all these new requirements. If they want to have a ten-man raft on their boat and invest in that, go for it.

MR. HERRERA: Again, in Key West, there seems to be a lot of confusion about that raft. A lot of confusion. I support it. Listen. I agree, and the people who are doing that, I don't know if they would put a ten-man raft. I know I'm not going to do it, but, anyway.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm sure the Coast Guard would be glad to straighten that out for you.

MR. ATACK: I'm going to read the motion. Basically, it's no action, Alternative 1, during May and June it's going to stay the same. **Anybody in favor of the motion, raise your hand; anybody opposed. The motion is unanimous. It passes.** I think that's our last action in mutton snapper.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so just to remind you that the amendment will be approved for public hearings at the June meeting. We'll have public hearings in August, I think it's toward the beginning of August, and the council will look at it again in September. The plan is to approve it for submission in December, and so you will get to see this amendment again at your fall meeting. By then, as Jim pointed out, the analyses will be a lot more fleshed out.

MR. ATACK: We are going to move into the Attachment 5 next, which is the Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10/Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, but, first, we're going to do a fifteen-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. ATACK: We're going to reconvene here, and Brian is going to go over his white paper.

DR. CHEUVRONT: For those of you who don't know me, I am Brian Cheuvront. I am the Deputy Executive Director for Management for the South Atlantic Council. I was formerly the economist for the council, and I have done some of the council's work with dolphin and some allocation issues. I used to be a former council member, actually, myself, working in some allocation issues when we came up with the bowtie rule back in 2008 or so.

Anyway, I just wanted to talk to you about an amendment that the council is considering. They haven't gotten very far with it. They have discussed it at two meetings already, in December of 2015 and in March of 2016, and they still haven't quite figured out exactly yet what they want to put into this amendment, but, among the things that they're considering that we wanted to bring up with you is, last year, two commercial fisheries were closed due to having reached their ACL, their sector ACL. That happened in fisheries that it doesn't typically happen in.

For the first time, it occurred in the dolphin fishery, and that closed on June 30 of last year, and that was largely because of some really large longline landings. The council had already voted to change the allocation between the commercial and recreational sector at that time, but it wasn't in place yet.

Then, later in the year, I guess it was in October, the commercial yellowtail fishery closed down, and that caused a lot of concern for folks. When we got to the December council meeting, the council talked about needing to be flexible in allocations for certain fisheries, and they had started the -- They had been through the whole visioning process, and sector allocations was one of the issues that came out of it, and it may still come up again, in terms of looking at snapper grouper fishery-wide sector allocations, but the council decided that it was worth looking at and doing something sooner rather than later in regards to the dolphin and the yellowtail fisheries. This is here not so much to talk about dolphin as we are to talk about the yellowtail fishery.

Now, there are some interesting issues that are going on here, and I'm going to skip down over the dolphin stuff. If you really want to talk about it, there's a lot of stuff that is very similar between the yellowtail sector allocation discussion and the dolphin sector allocation. One of the things that they are considering for dolphin is having gear allocations within the commercial sector as a way to put some brakes on the longline fishery, which is something that happens -- Generally, it's over by early July or so, and that would allow the traditional all-year-long hook and line fishery to continue, and so that's why they're considering that as a possibility.

In yellowtail, as you can see, the allocation between the two sectors, while it's not exactly 50/50, it's not that far off, and so what the council wants to do is look at the potential of either considering permanent or temporary allocation shifts between the commercial and recreational sectors, and, of course, a permanent allocation shift would be just that. It would be a permanent shift from -- Probably, in this case, if it was to happen, it would be from recreational to commercial, but they would consider all different sorts of alternatives.

There are no actions or alternatives yet. They haven't even given us direction to really start developing an amendment yet. We're hoping in June that what they're going to do is to decide what actions they want to consider in this amendment. There's a lot of additional dolphin actions that the council wants to consider, and they need to make up their minds if they want to just make

this an allocation issues amendment for these two species, do they want to put in other actions, and they haven't even gotten that far.

What we're thinking is probably going to happen is that they will make up their minds of what they're looking for in June. We will take it out for scoping this summer, and they will discuss the amendment in earnest in September, and so hopefully, if they do go ahead with this amendment, when you all come back in the fall, October or November or whenever your meeting will be, we will have some actions and alternatives for you all to look at, depending on how this progresses.

Some of the things that the council is looking at is if they did a permanent allocation shift, and that's what we typically think of, is that you just move allocation from one sector to the other and it's permanent, it's done, it's over with, and everybody moves on, but they're starting to look now at the idea of temporary allocation shifts, and there is lots and lots of different ways that this could be considered.

For example, let's say one sector is getting close to reaching its ACL and the other sector has a lot of fish left in their portion of the overall ACL. What could happen, for example, would be that -- Let's just use this yellowtail example. Let's say they reach 90 percent of their ACL and it's September and they've still got four months of fishing to go. The recreational sector has maybe only caught 50 percent of their ACL.

Then the council could make a decision to put a mechanism in place that would allow a certain amount of the recreational sector to move over to the commercial sector for a defined period of time. It could be until the end of that fishing year, and then everything all goes back to the way it was at the beginning of the fishing year, or it could be, if it turns out that the recreational sector, for three years running, has only caught 75 percent of their sector ACL, the council could consider making a temporary transfer of say 25 percent of the recreational ACL over to the commercial sector and say that for three years this goes to the commercial sector.

If the recreational sector starts bumping up against their new, lower ACL, it would move back sooner, or it could move back automatically after a defined period of time. There's lot of different ways that the council can look at this.

The council is also very aware that even discussing these issues is very, very controversial, and so what -- I think, right now, all we're looking for is if you all have some ideas of whether you think that the council should even be considering such ideas. If you think that they should, is there any ways that you think that you would like to offer that the council might consider how to go about doing this?

One of the things that the council is also discussing is the definition of optimal yield, and there are some disagreements among sectors on how to deal with that. Really, before you can consider moving fish from one sector to another, you need to make sure that everybody is onboard and talking about optimal yield in the same way, and so the council has some work ahead of them to try to figure out how they're going to deal with this problem.

Really, all I wanted to do was to make you aware of the council has this on their plate. They're talking about it. They haven't really gotten very far with it. This was a paper that I had put together for the council for their March meeting, but, to be honest with you, at their March meeting, they

really didn't get into the details of the allocation, and so they haven't really even discussed it very seriously yet, but, at this point, we just wanted to bring it before the AP and make sure that you were aware that this is being considered, and see if you all had any comments at this point on what you could offer in terms of advice to the council.

MR. DEMARIA: I think one that's going to happen is this could open up a whole other plethora of problems with respect to sector allocations and that sort of thing, and I'm just looking recently at the cobia experience. Due to the Magnuson Act, when you get into these fisheries, where, like the rules seem to be as told to me, you overfish one year, perhaps drastically, in one sector. You can continue on okay without any changes, provided the three-year average kept you within your ACL.

If you're going to start giving the fish away, somebody on one sector or another could end up using or not using the fish and then suddenly blow their take away in one year, and then you're going to be bringing up this three-year average for the other sector that hasn't been fishing quite as hard that I think could backfire, just due to the glitches in the Magnuson Act.

As we saw with cobia, we blew it away this year, for the single year, but when we did the three-year average, we still blew it away. Therefore, we need to have management measures now, even though our catch per unit effort is pretty steady. In this case, you couldn't have shifted. If you shift something to the commercial, it's not going to do anything, but I see that as one large problem, based on this recent experience.

MR. ATTACK: That three-year thing, it depends on what the fishery is and how the accountability measures are written into the regulations. Some fisheries are that way and some of them aren't, but that's how cobia is written, and so it's not true for all of them.

MR. MUNDEN: Brian, you're probably aware that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Mid-Atlantic Council Bluefish FMP has provisions for transfer of quota between the recreational and the commercial sector. I was involved in that for over fifteen years. The process works extremely well, and the way that would work is when we were doing our annual specification setting for the harvest levels for the upcoming year, we looked at the harvest levels for the past year. If the council and the commission felt that you could project that one sector or the other would not harvest its share of the quota, at the time it was called a quota, for the upcoming year, you could transfer fish from one to the other.

It was for that fishing year only, and I don't remember exactly when the Bluefish FMP was written. John Carmichael was involved in that, but it was in the 1980s, and so it has worked well for over twenty-five years. Not everybody is happy about it, but, oftentimes, we would find a state like Florida, as an example, would be sitting on several million pounds of commercial quota and, if it did not get harvested, it would just not roll over. It would just be contributing to the welfare of the stock, so to speak, but by the provisions in the plan, where you could transfer from one sector to the other, it allowed the stocks to be managed to the benefit of all states and all individuals involved.

MR. JOHNSON: In order for that to work, the fishing years would have to be the same on the stocks, correct?

DR. CHEUVRONT: It would sure make it a lot easier if it was.

MR. JOHNSON: Then we know that the recreational sector is only going to get larger. Theoretically, it may not. I mean people may quit fishing, but I think it's a great idea. I support it. I just think you would have to have a threshold for the commercial sector. In other words, I wouldn't want to see over time -- In full disclosure to people who don't know, I do it all. I do everything. I have a commercial boat, I have charter boats, and I have a lot of hats.

I wouldn't want to see a situation where the recreational sector lost a part of their allocation forever, because at some point they may need it back, but then, in looking back a couple of years ago to gray triggerfish, when I think the recreational sector harvested 40 percent of their ACL and it was closed commercially, that was a waste of the resource, and that's what you're talking about.

How would you set that up? I wouldn't want it to be permanent. I would want it to be a temporary shift, like Red is talking about, but you said you did it the year before? You based it on last year's catch?

MR. MUNDEN: That's correct.

MR. JOHNSON: So could you do it mid-season? I mean could you get in a situation, say like gag grouper, where the commercial sector in December, early December, they only have three weeks before the fishery closes anyway and they're projected to close, and you look at the recreational sector and they've only met 45 percent of the ACL for their allocation?

DR. CHEUVRONT: I would think, theoretically, and some of the logistics needs to be worked out by the National Marine Fisheries Service on how they would make that happen. Right now, the way the accountability measures are, unless a stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing, if a sector goes over its ACL, but the total ACL has not been exceeded, there is no payback, but what we're talking about here -- You're talking about really sort of an end-of-the-year sort of thing, and that's kind of up to Roy to decide how he would handle that.

I think what we're talking about is if you had that same scenario, but it was the first of September, now what do you want to do? Right now, we have no mechanism that would allow Roy to do anything other than, when the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met, he would have to close the commercial fishery, regardless of whether or not the recreational sector caught all of their ACL. Roy, if I'm saying anything wrong, correct me, please.

DR. CRABTREE: I have thought some about this, because we have this problem in the Gulf of Mexico with some species as well. I think there are a number of ways that you could do this without permanently reallocating anything, because that gets difficult. One way would be to change the accountability measures such that if one sector hits its ACL, but projections are that the total ACL is not going to be hit, there is no in-season closure and you just keep fishing.

Another way to do it would be to manage under a common ACL, meaning no sector ACL and just a common ACL, until it gets hit one year. Then, if it gets hit one year, the next year you revert back to the sector ACLs and you go back to in-season closures, and then another way that you might be able to deal with this is to carry over uncaught quota, and so take yellowtail, for example. The commercial hit theirs, but the recreational is usually under, and so you carry over some of that

uncaught quota to the next year, only you allocate most of the uncaught quota to the sector that did catch their ACL the next year.

All of that is kind of predicated on the stock not being overfished, so that -- I look at it that going over your ACL one year is not a big deal. Even if it's overfishing, it's just one year, and if you stop it and don't allow it to continue, it's probably not going to do all that much damage.

If you're in a rebuilding plan, that's different, and you would probably have to do it differently, but I think there are ways you could do this by adjusting the accountability measures and how you handle that, and that would get you away from trying to permanently reallocate fish, although I would urge you not to completely shy away from the allocation issue, because there may be cases where you really do need to just make an allocation shift, but that's kind of my thoughts.

MR. HUDSON: As long as we're on a two-month wave with the recreational with a forty-five-day delay on processing that information, that makes it a little fuzzy on the recreational end of their landings. Right now, you don't even have a single pound listed for 2016, and we're already four months into the year.

Second off, in the mackerel amendment recently, we did have a consideration, even though it was tabled, for a later amendment of doing just that, knowing that there was unused allocation from one sector and then being able to do a little horse-trading, but it was terms like "borrow" or "loan" and stuff, and that got a little fuzzy, too.

I agree with what Roy was saying. When you don't have overfishing and it's not an overfished stock and you do have, like in the case of how the dolphin was last year, millions and millions of pounds that never got caught, that begs to allow for a little flexibility on the part of the managers, and so I like that idea.

One other thought is ACCSP. One of our things coming up this year is to go to the one-month wave now that they're responsible for the MRIP, as opposed to the two-month wave, and so that will shorten the time between recreational reports.

MR. HULL: I just wanted to make one comment. I feel like that we need to be getting the maximum sustainable yield out of these fisheries. If we're leaving fish, whichever sector, we should not be leaving fish in the water. By the time we get these ACLs, based on the best available science, through these SEDAR stock assessments, there has been so much buffers and reductions put on us that we just -- We need to get what is given to us and utilize it for the people that own this stock, which is the citizens of this country.

For us to leave fish in the water, I am not for that, and some of the ideas that Roy just brought up, like fish under a common ACL, until you reach it and so one sector is this or that, but who knows what ideas they can come up with here, but I think it's a real discussion to have and try to obtain maximum sustainable yield. One other question, Brian, is what is the current definition of "optimum yield"? Is there an official definition of that?

DR. CHEUVRONT: There is, and if this is a quiz, I am going to fail, because I can't tell you right off the top of my head, and I don't think I have it written down, but it does have to do -- It follows from, I think, MSY.

MR. ATACK: There's kind of a couple of different sides and philosophies to that. You know you've got your borrowing and your loaning, and then there's also the term of you could leave some money in the bank for it to grow. Some people on the recreational side might be thinking, well, we're leaving fish out there in the bank and it's growing and we're helping the resource, and the other thing is, is the ACL really the correct number?

Depending on what fishery it is, I think you need to look at how you really want to do this. A fish could be not overfished, but look at like red grouper and scamp. The recreational sector has been leaving a lot of fish out there for several years now, and so has the commercial, but that fish isn't coming back. You can have problems in a fishery where the stock assessment doesn't say it's overfished or in trouble.

On the side of the coin, I think it is good to be flexible. I know in the bluefin tuna that they have sectors, and they have general, harpoon, longline, trap, purse seine angling, and then they have a reserve. That reserve can be moved by the director to whichever category that might go over. He has the discretion to do that. They also change the number of bluefin that you can land each day as the season goes on, and so it can be three bluefin tuna per person per day or it could be two or it could be one, based on where they are versus the quota.

That's a very flexible, I think, and dynamic thing that you could maybe look at. It's out there and it works, but I would be concerned about taking every fish out that they can unless you're sure the ACL number is really a good number to sustain that fishery for a maximum sustainable yield and OY.

MR. JOHNSON: To that point, the ACL is set below the OFL. The way this is supposed to be -- Well, sometimes. Anyway, we're talking about a commercial -- Very seldom is this going to go the other way. I mean the commercial sector is the one that reaches their allocation, pretty consistently. Again, I think it's a great idea, if it's a situation where you're looking at the end of a season, like the gag grouper and I gave you that example. It made no sense to shut it down with three weeks or two weeks left.

I think it definitely needs to be explored, in my opinion. I just wouldn't want to see it happen early on in a year. I wouldn't want to see some species get really hammered by the commercial sector that's having some really good catches and then start borrowing some from the recreational sector and then find out that, wait a minute, they were catching them really good too, and then everybody gets shut down, because then you're going to have a lot of upset people. I think it would work, but I just think it needs to be a case -- I don't know what formally you could set up. It just needs to be a case-by-case kind of thing.

MR. ATACK: Like B-liners could be an example. You have a split season in April and you hit the season limit for commercial, are we going to start borrowing from the recreational so we can keep that commercial season open until July 1 and then hit your second? I think you've really got to look at that case-by-case, how the fishery is --

MR. HERRERA: In the case of yellowtail snapper, I completely support this mechanism. Last year was the first year we ever had a closure, and that, socioeconomically, was a disaster for us, a real disaster. There was plenty of fish in the water. I have a video of a couple of days before it

closed, and the amount of fish behind the boat and behind all the other fishermen's boats, probably Ritchie's and my brother's and so many of the other fishermen.

There was a lot of quota left recreationally, and so, again, yellowtail is not overfished. It wasn't during the spawning months. It would have been a very useful tool, and, if you look at it and see what effect it had, the people who, like myself, had Gulf reef permits -- Okay, so we went out and fished in the Gulf, and everyone tends to think that the Gulf is such a big area, but not when it comes to yellowtail. It's a very small area that we get to fish yellowtail in the Gulf.

What happened was you cause overfishing on the Tortugas side of the Gulf, and that's a very delicate area. Really, the fisheries management, by not having this in place, had somewhat of an issue. The other issue is, that time of year, we start getting cold fronts. The wind blows out of the north, and we want to be on the Atlantic side. We don't want to be on the Gulf side, and that's what happened the last two weeks of the year. We got hit with a few blows out of the north, and we weren't able to go to the Gulf, and so just having this mechanism would have really, really helped us last year. If we get a chance to vote on it, I would totally support it.

MR. ATACK: If they change the start of the fishing year to July 1, that is going to eliminate the same problem or not?

MR. HERRERA: There is no telling. There is no telling. Again, when you have now that we have quotas and we had a closure and you have talks of individual fish quotas, you put yellowtail snapper on the map, and people who normally didn't go out and target yellowtail now go and specifically go and target yellowtail. Not only do they go target them, but they go target them now that they're spawning and hit them as hard as possible. It doesn't matter the size of the fish. They are catching small fish just to put pounds, because they're scared of if they go to individual quotas.

I think now, when you start the fishing year in I believe August 1, it will help ease the problem of a closure. However, there is no telling, because this will be a totally new thing put in place, and so I'm hoping that we won't reach it, but, once again, if we have the mechanism, it will allow for there not to be a closure. Again, I totally support it.

MR. DEMARIA: Yellowtail is a bit of an unusual fish for the Keys. It's not a fish that aggregates at a couple of well-known spots that people know and pound, like mutton snapper. There seems to be quite a few of them. I don't know anyone, on either side, that's complaining about a lack of yellowtail.

Two of the main predators, black grouper and barracuda, have been diminished greatly, which probably adds to their numbers now, and I think it's a species that you've probably got some leeway with. I don't really see a big problem with it. I don't know anybody that does, and so I think you've got a little bit of room to play around here.

MR. MOSS: As a recreational fisherman, and a recreational yellowtail fisherman actually, I personally have no problems with it. The one warning I will kind of heed out there is the perception of this, if something like this moves forward, and the general perception of recreational fishermen in the Keys who already feel like, and I'm not saying that this is true, but this is perception, whom already feel like a lot of commercial guys kind of get special treatment, that commercial fishermen

take everything and they get nothing. Now, all of a sudden, commercial fishermen have hit their limit, and so what do we do? We take some of the fish from recreational fishermen.

Again, I don't disagree with this. I don't disagree with this, especially because the recreational side isn't hitting their limits anyway. I am just saying kind of take heed of the perception that may be out there, should something like this come to fruition.

DR. CHEUVRONT: At this point, I don't think there's really anything that could be voted on. There is nothing that's really been concretely discussed or put forth by the council. I appreciate all the comments that you all have made, because I think it's given some good things that I can take back to the council in June, as they start into this discussion and figuring out exactly what kinds of actions they want to look at. As we go out to scoping, I'm sure we'll probably get some more ideas and things. When you see this again this fall, assuming the council moves ahead with this, you will see there will be some more definitive actions and alternatives for you to consider. Thank you.

MR. ATACK: Thank you, Brian. I think we're going to move into Item Number 10, because Items 7, 8, and 9, John Carmichael is doing, and he'll be here tomorrow morning, and so we're going to move to the Visioning Amendment, which is your Attachment 8a and 8b in your briefing materials.

MS. BROUWER: Actually, if you don't mind, the council finalized their vision blueprint, and before we talk about a visioning amendment, perhaps Amber can update everybody on where that is and what's included. It won't take long, and so we'll do that first and then we'll get into the visioning stuff.

MS. VONHARTEN: As Myra indicated, at the December 2015 council meeting, the council adopted the final vision blueprint. You guys saw this last fall, kind of in its draft form, and then there were a few more tweaks that were made, but this is the final document, Attachment 8a in your briefing book. This is the vision blueprint, and you will remember that this was the long-term strategic plan that the council has put together to help guide management of the snapper grouper fishery.

For this first iteration of the blueprint, this is for 2016 through 2020, and the document -- First, I want to say thank you to Don DeMaria for always providing us such wonderful images that we can put in our documents, but here is the table of contents. The way the blueprint is set up is it gives a little bit of background about how the council came to produce this blueprint. Then, if you recall, the blueprint is divided up into four main goals of science, management, communication, and governance.

The council also put together an evaluation plan for the blueprint, and I will go over that. Essentially, that's going to kind of help the council look at the blueprint and how they're using it over the next four years and evaluate it along the way, as we go, and then there's a couple of appendices and an implementation schedule.

The council went through each goal and kind of put in a draft suggested timeline of when each of the different actions in the blueprint might be able to be addressed within the next four years. Appendix B is the full version of the vision blueprint and the glossary that goes along with it, and

I'll explain what's in that in a minute, and then Appendix C is the items that the council decided to not consider for this iteration of the blueprint, and so some items that were in the draft form, after public input and further discussion amongst the council, they removed some items.

The first section is the science section, and the way each goal area is organized is the council, at their October visioning workshop, prioritized all the different objectives within each goal, and so what you'll see in this iteration of the blueprint are the objectives that kind of rose to the top and were the highest priority that the council felt to address over the next four years.

For science, Objective 1 is dealing with quality data and looking at ways to supplement and improve the fishery-dependent and independent data collection programs. Objective 2 is dealing with cooperative research and citizen science, which fits very nicely into what the council is thinking about developing with the citizen science program, and the so the priority actions are the actual specific actions that could be developed into an amendment.

Then the other hot topics section in each of these goal areas are items that may not have been included in those top-priority objectives, but other items that the council felt like were kind of hot-topic items, based on what's going on with management right now, that they wanted to include in this first version of the blueprint.

Probably of most interest to everyone is the management goal. The first objective priority is looking at sub-regional differences within the fishery, and so looking at things like state-by-state quotas and regional management and things of that nature. Objective 2 deals with looking at access to the fishery, and so ways to address retention, as well as the amount of effort in the fishery, the seasonality of the fishery, and flexibility in setting ACLs. Again, some more hot-topic items. All of these are still linked to the original objective and strategy in the full blueprint, so you can look back at that, and also the other objective was looking at ways to maximize social and economic opportunity for all sectors.

Then communication, and there is a whole other host of ideas brought forward about communication approaches that the council engages in to engage stakeholders, dealing with fisheries science and research, the way that the council communicates with stakeholders and trying different approaches, new approaches, and maintaining some of our existing outreach strategies.

Then the last is governance, which is kind of talking about how the council operates and carries out management, and so looking at an accountable and flexible decision-making process, streamlining management efforts, and better coordinating with management partners and then other hot-topic items.

This is the evaluation plan, and so there will be an annual review of the blueprint. The first annual review will happen in December of this year, and that's just more of an internal review to look at the progress that's been made in terms of actually applying the blueprint to management. We will do a written update, as well as a webinar to the public, that will talk about how the council is starting to work on actually applying the blueprint, which relates to the amendment that we're going to discuss next.

Then there will be a biennial review, which is kind of a midterm review of progress, and that will happen in August of 2018. We're hoping that that public input can be in conjunction with existing

public hearings that we typically hold in August, and so we'll do a review of the short-term action items from each goal, to see if anything was implemented, and, if so, how that turned out. Then we will have a report on that in December of 2018.

Then the comprehensive review will be the process where we do it all over again, and so that would happen January through June of 2020. Right now, I think what the council is thinking is a similar approach, using those port meetings to get out and talk with stakeholders again, and reevaluate what's in the blueprint now, and then also maybe go back and look at some of the items that weren't prioritized as high-priority items from the last go-round and also those items that maybe weren't considered during this first iteration of the blueprint.

Then this last section is how we actually will put it into action, and I think I gave you all a presentation on approaches that we could take with applying a blueprint, in terms of how an amendment would look that would apply some of these things that came out of the blueprint, and so we're going to talk about that next, I believe, and all of this is available on our website. There is still a visioning project tab on our website that has all of the briefing books from every single meeting and workshop that we've ever had on visioning, as well as the final version of this and all the appendices are available there, too. If there's any questions, I will take those.

At the December council meeting, we also discussed that we have these priority action items from management, which are the ones that are most applicable to developing an amendment of some type, and we did a survey with the council members to kind of better understand maybe which of those objectives under the management goal that they wanted to pursue first.

Based on the survey that we gave the council members at the meeting, and all those results were available at the December council meeting, in part of the briefing book, they came up with -- They prioritized an amendment that would look at retention and seasonality in the fishery. Now, if you look at those objectives in the blueprint, there were lots of different actions that they could consider to address retention and seasonality.

Before the March council meeting, we gave them another survey, where we gave them very specific action items from the blueprint to prioritize, and that's what you see here on the screen, and so we separated it between retention and then seasonality. In black, these are the specific actions that they were asked to rank in order of priority.

As you can see here, aggregate recreational bag limits and commercial trip limits kind of were the top highest priorities for developing some type of an amendment related to retention. The others kind of fell out after that. Then we did the same thing for seasonality, and there were just a few action items there, but the big one that came out on top was adjustments to the shallow-water grouper closure as the highest priority.

Then the council asked staff to, looking at these different action items, figure out if there had been any analysis done, to date, on some of those that might make it a little bit easier to get started on it, and so Myra put together this, action-by-action, to figure out what kind of analysis was available.

You will see there's some that SERO has done, and some of the actions were moved to other amendments. Some had no analyses, and so then the council, right now, is trying to determine which approach they want to take, if they want to do one amendment that just focuses on

seasonality, one amendment that just focuses on retention, an amendment that is just commercial actions that addresses both seasonality and retention, one amendment that addressed just recreational actions, that addresses retention and seasonality, and so there's all these different combinations that we could go through.

I guess that's kind of what we're asking for your input on, is maybe looking at these action items under these two slides and figuring out if what the council might be considering focusing on matches that.

MS. BROUWER: That's hopefully enough information for you to at least maybe get some ideas on paper for the council. What I was going to pull up right now is the overview that was included in your briefing book, because the very last item on it has a little bit more detail. It summarizes pretty much everything Amber just went through, but then it shows you the options that the Snapper Grouper Committee discussed at their March meeting.

Basically, we said, okay, here's your options. You can have a seasonality amendment, which would include, for example, the highest priority there, the shallow-water grouper closure, for both sectors. Option 2, we said you could, if you wanted to, have an amendment that deals with just recreational management measures and then have another amendment for commercial management measures and separate it that way.

The recreational amendment would have this aggregate bag limit and the removal of the size limit for the deepwater species, start and end dates of fishing seasons, that sort of thing, and then a commercial amendment could look maybe at aggregate trip limits and then, again, adjusting those start dates, or maybe even doing split seasons. There has been some interest among the council members to do a commercial split season for red porgy, for example, to line it up with vermilion and gray triggerfish.

Then the other option was to just do the retention amendment, which would include these various things, but for both sectors, and so they had a little bit of discussion about it, but I think they weren't quite ready to give us more specific guidance, and that's why we're bringing this to you here, to see if there's anything the AP would like to recommend or suggest that the council do in terms of approaching this visioning amendment. That's what we have for you, and hopefully we'll get some discussion going.

AP MEMBER: I hate to be dumb, but do we have size limits on deepwater species? I can't think of a deepwater species we do.

MS. BROUWER: We have a size limit on queen snapper. I believe there is one on silk snapper as well. There's a handful and not very many, but there are still some -- Removing the size limits is what I'm talking about. There shouldn't be any size limits on deepwater species, because obviously -- There are a handful of species that do have size limits that are deepwater species, and so obviously that's kind of a no-brainer, to get rid of that one. Any thoughts? Some of the -- I am trying to get you all to -- You were very chatty earlier, and now everybody is like tired or we ran out of cookies or I don't know.

MR. JOHNSON: I have some questions. I don't know about thoughts. What was the aggregate recreational bag limit? What are they going for there? I am trying to understand that.

MS. VONHARTEN: I think they were talking about maybe reexamining the current aggregate bag limit, like the ten snapper. A lot of people felt like that might have been too many or maybe some of them should be shifted around, possibly having an aggregate for the deepwater species. That is different than now.

MR. JOHNSON: I mean because I know like the vermilion are separate from the other species, and you can have ten, and only five can be mangrove. I guess if you adjust the bag limit on the mutton snapper -- I just don't see the need for it, I guess is what I'm saying. I was trying to figure out if there's a problem there, but I wasn't aware of it. I guess lane snapper would fall in there too, I guess. It's ten snapper, excluding vermilion, and so like if you had ten yellowtail snapper, you couldn't technically have any mangrove snapper or any mutton snapper.

MR. ATTACK: But you could also have grouper in that aggregate bag limit.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, that's a different aggregate bag limit, and so they just thought it was confusing or --

MS. BROUWER: One of the things that came out of the port meetings that we heard over and over again was stakeholders wanting streamlining of regulations, simplifying of regulations. There is too many of them and they're too complicated, and so why can't we just have more straightforward regulations, but it's one of those things where it's a complicated fishery. We're in this box where we're trying to manage and there's these latitudinal differences and access to the fishery is a problem, because of that, and so --

MR. JOHNSON: To that point, I guess to take their side, if you have bag limits for individual species of fish, why do you have an aggregate bag limit? What was the original intent of that?

MS. BROUWER: I can take a guess, but I imagine a lot of these species are caught together, and so you want to minimize discards, and so you don't want to have an aggregate bag limit for a single species. Perhaps that may have been the rationale, or at least one factor that I can think of, that may have gone into play when this was put together way back when, but this is the sort of thing that I think the council is interested in revisiting. Why do we have these aggregates and are they still working for how the fishery is today?

MR. JOHNSON: Seeing as how no one else is talking, I do support the split season for red porgy. I imagine most of the commercial guys do, because they do live right there with the gray triggerfish and the vermilion snapper, and so that one makes sense. How you address that when that was technically a spawning season closure -- I'm not sure how you can open them up. Red porgy were closed -- They spawn in January, February, and March, and so that's why they were originally closed during that time, but it would be great if we could retain some. Maybe not 120 head or whatever, but maybe fifty head or just something so when you catch them in with your B-liners and your triggers that you could keep them, instead of chucking them back. That would be very helpful.

MS. MARHEFKA: Myra, I think what I'm hearing you ask us is what would be priority to us. Is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and do you have -- For example, this Option 2, is that something that rubs everybody the wrong way? I mean some committee members said no way do we want that. Other said that would be okay. Just some kind of guidance that's going to allow the council to give us sort of marching orders that this is what we want to see. Anything really.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm not sure if it's Option 2 or 3, because, to me, they kind of overlap, but something that would be incredibly important to my business and the end user for my business would be, again, some way to keep fisheries -- Something available year-round. That gets to the point of the red porgy, which I know the weird thing with the spawning will be interesting, and so I don't know if it's a fishing year thing, or I have some trip limit issues that I'm going to bring up tomorrow, at end of business, unless this is an appropriate time, with regard to vermilion. That would be of incredibly high priority, because this April stuff is really the pits, and especially for my market.

MR. JOHNSON: My eyes aren't so good, but we're talking about deepwater species aggregate. That's for the recreational sector. I mean we can have one snowy per boat? I mean it's not a whole lot of fish we can -- I don't know why we --

MS. BROUWER: That's one thing that the council has been doing, but they haven't looked at it comprehensively, and so now we have one per vessel, May through August I think it is, for snowy. We have the same thing for blueline. That one is getting ready to change, but should the council look at lining that up? Do we want to have just a season for deepwater species, in general? That would address a seasonality thing, and so yes, there is many different things that could be considered under these two umbrellas of seasonality and retention, but what is going to be priority for the end users?

MR. JOHNSON: I mean so our aggregate bag limit would be two fish? I'm sorry, but that's just really --

MR. FEX: I can see separating it out, because, right now, with your grouper, your snowy would count to your total grouper bag limit. Just take the deepwater and separate it from the shallow-water species, because I can see the deepwater is going to be changing in the next few years, for the good or the bad. Right now, you don't really keep anything, but you have your twenty-fish complex right now that's kind of most people really don't understand, but when you really get to it -- I have bottom fished here lately, and I'm finally figuring it out, thanks to a lot of reading.

Like you said, you've got this snapper you can keep and then you have these few pinkies and that bass, or you can just go ahead and get twenty triggerfish. It gets kind of chopped up, but I can see separating the deepwater and letting them be their own new category and keeping the shallow-water roughly where they are.

MS. BROUWER: Other things that the AP has recommended -- For example, one that we started developing, we put it in a regulatory amendment and then the council said we need to wait to see where this visioning thing takes us and let's just put it on hold. The AP had recommended a change in the start date of the fishing year for the hook and line sector for golden tilefish.

I know that was important to some of you here at the table, and, again, that's an action that's sort of been put on hold for now. Is that something that the AP would recommend that the council take

back up in a visioning amendment? The AP didn't actually have a recommendation, I don't think, or maybe it was an individual AP member that recommended maybe April 15, is what I'm remembering, something like that.

I don't want to put anybody on the spot. Maybe you need some time to chew on this tonight and we can revisit it. If you have recommendations, we can pick it back up tomorrow. Another thing that might help with your considerations of what you want to recommend is we will be getting some updates tomorrow morning on stock assessments. We will talk a little bit about red snapper and where that is. We will talk about gray triggerfish and blueline tilefish and golden tilefish, and so that's all going to happen first thing tomorrow morning, if that is something that the AP would need to consider in order to move forward with any kind of recommendations for the council.

MS. VONHARTEN: Maybe it would help if you all looked at these again and went by retention and then looked at the next slide for seasonality. These are all the things that the council kind of prioritized in their survey that I gave them, and so maybe look at these again and make sure they're -- I mean this is what they thought was a priority, but I think what we would like to hear is, of this list of things, are there other things that you all feel are important as well that could be included in either a retention amendment or a seasonality amendment.

Here is retention. Maybe have a look at that and think on that. Some of this is stuff you've already just talked about, but commercial trip limits for the jacks complex, that was something that was high priority for the council.

MR. HULL: Can I just ask one question there? When you get into something like the adjustments of the size limits for red grouper, what was the spirit behind that? Classically, where we're looking at them to get larger, in order to allow them to breed, or are we looking at letting you take a few undersized ones to eliminate dead discards? That would be at the other end of the spectrum, and so what's behind the adjustment?

MR. ATACK: Removal would be no size limit.

MR. FEX: It's because the red grouper, people are seeing not the sign that they want. That stock doesn't seem like it's rebuilding like it should, and so Jack Cox and them were looking to increase the size limit to protect it. I believe that's what the red grouper size limit was.

MR. KELLISON: I just wanted to maybe help clarify -- A lot of people seem to have trouble with the aggregate recreational bag limits for deepwater species. The idea behind that was that, especially in the -- I know off of North Carolina, when they're going out, you're catching snowy grouper and blueline tilefish in the same area.

The idea was when you go out, let's say you catch your blueline. We don't want you to hook another blueline and then throw it back while you're trying to get your snowy, because anything you bring up from those depths is going to be dead, and so the idea was if you had an aggregate limit, if you bring up two blueline, you just keep the two blueline and you don't have to -- Then you would be done. It was to try to decrease dead discards.

MR. FEX: I think the downside would be the high-grading, and so maybe if they had -- I mean they might not want the blueline and they wanted the snowy, and so they might throw the blueline until they got more snowy. That might be the double-edged sword.

AP MEMBER: You have high-grading going on now.

MS. BROUWER: How do these actions look to you as far as the council including them in a seasonality amendment that we would begin developing this year?

MR. JOHNSON: They look good. I mean I would rank the split season above the adjustment to the shallow-water grouper closure. If we're prioritizing them, I think that would affect more people. I'm not sure where we would go with the shallow-water grouper. If you take anecdotal testimony from fishermen up and down the coast, most of them will tell you that they don't really think the gags are doing that great, and so the idea of changing that -- Unless someone is worried that we're still harvesting them while they're in spawning conditions, but I doubt that was the intent.

MR. HUDSON: In some of the discussions in the literature, it seems to me that red grouper, and I believe speckled hind, are more found in the spawning condition after May 1, and it was discussed, with Ben and myself, about gag down our way usually being done with their spawning by the end of March, and so there was discussion about maybe opening up the tail-end of April, but that was just some of the things thrown around in the last year or two.

MS. BROUWER: One of the things that was brought up during port hearings, port meeting, relevant to the shallow-water spawning is this idea of these rolling closures. Like Rusty just pointed out, it doesn't -- The current closure doesn't seem to capture the exact periodicity of all the species that are included in the shallow-water grouper complex, and so some folks threw out there that there needs to be some sort of like a rolling closure, so that we can address this latitudinal difference in spawning activity.

MR. HUDSON: That sounds really good, with the one worry about just the behavioral aspects of people. Will it lead to derby fishing in one section or another, as one is opened and one is closed? That has to be considered.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and not to mention that it wouldn't simplify regulations, and this is where we get into this conundrum. It's like, okay, we can address this issue, but that's going to mean regulations that are going to be more complicated, and so which one do you want?

MR. JOHNSON: Ideally, the split season, you would have your small-mouth species, like the vermilion and red porgy and gray triggerfish, all open up and sort of close close to the same time too, so you don't have all these dead discards. You don't have somebody going out there and pounding on triggerfish and throwing everything else back because triggerfish are still open. I think that's -- Whether or not we have to adjust trip limits or maybe not the original trip limit, but when we project to reach a certain percentage of the ACL, we step it down, but keep those species open as long as we can, to keep some fish coming into the marketplace. I think that would be my goal.

MR. FEX: I thought we had talked about that a while back, about split seasons, and we made a motion of eighty fish per trip, for a trip limit. I would hope we could do it, that same scenario. January, February, and March, we were catching really big pinkies. It's good to see the stock like that, but that sample is not hitting the dock, and that's one of the problems with the red porgies. We don't have sampling throughout the year, and MARMAP doesn't sample during the winter months, but I do support your idea.

MR. BUFF: Back to what Robert was saying, it would be nice if all of those could be adjusted some way, to where they're all open and closed at the same time. It would help the markets for some of us that have a storefront. It would help that market stay open. You've still got those employees and the power bill and all that stuff. Even if we back those down some on the trip limits and set them as they get so many percent full, that would maybe close those somewhat similar to the same time.

MR. JOHNSON: While we're on that subject, I know I made this motion, and it didn't even get a second once before, and I'm not about to make a motion right now, but I don't understand why we have the same trip limit for vermilion the second opening, when we have a fleet of other species available, and why we would not have less of a trip limit then that we do -- I understand the January opening, because if you don't have any of your grouper available, and so people -- I mean they need to be able to maximize profit, but, in July, you've got a lot of other animals you can catch besides vermilion. I made a motion at a prior meeting to adjust that trip limit, to maybe 800 pounds or 750 pounds, just to prolong that season. Not to complicate things, but just to prolong the season. Even maybe -- It would be up to the fishermen, ultimately, but B-liners are pretty easy to catch. That's why we typically get the ACL pretty quick.

MS. MARHEFKA: To the point about vermilion, as long as we're talking about it, I agree with you wholeheartedly, and whether this is the appropriate time to talk about it or it's at the end of business, we have been talking about that conversation we had the last meeting of this north -- I believe it's happening primarily in north Florida, where these guys are doing these -- You guys can describe it better than I can, but the quota should not have been met as early as it was this year, because we had bad weather, and a bunch of us got shut out of it. I would like to add that to be a high priority of something that would go in the next amendment. I don't know what we do about it, but --

MR. FEX: To that point, I agree with you. I would go with the smaller trip limit, but you do have those day boat guys there in Florida, mainly, that just will go out there and hit them. You will drop the size limit, but it's the amount of trips you can make in a month.

That's what really is the concern, because if the trip limit is 500 pounds and I can go out every day and hit 500 pounds, I'm not even going to bother to go catch grouper, but if I was limited to X amount of trips, and I know that's happy with nobody in here, but I mean if I make five trips a month, I'm content, but you've got guys that -- One guy was doing seventeen trips a month on a thousand-pound trip limit. I mean that was crazy. It's really not the -- You could drop the trip limit, but the effort is still going to be out there, whether it's one day or two days or whatever.

MR. BUFF: A little bit about what we were talking about a while ago is the amount of people that are on these boats, and I know everybody has their own agenda and their own way of doing business, but it would be nice if that season was longer, whether if it was a reduced -- I voted for

the 750 when this came up originally. That's what I was for, just because it would extend the season a little longer.

If you think about it, if you can have 750 in B-liners and 750 in trigger and eighty fish or a hundred fish of pinkies, you've got a trip and everybody is happy, but, at the end of the day, somewhere along the line, these people are putting five or six or seven people on these boats and they're running in and out every day and catching their ten boxes.

Before the weather gets to where we can actually catch them decent in North Carolina, it's closed, and it also shuts the market up. If that could be adjusted, even by what Robert said or by cutting the amount of people, I think that could play a part in a lot of the commercial and the recreational -- You either have to wear one shoe or the other, and that's just my opinion.

If you're going recreational fishing, that's what you ought to be doing. If you're going commercial fishing -- I think if we drew the line on that, that would help this a lot as well, to help keep it open some. If we could cut those number of people back on those boats, or either cut the trip limits back, or adjust them as it fills, then everybody might get what they want.

MR. JOHNSON: To Scott's point, the -- I no longer have a dually-permitted boat, but, anyway, I did for years. Those boats are already limited to the number of people that they can take, which is four, and there is only a handful of boats doing what you said in north Florida. There's a couple of Mayport boats that were literally changing crews, is what they were doing.

They would come in an unload with a crew and grab another crew and go right back out. If you want to grind that hard, I guess more power to you, but what I'm talking about is more on the second opening, because that's when it's good weather and you've got so many different species available. That would be the one I would be -- But I could live with a little bit less, even in the first opening, if it helps people up the road a little bit, but the goal is to keep the fishery open, but you have to set it where people could still make a living. In northeast Florida, we run a long way. We're fishing forty-five or fifty miles, and so it's not like -- People get confused. Florida is not all South Florida, and it isn't calm either.

MR. BUFF: I would like to -- One of the easiest things to satisfy this is we just need to move forward with another evaluation on the B-liners, I think. We all agree there is plenty of them out there, and so if we can increase the ACL, that would extend the seasons, regardless. If we keep the same trip limit we're at -- I mean you want to be able to maximize, even if you only -- If you've got enough ACL to keep the season open, then get the thousand pounds in the summer too, but I agree with you that you need them in the winter more than you need them in the summer, the thousand, but I think you need to stay on up there while you've got it. Don't give up what you've already got. Keep that, and see if we can get a little bit more, because the fish are there.

MS. BROUWER: To that point, vermilion would need to undergo an update, and I'm looking at Julia over there, because I can't remember whether they're even still on the list or when they're coming up for an assessment, and so maybe we can get just a very quick --

MS. BYRD: I'm Julia Byrd. I'm one of the SEDAR coordinators, for those who I haven't met yet. A vermilion snapper update is on the schedule for the end of 2017, and so the reason -- One of the reasons it's so late is because there is the change to the MRIP numbers with the new effort

survey, and we want to make sure that we have the new MRIP numbers included in that update, and so that's where it is on the schedule right now.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Julia.

MR. BUFF: I just want to clarify that I was not discussing dual-permitted boats. I was addressing the recreational bag limits being able to be kept on a commercial fishing boat.

MS. MARHEFKA: To tie this into what we were talking about before, I would like to point out that the recreational sector left over half of their quota on the table last year, and so there is fish out there. We're dealing with a fishery that I think we're not overfishing or overfished for the vermilion snapper, and so why should we not get the yield out of it that we need? The fish are out there, and so there is room to catch more, I think.

MR. ATACK: I wouldn't wait on a SEDAR assessment to increase your length of season. Do you know what I mean? You closed April 22 this year, and you want to keep it open until July 1, right? March 29. Anyway, you're wanting three more months, right? You're going to have to have a big increase in the stock assessment to get that, or you've got to do your trip limits to extend it out.

MS. MARHEFKA: It doesn't need to be three months. I don't think we're going to get there right now, but --

MR. BUFF: We would like to extend the season one way or another right now. SEDAR says we have plenty of fish, and if it goes to July 1, that would be fabulous, but if you could adjust some fish now and give six weeks of it, or four more. That would get you into grouper season. You're fishing year-round and you're not dry-docked. It made it longer this year than it has in a while, or ever, since the four-month closure.

I'm just trying to get to where you're not stopped, because if you come hang around the docks a little bit, these guys don't save any money. They're hand-to-mouth. If you see the labor you're putting on these boats, it's not like you've got PhD candidates coming here to work. I mean it is what it is, but, also, in the market, when you gather the fruits of their labor, you need to keep moving it along, because it's from the market to the restaurant to the consumer. Everybody wants a fish available, a fresh, local fish. Now you're looking at it and we might have a snowy or two and that's about it. We would just like to ease up the extra few weeks and hopefully make it year-round.

MR. ATACK: Yes, and I agree. I'm not arguing your point. I'm just saying that I wouldn't wait on the SEDAR, because that could be years, depending on how the SEDAR goes. I would do what you're doing here, and then hopefully the SEDAR will help you also.

AP MEMBER: If it moved forward with the council, which we agreed on that, that would be great. Let them have some tools to work with to adjust the thing here and there. I think everybody agrees with that.

MS. BROUWER: One thing that I think the council would like to hear what you think about is one thing that they discussed was to perhaps move these six-month commercial fishing seasons

around. It doesn't have to be January to July and it doesn't have to be split out that way. Is there a better way that you could line it up, so that there would be more fish available at the same time?

AP MEMBER: Off the top of my head, I would say no.

MR. BUFF: This is back to what we were originally talking about, was the trip limits and the length of the seasons. A lot of you guys don't have to peddle these fish either, and this is a huge problem when everybody is catching these fish. With this thousand-pound trip limit, and you think it's not really that big of a deal, but I bet you if we were at 800 pounds that we could get more for our fish than if we were all catching a thousand pounds.

What happens is the market gets flooded, and we're dealing with a product that has a shelf life, and it's very short. You can't eat but so many of these fish, and so, from my standpoint, we're trying to peddle these things out the door as they're coming in, and thank goodness we're at a thousand, because we probably couldn't sustain very much of it.

As Kenny was saying, at the end of the year, I think they got 250 for their fish, and we were getting somewhere around 350 at prime. If we back this down a little bit, we're probably going to get the same amount of money for the fish and extend the season and we're not going to be flooded with them and trying to get rid of them.

Back to what Robert was talking about. If we could adjust these allocations a little bit, we could get that quota back that she brought up, to where we could have kept our season open, but I just think the smaller trip limits is the way to go, from the market standpoint and from the boat owner and the crew and everybody being able to fish all year-round, and that is the objective, I think, for everybody when you talk about this.

MR. ATACK: I would tend to agree with that, and it should play in with what Robert said, to where in the fall you may want the smaller trip limits, and you may not want your quota split 50/50. I mean do you really want -- Maybe you want more of it in the spring and less of it in the fall and then look at your trip limits to look at your supply and demand and what kind of a rate you want it coming in at, to keep that price where you want it, because you can make more money by having the fish price up than it bottoming out and trying to get rid of your fish.

AP MEMBER: I was fortunate enough this year to be able to -- We have put a boat in the Gulf, in Panama City, and they control their fish prices by the supply. Demand is only so high. It doesn't matter what the supply is, but the demand -- Your demand is only what you can get rid of, and so they do a really good job of controlling their fish prices. If we could back this down, if we went to 800 or 750, it would take care of itself, pretty much, and so that's why I said that.

AP MEMBER: It comes from the recreational sector, but it almost looks like a whole bucket is missed, based on what I am hearing everyone say, and it was utilizing seasons, closures, and limits to maximize economic yield, that that would almost be a factor you might look at in every plan.

MS. BROUWER: It's not that it's missing. It's just that the council has chosen to approach the outcome of their vision blueprint with these possible two amendments, and so I don't think it's missing. It's just not going to be addressed like right now, and so that's more of a comprehensive, long-term sort of thing, and the same thing with allocation shifts. As Brian explained and Roy

pointed out, shifts in allocations, it's going to be complicated. It's going to take some time. It's going to take a lot of outreach and education. Those are more -- I don't want you to feel like stuff is missing, but it's just not being -- We're not talking about it right now, but it's still in the blueprint.

DR. DUVAL: I apologize that I wasn't able to be here for this afternoon's discussion on this, especially this part of the discussion and getting you all's input on how to prioritize all of this input that we got from visioning and is now in the blueprint that's been adopted. The council, as you've seen, has gone through a couple of surveys to try to prioritize what to tackle first, because, like Myra said, we can't do everything all at once. We do have to manage other species besides snapper grouper. I know it's hard to believe, but things like cobia.

I think just a couple of things that struck me as you all were talking about things like aggregate bag limits, like for deepwater species -- One of the things that we heard from the recreational community is that they would like to see some simpler regulations. As Robert was pointing out, you can get five of this and five of this and then one per vessel and then one per person of this within the aggregate grouper bag limit.

We thought that it might be less confusing to take another look at all of these aggregate bag limits. You've got your aggregate ten snappers and you've got your aggregate twenty of everything else, which twenty fish seems like a hell of a lot of fish for another aggregate. I mean do you really need a twenty-fish aggregate and a ten-snapper aggregate? Maybe you can have a fifteen-fish aggregate of everything else kind of thrown together.

The idea behind something like a deepwater grouper aggregate wouldn't be that you still have your one per vessel of snowy and your one per vessel of blueline that's going to change and your one per person of golden tilefish, but we've moved towards sort of a four-month season for at least a couple of these species.

If you just have a three-fish aggregate deepwater grouper limit, then whatever three of those four groupers you bring up, that's what you get, whether it's two gray tile and a snowy or two snowy and a golden or whatever, but we thought that something like that might actually be simpler. I was getting a little concerned that people were getting wrapped around the axle on what we have currently. We're trying to rethink this a little bit, and we're reaching out to you guys, because you're on the water, to get your input on this.

Similarly, with the adjustments of our existing six-month split seasons, they're aligned January and July right now, but we received a lot of input during visioning that there were disadvantages, geographically, to that type of alignment, that maybe we should start in March or April, recognizing that in Florida that folks would really like to have access to this fish during wintertime. Everybody wants access during Lent, and try to think about shifting those around a bit.

If you guys don't think they need to be shifted, that's fine, but maybe everybody can kind of chew on that or sleep on it and provide us with some additional input. Not that we're going to have an amendment completed overnight, but I think we're trying to think a little more comprehensively, and so let's not just say, well, we want to just add red porgy to our existing list of split season species. What are some others out there, so that we don't have to continually keep having amendments in the pipeline? Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence. I appreciate it.

MR. ATACK: We need to wrap up here in a minute. Go ahead, Scott, and then we'll probably close out for today.

MR. BUFF: Being Michelle brought that up, back to the point Robert made with tying all those fish together. I think that the snowy and the gray tile and the golden tile, even for the commercial and the recreational, those need to be adjusted as well, to open and close at the same time, so we're not having all the discards, because that's basically what there -- If you basically don't have one or the other, there is no sense in going after them, because it's not feasible. Even from the recreational side, like Michelle said, if we had a bag limit of three of those fish, or four or whatever it is, and the same from the commercial side. That way, they would open and close at the same time.

MR. ATACK: It's getting late, and so we're going to wrap up for today. We will reconvene tomorrow morning at nine o'clock, and so I would thank everybody.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on April 26, 2016.)

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened in the Crowne Plaza, North Charleston, South Carolina, April 27, 2016, and was called to order by Chairman Jim Atack.

MR. ATACK: Good morning, everybody. Let's go ahead and gather around the table and we'll reconvene this morning. We're going to pick up where we skipped over yesterday on Item 7. We're going to do the SEDAR stock assessments, and Julia Byrd will be doing that.

MR. DEMARIA: Just one thing. I wondered if it might be a good idea to have the election of the Chair and Vice Chair earlier, since a lot of us are going to have to take off to catch airplanes. We don't have to switch it over right now, but to do it before the end of the meeting. I have to leave kind of early, I think.

MR. ATACK: Okay. Is that a motion?

MR. DEMARIA: I think you can just decide, make an executive decision.

MR. ATACK: That's fine. I guess what we'll do is open the floor for nominations for the Chair position first. Does anybody want to make a motion?

AP MEMBER: **I would make a motion that Kenny Fex becomes Chairman.**

MR. DEMARIA: I will second that.

MR. ATACK: Okay. The motion reads that Kenny Fex will become Chairman of the Snapper Grouper AP. Any discussion on that? Any other motions? Then I will go ahead and we'll take a vote. **All in favor of that motion, raise your hand; anybody opposed. The motion carries unanimously.** Congratulations, Kenny. The next business would be who we want to nominate for the assistant chairperson on the AP panel.

MR. DEMARIA: **I would nominate David Moss.** Then we would have one commercial and one recreational person up there.

MR. ATACK: Anybody second it? It's been seconded. Any discussion or any other -- He's nominated as Vice Chair of the Snapper Grouper AP. **All in favor of that nomination, raise your hand; anybody opposed. That nomination carries.** Now we have to vote to see if he becomes the Vice Chair. **All in favor of him becoming the Vice Chair, raise your hand; any opposed. The motion carries.** Congratulations.

MR. HULL: Just one other thing I would like to bring up at this time, because people will be leaving early, but I would like to recognize someone who has been on this AP and this is their last meeting, and they've been serving on this AP for twenty-six years. It's this gentleman right next to me, Don DeMaria. I think he deserves a big thank-you and a big round of applause for everything that he's put into this process from all of us. (Applause) He has given up an awful lot for the betterment of everyone here. Thank you.

MR. DEMARIA: Thanks. I think in the twenty-six years that I've been on it, this group here is probably the best. It's the most agreeable. There hasn't been any arguments, and I think we're getting things done, and so thank you and keep up the good work.

MR. ATACK: I agree. Thank you very much, Don. Julia, I think we can go back to where you were.

MS. BYRD: Good morning, everyone. I am Julia Byrd. I'm one of the SEDAR Coordinators, and I typically work on the South Atlantic assessments. What I'm going to do is update you guys on a few assessments that we'll be starting during this calendar year, 2016, and then also talk a little bit about some assessments that recently finished up and will be reviewed and evaluated by the SSC at their meeting next week here in Charleston, and so I'm going to start with the projects that are kind of upcoming and that are going to be starting during 2016.

I will talk a little bit more about this as I go through each project, but we're going to be hopefully looking to get some AP members involved in the assessments. It's really, I think, critical to get knowledgeable fishermen involved in the process, and so I'm going to ask to see if there are any volunteers for some of the assessments that are upcoming as I kind of walk through each project.

The first project I wanted to talk about was SEDAR 50, which is an upcoming benchmark assessment for Atlantic blueline tilefish. This is going to be a joint assessment between the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and SEDAR and the South Atlantic Council and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center are going to be kind of taking the lead on that assessment.

There is a data workshop scheduled for October 24 through 28 of this year, and that meeting will be in Charleston. The kind of assessment stage of this project will be held over a series of webinars, and the webinars will be January through April of 2017, and then there will be a review workshop May 23 through 25 of 2017. The location is still to be determined on that.

At the June council meeting, the council will be making appointments to the data workshop, the assessment webinars, and the review workshop, and so I wanted to see if there are any AP members

who are interested in participating in any of the stages of the assessment. Again, it's really critical to have folks.

MR. HUDSON: I have been on record a lot about the blueline tile data issues that came up in SEDAR 32, and I honestly believe that the arbitrary choice made in SEDAR 4 for the blueline tile landings in the early 1980s were actually golden tile landings, and the only way we can fix that is at the data workshop, and so I would like to be involved at that stage, at least.

MR. ATACK: I would just remind everybody to please say your name when you start out. One question, Julia, is how much time would be -- If you agree to participate, what would the time requirement be that you would have to allocate?

MR. PILAND: I would be glad to help you.

MS. BYRD: Great. Thanks, Andy. To answer Jim's question, kind of the amount of time that you would need to commit would be dependent if you want to be involved in the whole process, the data workshop, the assessment stage, and the review workshop or one particular stage. The data workshop, there is normally two webinars in advance of that workshop, and so a webinar will last between two and four hours. You would commit to doing that.

The in-person workshop is Monday through Friday, that full week, and then there is normally one webinar, or maybe two webinars, after that, and then you're also supposed to help kind of review the report, to make sure all of the points and the decisions and the things that were discussed at the workshop actually made it into the report and are documented.

The assessment phase is going to be all webinars. There are, I believe, four webinars. There's one kind of pre-assessment and three assessment webinars on the schedule now. Again, those are going to be between two to four hours, probably. They're going to be spread out from January to April, and so it will probably be once a month or twice a month of a four-hour kind of commitment, and then the review workshop is three -- It will be two-and-a-half to three days in May, and the kind of time commitment there is actually coming to the review and kind of reviewing any materials beforehand.

If anyone is hesitant to kind of volunteer right now and wants to know a little bit more about what participating entails, you can ask me now or during one of the breaks. I will be here all day, and so if you just want to chat with me and see kind of what participating will entail and see if it's something that you're willing to do, that's fine, too. I guess another thing I will note is if you guys know of any other blueline tilefish fishermen who you think would be interested and available in participating, I would appreciate those names as well, so I can provide them to the council for their consideration in June. Right now, I have Rusty and Andy and Robert.

MR. JOHNSON: No, I did the last one, and it didn't come out too well. I was going to say that some of the people, like Manny from the southern part of our state, where they actually do have a blueline fishery, it would be helpful -- I'm not saying you, but if you know someone down there, because we've got North Carolina, where they have a fishery, and that fishery really is conducted on either end of the region. There's not a whole lot of effort anywhere else, and so it would be really helpful if we had somebody from South Florida involved, in my opinion.

MR. HERRERA: I will definitely talk to a few of the deepwater fishermen in Key West, to see if they would be willing to participate. I will get with you later.

MS. BYRD: Sounds good, and I will email you the dates and things like that, so when you talk to people, you can kind of share that information, if it would be helpful.

MR. HUDSON: I used to fish a lot of snowy and catch a lot of blueline tile, between below Cape Canaveral all the way up to St. Augustine. I kept notes on everything I did. That historical data may be useful for trying to be able to verify what I tried to tell them. It was 90 percent snowy and 10 percent blueline tile in our region, unlike what Dewey Hemilright does north of Hatteras, where it was clean blueline tile up there.

There is a different fishery, and I fished in South Florida too, the deep water, and that's a little different context down there also. We really need to make sure that we've got those bases covered for those regions where blueline tile are found, and so I'm glad to be able to be part of the process. It's like sixteen SEDARs for me or something so far.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, everybody, for your input. Manny, I will follow up with you. If there are others who are potentially interested and, again, want more information, let me know, or if you can think of other blueline tilefish fishermen who would be kind of important to participate in this process and you think they might be willing, I am happy to -- You can let me know their names, and I'm happy to reach out to them, or if you would rather reach out to them first, I am happy to email you specific information to send them. Just let me know, and a thank you to Rusty and Andy for volunteering to participate. Any other Atlantic blueline tilefish, SEDAR 50, kind of questions before I move on? Okay.

The other assessment that will be starting in 2016 is a red grouper assessment, and this is scheduled as -- Right now, it's scheduled as an update assessment, and so what that means is the last benchmark assessment for red grouper, which was SEDAR 19, will be updated. The same model will be used and the same data streams will be used. All of the datasets will just be updated through 2014.

MR. HUDSON: On our update protocol now, we don't participate in that, until we get to the SSC meeting, like the golden tile next week, correct?

MS. BYRD: That's correct, but what I wanted to mention to you guys is -- As Rusty mentioned, typically for update assessments, they are run by the assessment team. The Beaufort assessment team is the one who is responsible for collecting the updated data and running the model. Then they will make a presentation to the SSC. The SSC is the only review body for update assessments, and for update assessments, you normally can't kind of add new data streams or change the model or make those sorts of changes.

Next week, at the SSC meeting, they are going to be discussing whether red grouper should become a standard assessment, and the reason for switching to a standard would be to add a new data source, and that data source would be the SERFS video data. I am sure you guys are familiar, but the MARMAP and SEFIS, which is one of the programs that Todd runs, do chevron trap and video fishery-independent surveys throughout the South Atlantic.

The video index is fairly new, and it wasn't included in the previous red grouper assessment. It didn't exist yet, and so we're going to be asking the SSC if they want to change the assessment from an update to a standard, in order to incorporate that video index.

MR. HUDSON: Having participated in SEDAR 19, which was red and black grouper, it seems to me that one of the recommendations, I recall, was the idea of splitting the stock in red grouper for the North Carolina component, which was really a lot of high landings up in that region for a while, and down in South Florida, because it's like almost a moot kind of point in between, because there is just some red grouper, but not as plentiful in the other two places. Maybe we should take a look at that recommendation, for discussion, to see if they had wanted to do that.

MS. BYRD: We can go back and look at that. One thing I will say is if you are changing stock structure, that means you have to go to a benchmark. You can't do that in a standard. As far as I know, the only piece that was being considered for the standard is the inclusion of the video index, and so that's a lot of words to get to the meat of what I want to tell you guys, is that, if the assessment switches to a standard, we will hold a series of webinars, and we will need participants.

We will need both scientists and fishermen to participate in that process. Again, it would probably be a series of webinars that would start this fall and run through maybe early winter of 2017. Again, I wanted to see if any of you guys would be interested in participating, if this assessment is switched to a standard, participating in the webinars for the red grouper assessment. If it doesn't switch and it remains an update, we wouldn't need participants, and I would then reach out to you and let you know that, but is there anyone here who is willing to participate in the red grouper assessment, if it switches to a standard, or if you know of any red grouper fishermen who you think would be interested, I would be interested in that knowledge too, either now or kind of during one of the breaks. Thank you, Kenny. Anyone else?

MR. HERRERA: We will discuss that too, because I tend to release a lot of red groupers, but we will discuss it.

MS. BYRD: Okay. I will follow up with you then. Thanks, Manny. Anyone else? If you think of any names of folks who you think would be interested, again let me know during one of the breaks. One thing I will mention is time commitment for a standard will be less than for a benchmark.

MR. HUDSON: The one thing I didn't do for SEDAR 19, because they never started it until SEDAR 24, was the pictures for that quarter century of pictures from the professional photographers from the Daytona area. I know I can pick out the red groupers out of all of that if we needed to, if we get to a standard assessment and want to have that kind of reference material, I would be glad to work on what I had done back then, but it's just an idea.

MS. BYRD: For the standard assessment, any new information is kind of laid out in the terms of reference, and so that's one thing we could mention to the SSC too, that that may be another new source of data that would be available, if they're interested. Those are kind of the assessments that will be starting in 2016, and then I wanted to briefly talk about the assessments that were recently completed and will be going to the SSC for review next week.

The first is a golden tilefish update assessment. Again, as we talked about a few minutes ago, for update assessments, the analytical team, which are the assessment team up at the Beaufort Lab, are the ones responsible for this update, and so they were coordinating with everyone to update datasets. This is an update of the model that was used in SEDAR 25.

The datasets were updated through 2014, and so the last year of the assessment is 2014, and so it's the same model, with the same datasets that were used, updated through 2014. The stock assessment report is available online, on the council's website, in the SSC's briefing book, and it's also available on the SEDAR website. If you look at SEDAR 25, you will see kind of the update there.

For all assessments, the SSC is kind of the final review body, particularly for update assessments. The SSC serves as the role as the only review body, and so they will be reviewing the assessment next week and evaluating it and then coming up with catch level recommendations. I wasn't going to really share or talk too much more about the assessment itself, since it hasn't been reviewed by the SSC yet, but if folks have questions, I am happy to try to answer them, or, if would be helpful, I can send the link to where the assessment report is to Myra, and she can send it out the group, so you guys can look at that, if that would be helpful. I will send that to Myra, and she can send you guys the report. Does anyone have any questions on that? Again, we will be waiting for the outcome, at the end of the SSC meeting, as far as kind of what happens with that assessment.

MR. FREEMAN: Since it deals with the golden tilefish, it's more on the reported landings, and, since there is quite a few of the council here, maybe someone can answer this for me. The last four years, all the dealers have had to get together and get our own landings to give to the logbook, and, every time, the numbers have been off. This year, they had us at 511,000 pounds, as of a week-and-a-half ago, which is 105,000 pounds over. They made a couple of phone calls and they go, oh, we had a computer error. Now it's only at 414,000. That's a hundred-thousand pounds off.

Golden tilefish, we have twenty-two people right now. If we keep having the mistakes every year on the golden tile, what's happening in the B-liner and all these other fisheries that are a lot larger? Are there still mistakes there and it's just so big that we're not catching it, or what is taking place?

MS. BYRD: I'm not the appropriate person to answer that question, and I don't know if any --

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think maybe you're talking about what's being estimated preliminarily for ACL quota tracking purposes, and it sounds like that's substantially off. What goes into the assessments is based on all the reports, when they come in, and so these aren't being affected by that. What you're talking about is more of when the council is dealing with closures and the Regional Office is closing things down and wondering if the most accurate information is in there, the most up-to-date that's matching what you guys have actually caught.

MR. FREEMAN: Why is there still estimated landings a month-and-a-half after the season has been closed?

DR. DUVAL: Jim, there are dealers who report late. That's why the Science Center has to use the existing information that they have on like the burn rate through the quota, to try to estimate, for folks who have not reported on time, what those landings are, and so that's why you get the

preliminary number and then something updated later. I think Dr. Ponwith would be the best person to explain this to you. I mean I know that council staff and the Science Center folks went through a review of how the Science Center gives the numbers to the Regional Office that are posted to track the annual catch limits, but, as much as it disturbs us, there are dealers who do report late, and that's a big piece of that.

MR. FREEMAN: Why are they reporting late? I thought we went through this a year ago, to put teeth in this, so this doesn't happen anymore. It's usually the same people every year. Why isn't something being done?

DR. DUVAL: Perhaps if you could maybe send an email to me expressing your concern about those late landings, and I can pass that on to Dr. Ponwith and the Regional Office and -- Ultimately, it's the Office of Law Enforcement that pursues violations of the regulations that require folks to report on time. Obviously there are situations where you have some catastrophic thing, like your computer blows up or something like that. Hopefully you would be responsible enough to let somebody know that you're having issues like that, but, if you don't mind communicating with me, I will pass that along and make sure that that gets some attention. Thanks.

MR. ATTACK: I can understand that for the late reportings, but what you're talking about was really an over reporting, and how did it drop from 511,000 down to 414,000? A late reporting wouldn't do that, but when there is a big error like that, it would be nice to know what was the root of the error and how could that happen.

MR. FREEMAN: A computer glitch, four years in a row.

MR. CARMICHAEL: That was someone at the Science Center that told you that?

MR. FREEMAN: Hang on just one second, and I will pull the exact email. It's from Steve Brown from the State of Florida on tile landings. The State of Florida had 262,000 pounds, and there was only four other boats. They had it at 250,000 pounds, which boosted the 511,000.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It sounds like an issue with something the state -- The dealers reporting into the state and it being relayed up the line. It sounds like a state issue actually, more so than the Science Center.

MR. FREEMAN: Most likely, but that's what was on the ACL website, and so that's what we were going off of, and I was just curious as to why this continues to happen, and if this is happening in other fisheries. Like I said, this fishery is just so big that we can't go from dealer to dealer to try to count everything up.

MS. BYRD: Next is SEDAR 41, and John is going to talk a little bit about red snapper, but I just wanted to make you guys all aware that the SEDAR 41 assessments were completed, and these are the South Atlantic gray triggerfish and red snapper assessments, and the final -- These are benchmark assessments for both species. The final assessment reports are available on the SEDAR website. I will also send the link to those reports to Myra, so she can send them out to the group as well, for those of you who haven't seen them yet.

They are also going to be reviewed by the SSC at their meeting next week. These reports are going to be a little bit longer, since it is a full benchmark, and so it combines kind of the data workshop report, the assessment report, and there is an independent review for benchmark assessments as well. John is going to go over a little information on the red snapper assessment, and then we can kind of answer any other questions you guys have on those two assessments.

MR. CARMICHAEL: As Julia said, the red snapper assessment is finally done. It's been a long path getting here. It was reviewed recently, and the SSC is going to review it at their meeting. It is going to come up on the agenda on Wednesday, May 4, in the morning. The first thing, at 8:30 in the morning, it's planned to be the red snapper. That's going to be on a webinar and all that, and so, of course, you guys know that you're welcome to listen in to that discussion. It is available on the SEDAR site and probably in the SSC briefing book materials as well, and so you can access the report and look at it.

As Julia said, it's very long. It has a lot of detail about the data and the assessment process, and it has the review. When you go to look at this, I encourage you to start with the peer review report. It's going to be Section 3. In my opinion, this is one of the best peer review reports we've gotten in a long time. That panel did a great job digging into the details, and it kind of seemed at first like it took that group a little while to get their legs under them, to really get to grips with all of the issues and all of the information was coming at them, but the discussions they had, on the last day, in the afternoon before that last day, were really in-depth about what was driving this assessment and what the uncertainties are and how the fishery was interacting with things and the population.

Those guys put a lot of effort into it. They had a follow-up webinar to deal with a lot of things, and the review panel really went through the uncertainties in a lot of detail and explained their decisions and their findings, and so I think that's a -- It's not a highly technical read to review the review workshop report. It's very straightforward writing, and I think you guys won't have any trouble at all understanding that.

In the report, the next thing that follows in the overall assessment report is an addendum, which gives the actual final assessment results, and that includes recommendations and changes that came out of the review workshop report, and so focus in on those. Then, when you're curious about the data, you can go up and look into the different data report sections that will describe that.

The findings of the stock were that the stock, and this is the preliminary -- Obviously this has to go through SSC review. Then, once it goes through the SSC review, the agency gives the council an indication of what the actual final status is, but the findings of the review were that the stock is overfished, which means the biomass is not where it should be, and I see no reason why that would change. The stock is in a long-term rebuilding. It's very abundant right now, but those fish are relatively young, and so it's going to take time for those fish to get old and start producing a lot of eggs and get to where it needs to be in terms of the age structure and things of that nature.

The stock was also determined to be overfishing, and one of the things you'll see in the review workshop report is they comment on the amount of weight that that conclusion receives from the removals that were in 2014, which is the last year of data. In 2014, there were very high discards in the fishery.

That's somewhat of a function of just the amount of effort that's out there in general, but also with the abundance of this population right now. We had a good year class recently. That has contributed to a lot of fish being in the water. It looks like there is another year class which is on the horizon and starting to enter the fishery, and so the abundance is out there.

In fact, in terms of looking at the projections, which show you where you're going in the future and how the rebuilding is progressing, in the next few years, you can catch darned near as many fish as you would expect to catch at MSY. The first couple of years of projections are approaching 70,000 fish, versus, at MSY, this population says the total catch removals will be about 80,000 fish.

What that really illustrates is that, while the stock is overfished, there is a very abundant population out there now. They're just still relatively young. As they get older, they're going to produce more eggs, and then that overfished status, that biomass -- In this case, it's that number of eggs, because it's not actually in biomass, that's really going to start ramping up, and we'll get there and get this stock rebuilt.

To me, looking at it, an important thing to fishermen is that while happens, you're going to be fishing at -- There's a potential to be fishing at very close to the MSY levels, and this is not different from where we are in terms of our red grouper rebuilding, where the stock is being fished at a 75 percent of FMSY level, which is the same you will go to once the stock is rebuilt, but it also tells us, in the case of red snapper, that when we get to that rebuilding stage, because the stock is so abundant now, there is no huge amount of fish which is going to come out of that population and support catches and allow us to, for example, have exactly what we have now and be able to have a good directed fishery while we continue to discard the numbers of fish that we have now.

That's the issue that the council is going to have to grapple with when they deal with this in June, is how to take those fish and, instead of having them thrown away as discards, have them actually be caught. We actually had nearly twice as many fish thrown away, in total kills, between what was caught in 2014 and then the discards, as the MSY that is possible, and so there's going to have to be something done by the council to deal with that loss of fish.

That's sort of the findings, in a nutshell, and, on one hand, it's tough news, because of the high removals. On the other hand, I think there are some highlights in there, in terms of there is potential to have a fishery, but it's just how do we solve that problem of not discarding fish when people are, for example, going out fishing for other things and they're encountering red snapper?

As this population, this next good year class, comes in, that problem is going to continue. The fish are abundant and people encounter them and they're going to catch them, and that's the core problem we're going to have to address. With that, are there questions about this? I expect there probably will be.

MR. ATACK: When do you think they will be able to catch fish and keep them?

MR. CARMICHAEL: It depends on when they find a solution to the discarding of fish when they're fishing for other things, and, if we look back to the previous assessment, when the council was first putting in the rebuilding plan, actually two assessments ago, when they were looking at the very large area closures, I think they kind of know that's not a very palatable alternative to

most people, but that was what was being considered to deal with the fact that simply not allowing any fish to be harvested was not adequate to control the removals, and we're in a very similar situation again.

MR. ATTACK: Are there any recommended options for the council to consider or have they got to just come up with options?

MR. CARMICHAEL: They talked about a few things in March, but, for the most part, they're going to have to come up with options. Some of the things that we've thought about is you're going to have to have some way to perhaps control effort. If closures based on area are not palatable, perhaps closures based on time, or perhaps combining that with a depth component, where in the deep water, where the discard mortalities are higher, perhaps you have a season in the deep water and then, in shallow water, you let people fish more for the species that are found there, where the discard mortality is not going to be as high and you can factor that into your total removals and perhaps have a year-round fishery in some places.

MR. DEMARIA: Where are all the discards coming from? Is it the commercial side or the recreational or a combination of the two?

MR. CARMICHAEL: There are some in all sectors, but most of them in the recreational, in the private recreational, because there is so much effort out there in that fishery.

MR. DEMARIA: That's an easy one to resolve. You just get the recreational people to turn in all their fishing rods and take up golf.

MS. MARHEFKA: John, I just want to make sure that I'm hearing this right, because I'm hearing something really bad right now. What I'm hearing is that those of us who are not fishing for red snapper at all are still going to be affected by the decisions the council has to make, because we need to reduce our effort for the other species we're fishing for, whether it be time or area. I just want to make sure I understand, before I start having a panic attack down here. Should I be having a panic attack?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, I don't think you should, because it is -- As Don mentioned, the magnitude of effort in commercial versus for-hire versus private is obviously different, and that's something the council could take into effect. The areas in which you fish -- In a lot of cases, you know more details about the areas in which you fish than the other sectors, and that's something else that they could consider.

AP MEMBER: Just one comment, and it goes along with Kerry's. It seems that we now have red snapper, because it's so successfully productive, it's now become a choke species for all the other associated reef fish. They have now turned this into a choke species for us, so that, potentially to stop discarding red snapper, you will have to stop fishing.

MR. JOHNSON: There are potential solutions. They're not going to be popular, but there are some solutions, and I sent the group -- I sent Jim some stuff that he shared with the group, and we're going to talk about it later, but I think it's time we started thinking a little bit outside the box, because what we're doing is not working, and, if you just heard what John said, it's not going to work. It's never going to work, because as that stock increases, discards are going to increase,

and either we're not going to get to fish or -- I mean we'll never have a season, so to speak, because of dead discards, because of effort. We can throw MRIP under the bus if we want to, but that's the reality we live in. When we discuss that a little later on, I want everybody to sort of give it some thought.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Triggerfish was not accepted as acceptable by the review panel. They just didn't think -- They felt there were too many modeling issues and too many things where the model wasn't doing a very good job of explaining what was going on in the data. Triggerfish, the SSC can look at that and decide what it does to their ABC control rule and how there may be some information in there that they can use to change their ABC recommendations on triggerfish or not, but the bottom line is that trigger just didn't survive the review, really.

There still remains a number of issues with that species. This is I think the third SEDAR it's been run through, and so there are some serious challenges there with triggerfish, and we're going to look to the SSC to look at what the reviewers provided, in terms of guidance and data needs and such, and perhaps plot a path forward for us, in dealing with triggerfish.

As you know, the council is working on a reporting amendment for the for-hire sector, and this is to take the charter vessels to mandatory electronic reporting and change something on the timing of the headboat reporting as well, and this went out to public hearing at the end of January or early February. The council reviewed it in March. At that time, they discussed the need to specify potential core variables to give the fishermen, you fishermen, an indication of the type of information that you would be obligated to report, in terms of electronic reporting.

We're working on that now, to come up with a list of core variables, and the council is going to review them in June. Then they will decide when the amendment goes to be put forth for final approval. It could be in September. It won't be in June, but it's possibly to be in September, and the gist of this is just to get the -- In the Southeast, we have a for-hire survey, and the headboats have been on electronic reporting for a while and the charterboats were not. They could have been selected, but they haven't been, and so the charter boats are covered by MRIP. This is a way of getting at least the federally-permitted charter boats now covered by the electronic reporting.

One of the big issues that came up when we did these in the public hearings was reporting to area. The headboats have one way of reporting to area. It gives them one-square-mile resolution. South Carolina DNR has a little bit bigger square-mile resolution. It's more akin to how the headboats used to report.

With an electronic reporting system, different resolutions could be possible, and so one of the things the core variables will discuss is the basic resolution, and kind of leaning perhaps the South Carolina DNR, since that's already in place, which means the more refined reporting of the headboat program would actually suffice to meet the standards.

An important thing to say to you guys and others about the reporting of area is that what you report to the agency can be at a higher resolution than what the agency would provide if someone said, hey, tell me something about landings. That's always been the case now, and that continues to be the case under electronic reporting, and so it's not a case of I called in and said I want to see where all the black sea bass are caught off of Jacksonville, Florida, and they show me every little spot where someone like Robert fished.

They would give me, perhaps, landings for Florida as a whole or in sub-regions, but the higher resolution that's given to these programs, much as with the commercial data, there is a protection of privacy of information like that, and so there's a bigger resolution, like state level data in landings and things of that nature, that actually reported to people.

Now, folks with confidential access and working on a stock assessment, perhaps they want to use this data to help support our interest in moving to more area-based stock assessments and better characterize these stocks and better assign the effort and fishing practices in different areas, they would have access to it, but it's not the type of thing that is available on the internet and anyone can go look and see everyone's fishing areas. Are there any questions about this amendment? I would be glad to answer them.

MR. HUDSON: Is some of this reporting going to involve like iPads and stuff like that, kind of the work that the ACCSP did with the Rhode Island experiments?

MR. CARMICHAEL: That's certainly the council's intent, yes, and the council has a pilot study that is going to be cranked up here later this summer and fall, working with fishermen from all the states to explore an app just like that, to kind of see how well it works and how the variables work and that sort of thing, and so that's another reason the council is holding back a little bit on final approval, because we would like to get feedback from that study as well and perhaps refine things like the variables.

The gist of it is though to have the reporting -- To have you guys have reports due on a Tuesday for a week that ends on Sunday, and so it's a little different change in the time of the week that you now have for headboats. Basically, you would fish Monday through Sunday of the prior week, and you would need to report by Tuesday after that Sunday and that continues. Then you're fishing again that week and so then the next Tuesday, you need to report.

With electronic reporting, you could report every night. You could report every Wednesday up to that point or every Monday or what have you, report every Sunday night. It's really your choice. It's going to give you a lot more flexibility, and they've got all the normal things about if there's a storm or whatnot, then there are alternatives, just as there is now with the headboats.

MR. HUDSON: As a follow-up, South Carolina has already been doing a lot of charter boat reporting. How does that tie in with this?

MR. CARMICHAEL: The intent is that they would continue doing this, and then their data would become the data that's used for the charter boats. As it is now, we have double coverage in a state like South Carolina, because they have the reporting and those guys are also covered by the MRIP program. As you have heard, Rusty, when you get an assessment, there is a concern over creating a potential bias if we use the MRIP estimates for three states and then this reporting for another state, and so the intent of this is that the South Carolina program meets the standards and that would continue. The headboat program meets the standards, and other states can go ahead and do something like this as well to cover their fishermen.

Ultimately, the goal would be to have one report that covers all the fishing, and fishermen, perhaps as they get up towards North Carolina, they may be covered by the Mid-Atlantic or Northeast

permits as well as South Atlantic permits, and the goal is to let those guys do one report that meets the needs of everyone.

Now, the logistics of these reports, where the data go and who manages them and what types of platforms are available have not yet been resolved. That is something, to some extent, that's kind of out of the hands of the council as not being a data management entity, but the council's direction is that they would like to see this be done through ACCSP, because everyone has access and ACCSP has supported a lot of different platforms for electronic reporting.

That means that a fisherman could choose the device that suits his needs. For one guy, it might be on his phone on the way in. For another, it might be an iPad. For another, it might be a computer back at the marina when he gets in.

MR. HUDSON: As a follow-up to your statement about ACCSP and my role and Mark's role and your role, et cetera, January of this year, wasn't that the transition for the ACCSP with the MRIP?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, through ACCSP, the states are now handling the contract for the MRIP samplers, and that started in January.

MR. ATACK: With this amendment, I guess there's three actions in the amendment. I think we have weighed in on all three earlier. Do we need to page down through those three, or is everybody happy with the preferred? The council went with our preferred alternatives, I believe, right?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, that's correct. We are just bringing you up to speed on where it stands now and let you know about what happened at the public hearings. Yes, if you do have any suggestions or comments, we would appreciate them.

MR. FEX: John, I would make a comment. I did an electronic logbook last year with Brett Pierce. It was like a tablet like this. I told you guys about this last time. It ended this year. They're looking at different ways to utilize it, phones and other apps they're looking at and the tablet. It will be on your vessel. It will be kind of like something you take offshore and when you get in, it will send the signal back.

I would like for there to be an app on that same unit, since we already have the platform, to go ahead and put in our logbook numbers, what we caught that trip. Even though it's going to be recorded in the logbook, it ain't the exact numbers. When we finish the trip, we can say, okay, send this information in, because it seems like we always have a delay in data for the dealers, a two-week delay in the data, and it seems like we always put a barrier on our catches, just to worry about if we're going to exceed our catch.

If all of a sudden we have the same platform, that when we finish the trip, we can just type in the exact numbers and it gets sent in, then our numbers will be quicker than the dealers would, and so I just figured I would let you guys know, because I'm going to try to have that done, since I've been working with Brett Pierce and them. I just figured I would let you know and get your opinions on it.

MR. JOHNSON: That's the commercial sector you're speaking to, and this is speaking to the for-hire sector, and so it would be two separate things, but I agree with Kenny that it would be fine.

MR. ATACK: But if you're like dually-permitted and you had both, then you could fill either one out, based on what trip you were doing, if it was compatible for your same device. On the commercial side though, I guess you pretty much now report after you get back, based on your poundage, after you land at the fish house, and so reporting on the way in, then that might kind of muddy the waters on the landings, right, or not?

MR. FEX: No, currently this logbook, you just type in what you're catching as you go along fishing. It's not the correct amount of pounds, as you know, but, when you get to the dock, I finish unloading and I could go back in that system and say, hey, this is what I really caught. I can send it in and it's done at the end of the trip. Our landings will be real time, versus a two-week delay in the dealers.

Like a lot of times I've seen, we've always had to put a barrier of caution around something, because we're uncertain on how fast the landings are coming in. I am just trying to get the landings faster to be tracked. That way, we can get closer to our ACL and we don't have to put such a big buffer.

MR. BELL: Just to clarify questions about particularly methodologies for getting your data in, we're trying to set this up so that the basic level looks just like what we're doing right now with headboats. That would be sort of the basic level, but, in terms of using whatever electronic means become available through private industry, we're trying to wire it so that, once we establish the data elements, you can get it in multiple ways.

If you want to go to a laptop computer when you get back to the hill and enter it that way, great. At some point, if you want to use an application on a device on your boat, you could do it that way. We're not trying to prescribe any particular way of doing it, but set it up so that it can be flexible to accommodate different -- Because, if you think about it, looking at the industry, boats range in size from large boats, where you have a protected cabin that you can keep electronics, to a center console, where you've got one operator and he's trying to deal with customers and drive the boat.

We're trying to set the system up so that it's friendly for different ways of doing this throughout the entire spectrum of the industry, but the idea is to get the data in there, and, if you think about this, if we can accomplish this, the entire for-hire sector will be providing logbook data themselves, very similar to the commercial sector, and so now you've got those two groups of landings accounted for, and the big piece left, of course, is the private boat piece, but that allows you to participate as an operator in the data collection process directly, and then, perhaps if the system evolves eventually to the point where we can sort of come out of MRIP, perhaps, and then, voila, you have a logbook system.

Now, South Carolina has had a logbook system since 1993, and so we're also trying to set this up so that our system just meshes nicely with whatever we set up and we're there, but we've been doing this since 1993 on paper, and we're now shifting over to the option for electronic reporting for our guys as well.

The idea is about better data, more timely data, accurate data. We talked about going down to the box system that the headboats report on, which is a ten-by-ten-mile box. That's much better than

we have now, because we don't have anything now, but that's the idea. It's all about data improvement for this particular piece of the sector.

MR. FREEMAN: Kenny, this is to you. On this brand-new upload computer logbook that's been -- Basically, you've been working on it for about a year, maybe? Did you have any glitches?

MR. FEX: No, I didn't. Actually, all it was was an iPad, and they're making it where it's for a phone. The software was pretty easy to work with. It didn't have a back button, to where you could say let me go back to where I was at, and it didn't have a function where I could look at my total landings as the trip was going on. I actually had to end the trip to see what my total landings were, and so I made that point to them, and hopefully they're adjusting it, but it's the beginning of a platform that I think could be utilized for other reasons too, for regulations, updating regulations.

You could have a regular app on that for that, but I really want it for tracking vessels, not so much to track where you're going fishing, but just to make sure that you're going fishing and you're not writing down numbers. We always question where some of the numbers come from and them being real, and so that's one way to eliminate that, but get rid of some of the bad apples. You've got people out there slinging traps out of season. The way to find out is where were you slinging that trap up and why did you stop inshore and why were you there?

There's a couple of things, but it doesn't track you real-time. It's not an expense. It's your regular cellphone. Everybody has one, and so it's just something that can be utilized to better track, and it's partially for the science side. They want to know how effort -- That was the main object of the electronic logbook before, but I'm looking for another alternative to better our landings and get rid of the lag time, and so it's just another option. If you guys have any other options to go on to it, bring them up. I would like to hear it, but I support it, for the reasons that I explained.

MR. HUDSON: John, I learned from a charter boat or headboat operator down in St. Petersburg last week that there is a pilot program out in the Gulf and there is maybe one-quarter of the boats on the Gulf side are doing an experiment with a system like I believe Kenny described. Are folks aware of that or can they comment on that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I'm not as aware of that, but yes, there is a number of pilot studies all around dealing with this. As I mentioned earlier, the council, through ACCSP, has a pilot study involving three or so fishermen in each state to do a similar thing, to test an app that's very much like the one that was developed up in Rhode Island, and it's an iPad app, and get them involved in that. We're trying to go out there and see how they work and let people get familiar with them and figure out the kind of information that we need to ask, what's appropriate, and not be too onerous.

One of the comments that came up in the public hearing was the fishermen acknowledged one of the challenges you have in dealing with these data is they said, we may go out and stop and bottom fish and then go on and troll in the Gulf Stream and come back in. They were like it's a challenge in terms of where I report my fishing area, and it's also a challenge in terms of how much effort I devoted to each type of fishing.

They suggested that perhaps there's an option where they could do a split trip, and they could say during this portion of the trip, this number of hours, I was here and I fished for these species with

this gear, and then, in those number of hours, I was there and I fished and I caught those species with that gear.

Certainly, from terms of using this for a stock assessment, that would greatly refine, say, our CPUE. If a guy caught black sea bass, our CPUE in the charter boat fishery for black sea bass, if I could leave out some effort on that trip that was actually trolling for dolphin in the Gulf Stream. The challenge with that, of course, is getting people to do it and balancing the complexity. There is some people who would be interested in giving us information every time they stop and fish, but it kinds of depends on how often they stop and fish and how much interest in doing this in whether or not they will do it, and so you've got to balance what the people overall will do versus the type of detail that you need.

We haven't decided to do split trips, but I think certainly within something, as long as the core identity of the trip, the person and date and time they left the dock, were on there, then that's something that most electronic programs would have no trouble at all accommodating. For some people, this may not be an issue at all. For other people, it could be a huge issue.

The beauty of an electronic-type of thing is those types of things can be developed to allow each fisherman to respond in his way. As Mel mentioned, we're not trying to dictate to anyone which platform or type of software or mechanism they use, but to put it out there and let people do it in the way that best fits their fishing practices.

MR. FEX: To your point, yes, they are doing something similar with the recreational in the Gulf. Shane Cantrell, at the Marine Education Research Program, he is deeply involved with that. If you want to call him, he's on the steering committee, and he can inform you on it. He showed me the app and everything, and it's pretty neat.

MR. LORENZ: They seem very favorable with that experience with it.

MR. ATACK: I guess what's on the screen is the kind of data that's being collected with what you did last year, Kenny.

MR. CARMICHAEL: This is the data for the charter boat that's being collected by South Carolina DNR, which is kind of a starting point for the core variables. One of the things, another issue, in addition to the area and the split trips, is the idea of what type of discard information. Obviously you want to know the species and what were kept and what were discarded.

The headboat program has gone to just reporting total discards and not separating live and dead. The South Carolina one, they record the number released alive and the number released dead. For example, if the standard were to report discards, you can add those two up for South Carolina and you have the same equivalent number that you have in headboat.

The question becomes what would we ask of the charter boat fishermen in general. The headboat went the direction they did because of the large number of people onboard and the difficulty in just keeping track with the total discards, and they felt that the captains did a better job of just keeping track of total discards than trying to distinguish live and dead.

Then you also have the issues with delayed mortality and everything else, and you have a lot of discard mortality studies which are based on the rate of all of the discards, and so it would be combined anyway. That's something we're thinking of here in terms of the charter boat reporting, is perhaps just to make the core data just be report your number of discards. It's a little bit easier for you guys, in terms of what you're keeping track of. Those types of things, if you have any strong feelings about those types of things, that will certainly help the council make its decision on what they require.

MR. PILAND: I kind of agree with what you said in simplifying it, except for like on your red snappers, which the discards seem to be all assumed as dead. If a fisherman uses a barotrauma release device, those numbers would be reversed.

MR. CARMICHAEL: That's a really good point, and that actually brings up a potential variable to consider. In the red snapper, I think the discard mortality was 40 percent. Julia, was the latest?

MS. BYRD: It's lower than that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It's 38, and so they're not all assumed dead, but a large proportion of them are. That's where the idea of if we know better the depth at which you caught red snapper -- We all know that depth has a big impact on discard mortality rates. The challenge in using that, in terms of estimating dead discards of fish, is we don't have good information on the depth at which those fish are caught and discarded, and so something like this would maybe give us some more information on that.

Perhaps if a fisherman uses a release device, and we know that maybe a descender lowers discard mortality by 20 percent, if someone indicated on here that you were using that, then that could factor into the discard mortality calculations. It's just one of those things that, if you know it has an effect, then you need to know how widespread its usage is in the fishery, whether it's required by law or just voluntary. There is going to be some variation in how widespread it's used, but if we collected some data on that, then that would open the way for that to be used in the assessment.

That makes me think that perhaps adding a field of was some sort of descender device used, maybe a pull-down, where you could indicate the type of device that you used, and that might help refine discard mortality.

MR. PILAND: I think, with education, your fishermen would -- Especially with something like the red snapper, but I feel like most of your fishermen, your professional fishermen, would use a descending device, again, with education and understanding that it's such a high mortality assumption without it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I can see naysayers going, well, then everybody will just say that they used it and get the benefit, even if they didn't, but peer pressure can often work on that, and I don't think that it's -- Again, it's not one of those cases where the people are doing well should be punished because some people are not going to follow the rules. I think I would bring that up at the council as something to consider adding as a core variable, because I believe it could help us in the long run, if people report that accurately.

The next topic is the Citizen Science. As a number of you guys know, because you were at the workshop, the council recently held a workshop devoted to citizen science. The first product that has come out of that is this blueprint proposal, which documents the recommendations that were made at the workshop.

The council has reviewed this at their March meeting. We're currently in the process of trying to arrange some funding so that we could put some staff on this and dedicate them to it, because there is a lot of recommendations in here, ranging from everything to training and outreach to managing projects and managing data and recruiting volunteers and managing volunteers. It's going to take a lot of effort by someone, and the council wants to make sure that when they roll this thing out and they start doing it that we get data that's going to be used.

That's really the guiding principle underneath all this, is not to have people out taking part in a citizen science program and collecting data and then have those data get into a stock assessment scenario or a management evaluation and say, well, we can't use these data for some reason. That would obviously be really the worst-case scenario.

We're going a little slow on this, to make sure that we have the right infrastructure and the right process in place to make sure the data we have get used. You were given this. It's Attachment 7, which is the blueprint, and it lays out the goals of the program and the process by which it will be developed.

I will just highlight the mission statement here, which the goal is improving fisheries management through collaborative science. That's really where we want to go. It's not just stock assessments. It's management overall. Stock assessments are one part, but there's a lot more to management than just the stock assessments, and getting the more collaborative science, because everyone wins in those situations. The fishermen learn more about the science process, and the scientists learn more about how fishermen interact with the resources and the ecosystem, and the managers get better data. I will just see if there's anyone who has any questions or comments on the program.

MR. FEX: One thing I kind of thought about is somebody at the stock assessment said that some kind of tag study would be useful, and I kind of bounced it around to other people, and that's something that is kind of -- Everybody would probably be onboard, because we discard fish, and we're kind of curious about if that fish made it or whatever.

Like in the off-season, we could tag grouper and, vice versa, B-liners. I think some kind of tag study, because the cost probably isn't that high. It's just getting the data and information together, and, like I said, you get the people involved with it and then they get excited about it to find a tag from South Carolina. I think something along that line would be pretty beneficial.

MR. LORENZ: Mr. Chairman, I have a few things to say, if I may have some time, having attended this workshop and a number of other things. I spent a lot of time on this, and I would just like to share with some folks, and I actually have three goals that I wanted to bring in, and so this will take some time. Cut me off if you wish. It will take a couple of minutes.

I note, in sitting here, that a lot of you all make your disclosures of the time you've spent in fishing and that sort of a thing. I've been a lifetime recreational fisherman. What I always say is I'm a very passionate and enthusiastic one, but not a good one. One thing I also was is a scientist, and

that's how I ended up most of my career, and I wasn't too bad at it. I did well enough to retire at a fairly early age, and I have used science my whole life. I used it anywhere I had to use it, from understanding basic research to designing products. Then I used it to actually have those products manufactured, and so, at the end, I was in a business.

I am really big on this, on what I saw, and I participated in the workshop, and so those are my disclosures. You heard me mention yesterday that I think one of the biggest barriers to get this started -- There are just a tremendous number of great ideas, but it's money. Money is what is going to be needed to start it.

Hearing what I've seen in fisheries, it's probably not going to go anywhere if all that happens is NOAA or NMFS has to cut out a piece of what they're already doing in a budget to fund this, and so I think a big priority is going to be to somehow, and folks like us here as citizens can go somewhere with this, to figure out and find someone up there in the U.S. House or Congress to find some influencers to get a sum of money. My figure has been about a \$1 million or so might be good.

Some of us have made an effort on it, and there's been an effort made by the folks in Florida. Ira Lax has actually made some headway there, with like Representative Patrick Murphy from Florida. I tried in North Carolina. The wrong rep was picked, and I didn't really get anywhere, but that's been my experience. I am not really good at this, but we have some help.

What I would like to ask here, for this group, is maybe we do three things, and I've written them down here. One, just among you all, in hearing this, maybe give an advisory vote to the council on how you all feel about it. Some people think this is great, and some people are a little worried about it with the science. If we just took a how-do-we-feel-about-it vote on our support of citizen science, I would love to see us do that.

The second thing I would like to do is then, based on that, so you have the numbers of us who want to support this, would be that we actually make a formal recommendation to the council that they make a recommendation to NOAA and NMFS, wherever possible, to support citizen science as a new item, a new, and the dirty word is "earmark", but a new allotment of money, a new line item, and there are members of the council that possibly could champion that. There are members of the council that can't get involved, and I know, but the council, we don't have to worry about it. They have a lawyer that usually sits right to the left of Roy Crabtree at the SAFMC meetings that can advise them on that.

Then a third thing I have, for those of us in North Carolina, since I failed at the first attempt, and anybody that wants to hear the story, I can give it to you later offline, one-on-one, but we have a rare opportunity for those of us here in North Carolina. We picked -- Like I said, the wrong rep was picked.

We have a David Rouzer, District 7, House of Representatives for District 7, and there are four of us on this advisory committee that actually are David Rouzer's constituents, Kenny, Jim, myself, and Dick Brame. We represent four distinct interests of diving, recreational fishing, NGO, and commercial fishing. I think that's pretty powerful with one rep.

What I would hope to do, and I would very happy to do the footwork on my side. There is people that can help me, since I don't know anything about lobbying and all that sort of a thing, to get that going, but we offline, the four of us from North Carolina, and maybe we could even add Red in, where we've got another experience level, though he is out of the district of Mr. Rouzer, that we would try to put together a way to start the ball rolling and see where they may net out on funding a new line item for citizen science.

Coming from the recreational side, I think this is perfect to get some information on what the recreational sector does. It's been done before, in 2010, when the snook died in Florida. The recreational sector was logging their catches. In a way, that was citizen science. It was actually used by Florida Wildlife to make some decisions, and so it's something we can do.

Then, behind that, with North Carolina, anybody here from the other states -- I mean Florida has made the initiative, and I'm going to do it for North Carolina, but there is South Carolina and Georgia here, and so if there's any other U.S. citizens that might just want to take a stab at reaching out to one of your representatives, please feel free to call me, and I would help you out with what my experience is. Granted, I haven't been good at it and I haven't succeeded at it, but I now am gaining experience. With that, then I would like to take this forward as an opportunity, and I will shut up.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, I just wanted to let you know that I believe we were signatories to the same letter, many of us on this, to Senator Graham's office. I happen to have contacts in his office and have been in close contact with them. Apparently, the -- This is when my U.S. history is going to be bad, but it's in mark-up. It's in committee, and Senator Graham's office is aware that we want the one-and-a-half million dollars, and his staff is aware of it, and they are working on it as we speak.

I got an email from them a week ago, and they said they don't have a date set for when that's going to happen, but it's supposed to happen in the next couple of weeks, and so there has been some movement. We are fortunate in Charleston that we have a very strong -- It's called the Convention and Visitors Bureau. They have incredible ties with Graham and with Tim Scott, and they are hugely supportive of, luckily, Mark and I and the commercial fishing industry here and have said they will do whatever it takes to help us get that money, and so South Carolina is doing their part, for sure.

MR. BUFF: I have been fortunate enough to be on the lobbying side with a different business, and, just so everybody knows, the lobbying side is very expensive, but you can -- I don't know how the other states are, but North Carolina, there is a time of year that that is open for the public, so you can actually -- Four or five or ten or however many people wanted to get together, you can actually go to Raleigh and walk in and talk to these representatives face to face, and I highly suggest that. We made a lot of progress with what we were doing in the past, and the lobbyist would be the way to go, but it is very expensive, just as an FYI, but you can walk in and talk to these representatives. There is a certain time of year for North Carolina. I don't know how it is for the other states, but just it's more food for thought.

MR. LORENZ: **Mr. Chairman, with that said then, may I have an opportunity to make a motion that we just come up with a statement of position that the Snapper Grouper Advisory Committee supports citizen science and that the council supports citizen science, that simple.**

MR. HULL: I second it. Thank you.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion on this while she's typing this up?

MR. HULL: Not so much on the motion, but the previous conversation. Our group from Florida goes to Washington, D.C. once or twice a year and walks the Hill, and we have been doing it. We've made great strides and great progress in having -- Usually, you get to meet a lot of staff, and the staff is what, kind of like here, handles a lot, and so they have really been educated in the last couple of years, and they're coming onboard slowly. It's a slow process, but I think if we keep going with it and we're persistent that we're going to get what we need out of them eventually. We just have to keep on doing it, and you have to visit them. They have to know you're there. The squeaky wheel gets the oil. It's the same story.

MR. LORENZ: I would just like to change my -- Just add a little bit more, just because it will be clarity with respect to the budget. **Support for citizen science and the procurement of new funds to fund citizen science. I don't want them cutting out a pie that already exists.**

MR. ATACK: Do you go along with that, Jimmy?

MR. HULL: Yes, that's good.

MR. ATACK: Any other discussion on this? I support this. This looks like a good idea. I will read the motion then, if we're ready to vote. The motion is the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel expresses their strong support for citizen science and the procurement of new funds to fund citizen science. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; any opposed. The motion carries unanimous.**

MR. LORENZ: If I may proceed with the second part, the second one. I just have a second motion, because I'm going to put something in the council's lap. I would like for the Snapper Grouper -- **The motion will be the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel recommends that the council to make a formal recommendation in support of citizen science with new funds or funding to NOAA or National Marine Fisheries Service. In support of procuring new funds.** That's where they have to focus, to get the new money.

MR. ATACK: Does anybody second the motion? David. The motion reads: The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel recommends that the council make a formal recommendation in support of procuring new funds for citizen science programs to NMFS. Any discussion on this?

MR. HUDSON: The recommendation in procuring new funds from whom, because I don't think the council can lobby Congress or anything like that.

MR. LORENZ: I guess where my thoughts would be is that they can't lobby Congress, but they could send it up through whatever the channel is there is in the budgetary process, which I don't know. I presume NMFS and NOAA has one that continually rolls up until it gets to some kind of budget in somebody's office. I understand the council itself can't lobby, but there may be individuals within the council that could do something, and I'm unsure of that. As I mentioned, they can get their legal advice on that. That isn't something we have to solve.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Basically, the council already is working through channels to try to get funding for citizen science. As you say, we can't lobby directly, but folks at NMFS are aware of it and we're doing what we can, through our own channels, to try to get a bigger piece of the pie, literally just to fund citizen science.

DR. DUVAL: Bob, I just also wanted to let you know that there's a body called the Council Coordinating Committee, and so it's a meeting of all the Chairs and Vice Chairs and Executive Directors of all the federal fishery management councils. They meet twice a year, once in February and then once usually later in May. In February, I actually gave a presentation to that body on our citizen science workshop.

It was very well received by the other councils. They were supportive on our behalf. I was able to point out that there are already some existing citizen science efforts within NOAA. The National Weather Service has had citizen science going on actually for a long time, and, the day that I gave the presentation, there was actually a story on NOAA's *Fish News* about citizen science actually in the Pacific Northwest, with regard to protected resources and data collection.

The agency is aware of our support of citizen science. You know we've spoken about the value of something like this, in terms of being creative, to try to help both the council and the agency fill in data gaps. I mean, as you're aware, Dr. Richard Merrick, who is the Chief Science Officer for NOAA Fisheries, was at the Citizen Science Workshop, and so, as Brian said, we are in communication with our partners at the agency to try to determine if there is the ability to provide some additional support through the agency for us. That is how the council gets the money that we use to operate, is from the agency, and so I do want to let you know. I definitely appreciate that, and I want to let you know that we're doing what we can with the agency.

MR. LORENZ: Then the one question for me then would be is my second motion redundant and possibly pointless against the first?

DR. DUVAL: I think the council is certainly interested in pursuing citizen science with or without a motion. I would leave that to you all as the advisory panel.

MR. ATTACK: It sounds like, if we leave the motion the way it is, that the council knows that the advisory panel is supportive of what they're doing. I think I would leave the motion, and it's been seconded, and I guess the verbiage is correct. Any more discussion? If not, we'll go ahead and vote on the motion. The motion reads: The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel recommends the council make a formal recommendation to support the procuring of new funds for citizen science programs to NMFS. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; anybody opposed. The motion carries, unanimous.** Did you have a third thing there, Bob?

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am finished.

MR. DEMARIA: I just want to say something before we move on. I think sometimes we get too bogged down with trying to get all the data and science, when a lot of these issues are just common sense and can be resolved with common sense, and that's where this advisory panel comes in. There's a tremendous amount of on-the-water time and common sense here.

I think a good example is the Tortugas Reserves. I sat on that Tortugas 2000 Working Group years ago, and we struggled trying to get data, and there wasn't a whole lot of data on the Tortugas, and especially Riley's Hump, back then. We tried and tried, and there were proposals by NMFS of huge areas south of the Tortugas, a hundred-and-something square miles, to close and there was another one by what was the Center for Marine Conservation at the time, and those were all rejected.

We went back and forth for a long time on this, and it wasn't until we brought in Peter Gladding, a commercial fisherman from Key West, onto our panel that -- He didn't have a high-school education and he knew very little about statistics or anything like that, but he had fished the Tortugas for forty-something years and knew it like the back of his hand.

Peter just looked at the map after a while and said, look, this is what you need to close and these need to be reserves. This is where they fish spawn and there is where they're at. He drew all the boundaries with his finger on the map, and everybody looked around and said, well, that make sense, and that's how the reserves got created. It wasn't a big scientific thing, and it turned out to be, especially Riley's Hump, probably one of the most successful spawning reserves in the world, and it was drawn up by a commercial fisherman with common sense. I think a lot of times we overlook common sense and try to make a lot of these things a lot more complicated, and you all have got the common sense. That's all I wanted to say.

MR. ATACK: Thank you, Don. I think that wraps up citizen science or was there something else?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Just one more last blurb. NOAA does a thing called Quest Webinars, and they tend to address scientific topics, and they're available to people all over the country, and even people around the world. Coming up on May 25, we're going to be doing one. Julia, Amber, and I are going to be doing one on the citizen science initiative here in the South Atlantic.

We'll talk some about the need for it and why we feel this is the way to deal with our unique data issues and some ways in which citizen science has already been happening in the region, and then this program itself and where we see it going. There will be an announcement going out about it. It will tell you how to get signed up for the webinar. Once that's prepared and we receive it, we will forward it on to you guys, in case any of you are interested in sitting in on that.

MR. ATACK: Thank you, John. What we've got next is Other Business. What we would like to bring up is a letter that Robert Johnson sent out to everybody. We'll put that up on the board, and we can talk about it and get everybody's input or recommendations on that.

One other thing we want to do is, before everybody leaves today, Kim would like a group picture here, once the meeting is over, and so we should wrap up early today, I think. Before everybody takes off, let's get that done for Kim. Robert, do you want us to turn this over to you for a couple of minutes? Do you want to talk about what you've got there?

MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Jim. I don't know if I need to read the whole thing. You guys can read it. I guess the most important thing is I think we can all sort of agree that the path we've been going down, especially when we look at red snapper as an example, it's not working, when we sit here and listen to John basically say that as the fishery rebuilds that discards are going to go up and you're never going to get to fish, to put it blunt.

It's time to start thinking outside of the box a little bit, because we've been beating the same old drum here since I've been involved. I've done three assessments on red snapper, and we sort of saw this coming with the discard rates the way they were. As the biomass gets larger, you're going to be discarding more, and you're not going to ever get to keep one.

Now, we're in danger of not even being able to fish, to control discards of one species. Everybody says, well, it's not going to come to that, but I don't know how many of you guys were around during the discussion of Amendment 17A, but I watched that line keep getting moved south, until it was just north of where I live, and it would have put me out of business. When you start talking about closing the ocean to all vertical fishing, that's pretty severe.

These are just some of my ideas. This group has mentioned -- I mean we have a commercial sector, which I am a part of, that is very well monitored, and, for the most part, we know what they're doing and we know what they're catching. We know their effort. With this electronic reporting, we're going to actually get a pretty good handle on the for-hire industry as well.

This group has recommended in the past to have limited entry for the for-hire sector. When I first got on the AP, I opposed that, but, as time has gone on, I have changed my mind. I see that there is so many people coming in and out of the fishery. We don't know who they are and we don't know what they're doing. It's time to identify who the participants really are and give them a little bit of protection, just like we did the commercial sector.

I think limited entry needs to happen. You know we've spent a good portion of this meeting talking about South Florida issues, and not to throw South Florida under the bus. That's not my intention, but it sure would be nice if we could make them some kind of sub-region, where their effort isn't counted throughout the whole east coast, and I don't understand MRIP well enough to know how they account for all that kind of stuff.

I know that if somebody in West Palm Beach catches a red snapper that all that effort in that area is figured in with that red snapper catch, even though it might be a very rare event, and so I think I'm correct on that. John can tell me if I'm not, but just some ideas here.

Again, this group has unanimously supported limited entry. We've also unanimously supported these reef fish stamp ideas, much like a duck stamp, just a simple stamp that identifies, again, who the participants in these fisheries are, how many people that buy a saltwater license actually intend to catch a reef fish, because there's a lot that buy saltwater licenses that don't. We could even add a deepwater complex stamp as well, because Zack is never going to go try to catch a golden tilefish on a charter, and so we need to account for that.

These are just ideas. Most of these have been talked about. Some of them might be new ideas. The most painful one is when we start talking about seasonality, when we start talking about are we going to have some kind of recreational fishing season for reef fish. Again, you could troll year-round, but if you wanted to target reef fish, bottom fish, for the recreational sector. That sounds like a hard sell, but when you starting talking about you may not get to fish at all, because of discards on red snapper, that might not be such a hard sell. It may be something that the recreational sector is willing.

What I struggle with, and this is self-serving. I am a charter boat operator as well. I have two charter boats. If I start talking about having a reef fish season, that's going to hurt me financially, and it's going to hurt Florida more than the other states, let's face it, and so it seems like there may be -- We're not talking about that many vessels that are federally-permitted charter boats. I don't know what the number is. I would guess it's less than 5,000. I'm not sure, but I'm sure we could get that information.

MR. BOWEN: Federally-permitted charter boats?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

MR. BOWEN: Right now in the South Atlantic snapper grouper, it's about 1,569.

MR. JOHNSON: So we're not talking about that many vessels, and you could probably give some kind of protection, like we have the commercial fleet. Again, these are just ideas that I want people to think about, because I hate to keep saying that what we're doing is not working. It's not working. We can cuss MRIP and we can complain about this and that, but it's the reality that we're living in.

I think the South Florida issue is a big one, because not only are their fleet of species and their habitats all different, but their needs are different. Their season is the exact opposite of ours. You know we're busy in July, and they're dead in July down there. They're busy in the winter. People go down there in the winter because it's still warm. I don't know, Jim, if a motion is in order. Some of these things, we have already supported, and it may be that you don't need to do them all, but I would definitely start with limited entry for the for-hire sector, and I would seriously look at the reef fish stamps.

From what I'm hearing out of this latest SEDAR 41, a seasonality issue, that's a big one. At some point, we've got to figure out how we can say there are zero discards over this period of time, and so I'm open for anybody's thoughts or suggestions.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting me touch on Robert's letter, and I appreciate the time that you're giving me here. At our last council meeting in March, the topic of limited entry did surface. At the time, it was tabled to be discussed in the future, and that future is coming upon us. It is in the draft amendment to be discussed in June.

Since you all's last unanimous vote, the members of the AP have -- Some have come and some have gone. It's totally up to you and the Chair and the members of the AP if you all want to have another vote on that, but it is in the draft amendment to come up again in June. That may be something that you want to discuss in detail and actually vote on here, so we can, as a council in June, get an idea with the latest members of the advisory panel. Did I say amendment? It's on the draft agenda. It is on the draft agenda for June.

There are some talks about some snapper grouper or reef stamps going on. If you could have some discussion on that, that may be good as well, and so that's where we're at as far as the topics that are being discussed in Robert's letter, and so I just wanted to give you a heads-up and let you know a little background of where we're at on it. Thank you.

MR. FEX: I agree with you on the limited entry. We voted on that. The South Florida management, we voted that many times, but the federal reef stamp -- Doesn't Florida, on the Gulf side, have that already? I was there, and somebody showed me that on their license, and I think they are for the deepwater complex. I think they're looking to have something like that too, and so hopefully the other states will join in on that.

MR. JOHNSON: I think that was funded, in part, by BP oil spill money. That's a pilot program. I don't think that's something that's -- I don't know how long it's going to last. I'm not sure about that, but we just have to identify who the users are. That's what we're doing a poor job of, and then we also need to protect the commercial and the for-hire sectors, the people that actually make their living. Again, you see who comes to these meetings. For the most part, it's commercial guys and charter guys, because their livelihoods depend on it, and so they're invested in it and they're putting in the time and effort, and I just think we need to protect that.

MR. BUFF: I deal with a lot of charter guys. I used to be in the business for a while. I'm not anymore, but one of the guys that brought it to me, and I don't know how this would work, but it's kind of similar. You know you have a tag for a deer, and so some way that that could be accounted back, to where if you don't report, you don't get to renew your stamp. That would kind of give us some more information, and so I think that would be a great idea.

MR. LORENZ: I've been on that same thought when we were thinking about this with Item 4. If we do get to a stamp, the very next step after that, once we're counted, is for the recreational fishermen, for you all to find out just what our effort is and what we're catching, so I don't have to listen to Don's recommendation to throw my gear in the water so I don't mess anything up.

I think it's very important to have an economic incentive behind that. As Scott said, that can be done with a rather higher entry level fee. I will just use fifty-dollars to get in and ten-dollars every year to renew, provided you did some kind of reporting. If you don't report, you start all over again. It's just a thought.

MR. HUDSON: On the South Florida issue, is there anybody that can update us from the council level about where that's at, because like I see where he has Jupiter and Fort Myers, but I thought that they had modified that to the Dade/Monroe over to -- So it was just Gulf and South Atlantic, because of U.S. 1 and the Monroe County factor. A lot of us like the idea of it, and I just don't know where the status of that is.

DR. DUVAL: Rusty, that was probably a year-and-a-half long effort, joint effort, between us and the Gulf Council to try to bring some resolution to some of the conflicting regulations between the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils. From the council's perspective, we were trying to take a pretty comprehensive approach. There were some key trigger species that were of interest, yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper, black grouper, the shallow-water grouper closure.

I think, from our perspective, we wanted to make sure that, if we were going to undertake this significant effort, that we did it once, so that we could make sure that everything was consistent in that area of the Keys, so that fishermen wouldn't be having to fish with one set of regulations on one side of the highway and another set of regulations on the other side of the highway.

I think, unfortunately, some of the -- Quite frankly, some of the public input that we got from stakeholders in that region was that the councils had overstepped their bounds and were going beyond what the stakeholders wanted, in terms of the items that were being addressed.

We met jointly with the Gulf Council in Key West last year to review that joint document. In the end, we ended up in a place where it was just going to be easier to split out those major items that people had been interested in, and the South Atlantic would address those items on its side, and the Gulf would address those items on its side.

For yellowtail snapper, we have moved forward with changing an amendment to change the start date of the fishing year. My understanding is I think the Gulf is doing the same thing through a different amendment there, and so it's kind of sad. It's sort of a process that I had hoped could be a model for other areas. I feel like the northern part of North Carolina, above Cape Hatteras, that overlaps with jurisdiction in the Mid-Atlantic Council for some of those species is unique as well, like South Florida. Unfortunately, that process kind of fizzled out, and so we're back to each council trying to address sort of the most high-profile items through our own process.

I think, on things like king mackerel, the South Atlantic is moving forward. We have approved that amendment, Amendment 26, for review so that -- We have given the Gulf Council the management authority in the mixing zone, which is basically the Keys now, and so I think we're moving forward on a piecemeal basis. I think that's what I'm saying, and so it's unfortunate that the end result of that process was not the comprehensive type of approach we would have wanted.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you very much for that, Michelle, because, up in North Carolina, you're having parallel scenarios with the Mid-Atlantic Council. We're also dealing with it with the dolphin. We've been dealing with in the shark. There's different ways to deal with it, but obviously it looks like it's going to be a piecemeal effort, and so thanks for that.

MR. ATACK: I think one, to clarify, it's a little different than what we've had in the past. I mean he's talking about the people in that part of Florida, their snapper grouper permit would only be good for that part of Florida. Then, if you want to fish north of there, you've got to have a snapper grouper South Atlantic permit. That's what he means by this takes care of permit problems, and so it's kind of good to kind of think about that proposal and whether or not there's any kind of endorsement for that recommendation.

MR. JOHNSON: Again, these were just thoughts after the last SEDAR 41, sitting at my house and going through my brain, because I'm thinking, okay, if I'm a commercial fisherman in the Keys, do I really want a bunch of people coming from someplace else down here to fish? I mean I hear that you, and you can remove that part. Again, these are just things I want you guys to think about, but, talking about the stamps, the stamps, you can't charge more than it costs to run the program.

I'm not looking for this to be any kind of -- But I think on ducks, and I'm not a duck hunter, but I think on a duck stamp that there is a little bit of reporting that you do. I think you do write in how many days you hunted ducks, and you can maybe get a little bit of effort or something from that. I don't know if they don't give you a stamp the next year if you don't turn in something.

I don't know how it's set up, but I would think that would be a perfect model. That's been in place for I don't know how many years, and so we could use that as a model for these reef fish stamps. There are some states that have stamps. Florida has a snook stamp. I think they might even have a -- They have a lobster stamp and a tarpon stamp, and so there is precedent for this. This is not that hard.

Again, what we're doing is not working. We've had these conversations for I don't know how many years now, and look where we are. Look where we are. Half-a-million dead discards last year. That's where we are. I mean we can continue to roll down the road just like we've been doing and have panic attacks, like Kerry.

MR. ATACK: Michelle, maybe you could answer this. On the reef stamps, we've looked at that for years now, and there is an issue with that, because it's federal and it's the South Atlantic and is that right? Is that why -- If we go to the state level, I guess the states could do it. That's what Florida has done. They've got a state-level permit.

In North Carolina, I know when we renew our saltwater fishing license each year, I tell whether I gig or get shellfish, and so North Carolina could have a couple of boxes on there for snapper grouper, for spearfishing, and then that could be entered into the data pool. Then, in North Carolina, you would know which people to survey for which gear types or for which fishery they kind of participate in. Is that a better route for us, or do you think something on the federal level that would meet our goals?

DR. DUVAL: Robert is correct in that you can't charge more than the cost of the permit if it's administered federally. I have talked to our staff in North Carolina about including in the annual survey that we all fill out for the license whether or not you fished for snapper grouper species, as a means of trying to sort of narrow a pool.

I think the utility of doing that -- I mean I haven't thought about this very much, but I think the utility of doing that would be if all four of the states were willing to do something like that. I don't know, without talking to other state representatives, if that willingness is really there to require some additional information or something like that on the state license.

MR. ATACK: Right, but even if just the states that did it did it, then MRIP could use that to better get data on the recreational side, right? Like when we looked at our landings for hogfish in 2014, there was ninety-five pounds for the whole state, or the whole three states north of Florida. If we had -- If all states didn't do it -- I mean it would be best if the federal could do it, but if they can't and we have to go state-by-state, I mean information from states that's valid and good data would be better than not having it from any of them, right?

DR. DUVAL: I think we could certainly -- If we wanted to do that in North Carolina, we could do that. We could provide that information to the folks at MRIP. That would be like an additional substratum, but it would definitely require coordination in order to do something with that substratum that you're trying to establish. I mean I hesitate -- I am supportive of something like this. I think we do need some kind of snapper grouper stamp to try to narrow the universe of people that we know are out there who really do want to fish for these species, but that's one person's opinion. I will say it was definitely one of the hot topics that came up during visioning, and so it is in the vision blueprint.

MR. ATACK: Michelle, while you're here, who would we go to see to try to get this pushed? Should we go to the state meetings, or how would we address it? I know you do a lot, and so I'm not trying to burden you, but if we've got to kick in somebody's door to get this started -- I mean we're looking for a checkbox on a piece of paper. That's all I'm asking.

DR. DUVAL: I don't know. Maybe a letter on behalf of the advisory panel to each of the four state representatives on the council asking if they might be willing to include some type of box or survey that would allow for folks to -- That would allow for the states to have a better idea of how many people are participating in this fishery. I am not quite sure, but let's let Gregg provide some wisdom.

MR. WAUGH: Good morning. Yes, I think it would be -- If you're interested in pursuing this, let the AP pass a motion requesting the council to ask for this to be done, because you guys advise the council. It's better that you ask the council that this is what you want to see done, and then we can address it.

MR. JOHNSON: My intent is for a federal stamp. I don't want to muddy the water and have this state and that state trying to share data. We have a federal duck stamp. If you shoot a duck anywhere, you've got to have a federal duck stamp. This shouldn't be that difficult. We shouldn't have to go to each state and kick a door down.

I mean I'm struggling with that, because I mean this fishery is so important to everyone sitting in this room. I think that I will make the motion that the council -- I don't know how I would word it, but they need to pursue a federal reef fish stamp. Not a state stamp. We don't need states fighting over funding and who is going to pay for it and all of that. This just needs to be a federal issue. We fish in a federal EEZ. We don't even fish in state waters, besides South Florida, but we're going to remove you.

MR. MOSS: To speak to that, and this, again, speaks to the South Florida separation, which, by the way, I'm in favor of. South Florida is just such a different animal, pretty much from really Palm Beach, but even Martin County down, in so many different areas, politically and ecologically and everything, but you definitely need to be careful and try to get state support there.

Like in Broward and Palm Beach County, for instance, if you're beyond three miles, you're kind of out of the bottom fishing zone there. You could do some deepwater groupers and stuff like that, but not that there's good bottom fishing in Broward County anyway, but, once you get beyond your three-mile limit there, you're really not snapper grouper fishing anymore down there.

MR. FREEMAN: I just wanted to go along with what Robert was saying there. This has to be a federal stamp, a federal permit, whatever you want to call it, the same way we receive it on the commercial end. You receive your permits and you receive your logbook, and everything gets sent in to go that route, because that's the only way that we as fishermen can be held accountable, and that's the only way we can get a handle on dead discards and quit having these extrapolated numbers thrown at us of 500,000 or 600,000 dead discards, and we're just picking numbers right now, because we don't know what's going on.

MR. HERRERA: Robert, just so you know, I've always said that. The Keys needs to have its own fisheries management. Going forward with federal fishing permits, I see that we should have

just a federal permit and not a South Atlantic and a Gulf, because down there in the Keys, we don't fish -- I have explained this time and time again.

We do have a Gulf reef permit, but we don't fish very far to the north. It's pretty much, and Don can tell you, the Tortugas area. I know I've heard this would take an act of Congress and this and that and the other, but I do support the idea that you throw up there, and vice versa. I know you mentioned -- Obviously, in this case, if you had a Keys permit, you couldn't go and fish upwards to the South Atlantic, but I would imagine it would work vice versa, where people from the north couldn't go unless you had a Keys permit, and so I totally support and agree with you and what you're saying.

MR. DEMARIA: I think a lot of the problems in the Keys, it's mainly with the snapper grouper fishery. The lobster is pretty much sorted out and the stone crab is. The kingfish and all that seems to be pretty well sorted out, and the snapper grouper fishery, the line that runs -- Well, there's two lines, depending on who you talk to. One runs down U.S. 1 and one runs just south of the islands, but they enforce the one that goes down U.S. 1, it seems. I have talked to John O'Malley at NMFS about this, and so there is actually two lines.

If you just move the snapper grouper division line, not the council's jurisdiction, but the line that separates the snapper grouper, up to where the hogfish line is -- There is a precedent that is set. They did move the line separating the hogfish up to Cape Sable. Draw it straight out above the Tortugas, and that would allow fishermen, commercial fishermen especially, that traditionally fish new grounds and all those areas to go back and fish without a VMS, without the catch shares and all that stuff. It would be much less complicated.

A lot of these guys just got out of it because they have small boats. They didn't want to put the VMS on. They didn't have the landings, because it's a multispecies fishery down there. I ended up with thirty pounds of landings. They can go back and fish these areas, and it's not that many people. It's just a handful. That would clear things up, and there's been a line drawn for the hogfish, or proposed line. Just use the same one for all snapper grouper species. I think that would clear things up a lot.

One of the main objections that the Keys fishermen have about separating it out is they didn't want Florida to manage their fisheries, and I tend to agree with them. I would like to see it stay in the council system, but just simply moving the snapper grouper line up and not the council jurisdiction, but that line would solve a lot of problems.

MR. HERRERA: Again, I would love to turn in my Gulf reef permit and my South Atlantic permit and make it a Keys fishery. I have no intention of fishing anywhere north of that Tortugas area, nor do I have any intention of fishing anywhere past the Keys, including Miami, for that matter. I'm from Miami, and I have no intention of going back fishing there, and so this would simplify things so much. I've got to deal with the VMS, and that's a nightmare, a nightmare, for us, and, again, it's not that many of us that have both Gulf reef and snapper grouper down there.

MR. ATTACK: Before we continue on that, let's go back to the motion. We'll get rid of this motion, and then we can go to if we're going to make a motion on what we're talking about now.

MR. HULL: Pertaining to the motion that we're working on, is there some way that we could make that "stamp" say "permit" or "license", a permit rather than a stamp-type system, because it seems the most important thing, in my opinion, and this has been stated by many others, that we could do that would have an effect on what is happening to us is the recreational sector being accountable.

I have nothing against the recreational sector, but they can't have unlimited access to a limited resource, and that's where we're at. Is there some way that we could beyond just a stamp? We've done this before, and we've made this motion before, that they need to be made accountable with some type of permitting or licensing, just like every other sector. I would like to refine the motion.

MR. ATTACK: I think the idea of the stamp is that you couldn't be doing snapper grouper without the stamp, and so how is that any different than -- Whether you call it a license or a stamp or a permit, I mean --

MR. HULL: Because there is trouble with trying to create a stamp at the federal level. However, there seems to be -- That's what they've talked about before with the states, and the states have a problem with the stamp idea, but it seems that the council is able to put permitting upon the commercial industry, the sector, or the charter sector. We all have to have permits for that, and so they could implement, more easily probably, the requirement to have a permit, a limited entry system. There is already the mechanisms for all of this in the council process, and they know that this is something that they need to do.

Of course, there's a lot of political pressure not to do it, because the recreational side wants unlimited access to a limited resource, but it needs to -- That's the biggest thing that is killing us, and if we can get a correction, there's going to be a whole new world for us if we can start to get accountability in that sector, because that is the big, dark hole in data that is hurting us. Everybody else is accountable, and they need to be made accountable. They can't have unlimited access to a limited resource. They need to be permitted. That's the type of motion I would like to see, is for a permit.

MR. JOHNSON: To address Jimmy, I am not looking for that. I don't think we need to go down the road of trying to issue millions of recreational federal permits. We have states who have fishing licenses. We have precedent, through a duck stamp, that the federal government issues a stamp. It's very simple. We're trying to complicate this thing.

I'm not trying to limit recreational access, because that's impossible to do and it's not fair. They're citizens just like we are, and they have a right to the resource just like we do, and so let me be real clear on that. I'm not trying to eliminate recreational fishing or in any way do anything like that. All I want to know is which recreational angler is actually going to go reef fishing. That's all I want to know. That's all we need to know, because what we're doing now, we're using a saltwater angling registry, and there is people that never intend to go catch a grouper or a snapper species.

I don't want this to be too complicated. It's pretty simple, and there is precedent. It's already there. The duck stamp is a perfect example. You go buy your fishing license and you go to wherever you would get a duck stamp and you get a reef fish stamp.

AP MEMBER: The post office.

MR. JOHNSON: The post office, there you go. I mean it's not that complicated. I don't want to complicate it, and so that's it.

MR. FREEMAN: Not trying to complicate it, Robert, but it seems like we're missing an opportunity here. If we went to a federal permit requiring a logbook, that's so much more data that could be put in there, because we're eliminating this discard.

MR. JOHNSON: That's going to be all self-reported data. I don't know how they would even begin to use it. I don't know how reliable it would be. I don't think -- Again, I don't think we need to go down that path, because, eventually, I think some of these other things that I mentioned are going to have to take place. I think, eventually, in order to be able to catch fish, there's going to be a seasonality aspect to the recreational sector. We have it in a lot of other -- We have it in game animals, and I know that's not going to be popular, but we're doing is not working, and so let's try some different stuff, but let's take some baby steps, first. Let's do some of these things that should be maybe -- I hate to use the word "simple", but should be able to be done.

MR. ATACK: I agree. I think if you start out with a stamp -- I mean a lot of people don't have boats and it's just really you're wanting their contact information and their identification and whether or not they're going to fish in the fishery. Then you can know who to survey and MRIP and for data collection and then, maybe down the road, you might require them to have a permit, but I couldn't see mandatory reporting and logbooks and all that just for a recreational fisherman that might go once or twice a year. Who is going to log all the data?

MR. LORENZ: Pure recreational fishermen, my own and my friends' craft, we never take anybody for money. I support the motion as it is, and I feel we ought to walk before we run. If we start getting much beyond this at this point, you'll have an army of people and money fighting it back. They're doing it already, and I don't want to do that.

MR. DEMARIA: With regard to the federal duck stamp, that goes on your state hunting license, and so it's kind of a -- I think most states already have licenses, and so it can just be a federal stamp that goes on a state license, just like a duck stamp. If you want to get that, you've got to fill out a little questionnaire every year. It's a migratory bird thing, how many snipe did you shoot, coot, and all that. If you don't do that, then you don't get it. I don't think it's unreasonable.

MR. ATACK: I'm going to read the motion. The AP requests that the council explore ways to establish a federal recreational snapper grouper stamp. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; anybody opposed. The motion carries, unanimous.** Do we have another motion?

MR. JOHNSON: **I would like the AP to recommend to the council to consider limited entry for the for-hire sector.** We've already made this motion, and it was unanimous last time, but we have new members. Again, my intent here is to really identify who charter boats are and give the few of us that are still here a little bit of protection.

AP MEMBER: I will second it.

MR. ATACK: We have a motion. Any comments?

MR. THOMPSON: We already are identifying who the grouper snapper charter boats are. I just don't see why we need to limit -- The economy limits who gets in there, at times, and we do a good enough job getting the fish back, shouldn't more people get in?

MR. JOHNSON: I understand that, Robert, but, as was mentioned earlier, with the discard issues with the recreational sector, my hope is that at some point the charter sector can develop their own management strategy, much like the commercial sector has for their fishery. That's where I'm going with this, because if we -- In the Gulf of Mexico, they're separate. They're not in the South Atlantic. Why they're not in the South Atlantic is because the council just never moved on it. Again, we can keep continuing to do business as usual, and we're going to get the same results as we've been getting.

MR. THOMPSON: I agree, but -- I mean I agree with the stamp, wholeheartedly, because it does identify who is participating, and you get a lot of that stuff, which we've seen over and over again. We all know about the cobia, which we can detail out at some other time, but how they count it. When you know how many people are really participating on recreational, that's fine. You know how many are for-hire. We already have the for-hire that are becoming more accountable with more data collection.

I just don't see how stopping the number that comes in does any more for that. I mean you have them already -- You're classifying them out more and more already, but I just don't see where constraining the rights and freedoms of citizens to go into business because we just don't want any more in the business.

MR. JOHNSON: We do it in the commercial sector already, but just hear me out for one more second. Again, I don't know -- Can you survive on a six-month season? It's just a question.

MR. THOMPSON: No, I mean you have to find other things to do. You've got to get creative in the fishing industry, one way or the other. I just don't see how constraining on people coming into the industry helps the management. It just helps -- If you're one that owns a permit, that's fine. I know we did it in the commercial. Sometimes I don't agree with it. There is a lot of single permits out there that are restricted. They can't sell their permit. We can go on that for days, on what happened in the commercial industry.

We have kind of settled out. We know who is there and that's what it is. Do those guys make any money? Some do, but a lot don't. It's not a very lucrative job to run a commercial boat anymore. I just don't see where eliminating people coming into the industry is going to help with data collection and with -- I just don't see where it helps us. It's just limiting people because I've got a permit and I don't want anybody coming in is what it sounds like to me. That's what it's going to sound like to other people.

MR. MUNDEN: I have a question for the maker of the motion. Do you intend for this limited entry for the for-hire sector to apply to just the snapper grouper fishery or all activities?

MR. JOHNSON: I mean it could be just for the snapper grouper fishery, if that's the intent, but then you would have a lot of people -- That would allow people that wanted to only fish for pelagic or if they only wanted to troll. I think that muddies the water a little bit. My first thought is no, let's cap charter boat effort. The reason that I'm going down that road, and it may sound self-

serving, and a little bit of is, because I've been doing this for eight years, at least, it seems like. I thought it was longer, but they informed me no.

We're not getting anywhere. Every SEDAR that I've been involved with, it's the same thing. We're constantly this big -- I hate to call the white elephant in the room, but we've got this huge recreational sector that is driving not just the recreational fishery, but all fisheries, commercial, charter, for-hire, however you want to put it.

I know how ugly it's been in the Gulf with sector separation and talks of allocations, but what I'm trying to tell you, Robert, is we're not going to be in business ten years down the road if we keep going the way we're going. There's not going to be anybody fishing. I know that sounds doom and gloom, and there's probably a lot of council members who would disagree with me.

I used to be very optimistic about this process, but I haven't been very optimistic lately. When I can see all the red snapper that are swimming around in the ocean that I see, and then there will be talk about rolling area closures or other ways to deal with dead discards, and then you have a recreational sector that we know is only going to get larger, and so we have to come to terms with how we deal with this.

I was against limited entry for a long time, but I have seen these people come in and out of the fishery. They're not very professional. I'm just looking for a little bit of help for the for-hire sector. That's all it is, and if you want to say it's self-serving, so be it, but that's what I'm looking for.

MR. THOMPSON: I agree with you. Some of those that come and go are not very professional. They don't usually last very long, and the economics of it run them out, because they don't get repeat business. What I was going to say is a lot of what you just said would be taken care of with the stamp, which I am wholeheartedly behind you on. That identifies the participants.

Even if you're going to -- If you're going to be in the for-hire sector, you're going to buy a recreational stamp for yourself, and so you know that's just going to be added in there. It helps us -- Much like when we got the saltwater stamp way back when and it went through each state individually, and it finally came in through because there was a tax on tackle that the state wouldn't get that money if you didn't get the saltwater stamp. I don't know how programs get through Congress to work that, but, once again, you get the -- You identify your players with the stamp.

I mean the spot fleet that comes to Murrells Inlet every year are not going to buy the stamp, and that thousand fishermen right there are out of there, quite honestly, and then you can identify effort, much like the survey with the duck stamp. When you get in there, it asks you, did you participate in duck hunting? How many days did you go? Everybody fills that out.

The average guy is going to be three days or something like that. It's going to come out a lot lower than actually participate in bottom fishing. I've got a lot of guys that have been fishing with me all of my life and I've known them around the dock. This last year, I took a group of them and their kids sea bass fishing, and it was, most of them, the first time they had ever sea bass fished. They had been running charters and private boats for thirty and forty years, and they don't participate. Let's keep them out, and that's what the stamp does.

I don't see how limiting the for-hire, not allowing people to get in -- Most of them don't, but, once again, they will get their survey. We need that. That's coming. The for-hire is getting their survey to tell you that we don't participate, and all we fish is for red drum, and all we fish is for flounder or all we fish for is king mackerel. Those surveys are going to be put in place. We have that. We've gone through that in the last two days. I just don't see where limiting the for-hire sector is anything but self-serving and to keep restricting the rights of people that want to go into business at some time to bottom fish for-hire.

MR. BUFF: Now you see what I'm talking about, Robert. This is what happens in an open-access permit situation when you fish for a living. It doesn't matter if it's commercial or charter/headboat. The people that have been it for a long time -- We used to fish and it was wide open. It didn't really matter, because we weren't backed up against quotas and closures and this and that.

When all this happens and you have the people that have been sticking it out and paying the price for the rebuilding process and being good stewards of the fishery and working and working and working and you keep letting people in, every little bit that you gain, you're still backing up, because it's getting all absorbed and nobody is making any money.

When you have limited access, it doesn't mean that new people can't get in. People are under the impression that the fishery is going to go away, and no. Somebody is always retiring, and new people are always getting in. It just means they have to buy their permit. You've got to figure out where you're going to get your permit from.

Manny and I were talking about this last night. Even with the commercial snapper grouper fishery, it's limited access, but there is always new people getting in. Florida gives away commercial fishing licenses like candy at the dime store. I don't know why we can't get any help from the state on controlling that. You just have to figure out where you're going to get your federal permit at, and somebody is going to get out and somebody else is going to get in, but, when you just keep expanding the number of permits that are out there, every little bit of headway we make in managing our fishery, it's for nothing, because you don't get your seasons back, because it's just absorbed by the new participation, and you're still tied. Your hands are tied.

MR. MOSS: I was actually going to ask, along the lines of with what actually both of you were saying. My initial feelings on this is that it's difficult for me to go along with telling somebody how they can or can't make a living if they choose to get into that. As an example, I do landscaping for a living. Every day, I drive around there and I see a truck, and it sucks, but it is what it is.

I was then going to ask if you could expound on exactly what it is that you mean by limited entry, because, like I said, as much as yes, it does kind of stink that you can have anybody jump in there -- Not anybody, but it's fairly easy to jump into this, quote, unquote, business. It's very difficult for me, as a citizen, to tell somebody that they can't do what they want to do to be able to make a living.

MR. JOHNSON: It's no different than someone who wants to own a liquor store. There is businesses on land that aren't just open access. If you want to have a liquor store, you've got to buy a liquor license, and they're very expensive. It's no different. I mean I'm just trying to, as Scott said, protect some of the gains, some of the hard work, for the for-hire sector.

MR. MOSS: Do you -- As a recreational fisherman, I am admittedly a little bit ignorant about it, but don't you currently have to get some sort of a charter permit in order to run a charter business?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, you do, but it's open access.

MR. MOSS: Basically, as long as you pay your money, you can get a permit?

MR. JOHNSON: That is correct.

MR. ATACK: The other thing about this that I want to point out is this might be a little proactive on somebody doing this, because, if we go to the next one, where you do sector allocations, and the charter/for-hire has a certain amount of ACL and the pure recreational have another certain amount, once that happens, then I think you're going to want to maybe limit the access, so that you don't have more getting in there for that certain amount of ACL. Like Scott says, you're making some progress and you might be rebuilding it, and so I could see how I could endorse that.

MR. DEMARIA: I think the charter/for-hire business today is where the commercial fishery was twenty-some-odd years ago, before we got our limited entry and whatnot. Back then, anybody could come to the Keys and catch a fish and sell it, and they were. They were paying for their vacation. We called them the bucket fishermen. You would see them lined up at the fish house with their five-gallon buckets and a couple of fish in it.

Today, that's how the charter industry is in the Keys. Anybody can move down. They're operating out of their backyards. It's been diluted so much that it's hard to really make a decent living. It's a low-quality-type operation too, a lot of these, and so I'm in support of it, and I believe there was a control date set by the council in something like 1990. They could go back to it, but I don't think they will.

A lot of the charter fishermen I have talked with would like to have a license that some day is worth something that they can sell their business, like the commercial guys are. They're about twenty years behind the commercial industry when it comes to a lot of this. The commercial industry has finally gotten their act together. They've got licenses that are worth something and I think the violations are down now, because you don't want to lose your license. It's worth something. The compliance is a lot better on the commercial side. I think it's the way to go.

MR. LORENZ: I'm going to weigh in on this. As I said, I'm a recreational fisherman, and so I am a user of these services. I am a customer from time to time, but one disclosure is my whole life -- I still at this point, I am one of the biggest proponents for what they call free market capitalism. You have the ability and the freedom to start to get into any business that you wish, the way you want to, and to compete.

It is often the very newcomers to a business that often take the business to another level. In my own state of North Carolina, I do get pulled on by some charter fishermen, and I'm not speaking for them at this point, but they say, hey, Bob, you represent us and say this or say that, but I will say this to the group. Of many of them that have approached me and have been the most adamant in trying to pin me down on things to bring to you, there is a huge group up there of current charter fishermen, charter boat fishermen, that resist logbooks. They don't want it. They told me to do something, to design something, that puts it on the back of the recreational fishermen. I as the

customer, for some of them, want me to do the recording and let them be free of it, just as an example.

With that said, newcomers may offer a new paradigm. They may be open more to things like logbooks or to things like VMS that the current people in the business seem to resist quite strongly, and so if you want to put any more control on this -- For me, I would feel a lot better with different ways of barriers to entry. Perhaps the rules or the regulations or punitive actions, in a way, if you don't follow through, may be a better way to go, but, as I said, from the free market point of view and what I know, it does, bring excellence to another level. As a businessperson, I don't fear new people to any business, and, as a customer, I would like to see this business evolve and the attitudes of some of the people in the business evolve. Thank you.

MR. STIGLITZ: What would be the qualifier to get the permit or the license or whatever you want to call it?

MR. JOHNSON: There is no qualifier right now. The council could choose a control date. They could -- I wouldn't expect them to go back in time. I'm not trying to exclude anyone who is currently a charter boat captain, and I'm also a very free market kind of guy, and let me be clear. I have been very successful, and I'm not scared of any competition. This is not about that. You can go to my Facebook page and you will see. I've got a heck of a business. I've been in business for thirty-five years. It's not that at all.

It's just that, at some point, we've got to put a cap on it, and when we talk about free markets, there's a lot of businesses that if you want to have a franchise that you buy a franchise, and this is -- These permits, in the Gulf, are not very expensive, by the way, because most people will look at a charter boat business and say, well, that's a good way to lose money, because it's a lot of hard work and a lot of long day and a lot of hours. Anybody in here who is a charter boat captain knows I'm speaking the truth there.

If you're going to be successful, you've got to put a lot into it, and so if somebody wants to spend \$5,000 to get in a fishery, to me, that's not a huge issue, but at least you've capped that. You've kept it from growing into, ten years from now, 30,000 charter boats or 40,000 charter boats or 50,000 charter boats. That's all I'm saying. I just think at some point that we need to put a cap on it, just like the commercial sector.

MR. FEX: I agree with the motion at hand. We voted on this a long time ago. I went to three visioning meetings. Every one of them, somebody said this. It's in the visioning document. The reason I've heard is because of the saturation. You get too many nonchalant people jumping in the business for the three months, up in my area, and then you flood it. Then if you have some half-good fishermen, then it makes it look bad for the area. You've got guys going that don't do that well, and so I support it. I mean we've dealt with this before. We have issues.

MR. HULL: The same story. You cannot have unlimited access to a limited resource, no matter what business you're in. It's at that point where that's where we're at, whether it's the recreational sector or the charter sector or the commercial sector. You cannot have unlimited access to this limited resource that we are living with in this world. How you do it, we can sit here and talk forever, but at least the charter sector is one step ahead of the private recreational. At least you know how many permits are there and how many there are. Know you're talking about limiting

them, but this is important, but this statement applies to all. You cannot have unlimited access to a limited resource.

MR. STIGLITZ: This wouldn't stop people from getting in business. This would just stop people from landing snapper grouper, right? You could still go out there and catch them, but you just can't bring them to the dock?

MR. JOHNSON: All this would do is make every charter/headboat be federally permitted and that's it. If you wanted to get in the fishery, if you wanted to -- If I wanted to buy another charter boat, to have three or four, I would have to go find somebody who was willing to sell me a permit. That's all it is, and how they did it in the Gulf, is they even separated out the headboat and the six-pack boats. They put a passenger component, and so your Gulf permit over there says how many passengers you're allowed to have. That handles the fear of a headboat operator thinking, okay, somebody else just got a permit that's going to all of a sudden start running a headboat, buy a new headboat. It just offers a little protection, but it doesn't exclude people. They just have to invest in the fishery, and that's it.

MR. STIGLITZ: If I wanted to become a charter boat guy, and I wanted to try troll up and down the reef just to catch barracuda, I could go into business and I don't have to have this permit? The only time I have to have this permit that you're talking about is to land snapper and grouper. Am I right? The only difference is going to be that I can go out there and catch them, but I can't bring them to the dock.

MR. JOHNSON: That's really not my intent. My intent is if you're going to take passengers for-hire that you are federally permitted. There is a limit to the number of federally-permitted charter vessels for all fisheries. I think if you start separating out reef fish from pelagic that you're going to muddy the water and you're just going to open up some doors.

MR. STIGLITZ: That's going to really -- You've got flat guides and -- How far is this going to go?

MR. JOHNSON: It's a federal permit, federal waters.

MR. ATTACK: We'll let Zack talk, and then we'll take a vote after Zack.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting me speak. I'm not here to persuade or dissuade any member of this advisory panel, but one thing that did not come up in the topic of discussion -- If it did, I actually missed it, but with the council moving forward with the mandatory electronic for-hire reporting for the charter boats, the way it's set up now, if the council moves in that direction and it appears that it's going to be that way, there is no teeth, for lack of a better word, for somebody not complying.

If limited entry was to be moved forward and passed, they would have some teeth to comply, because of a worry that their permit would not get renewed. The way it stands now, if the council moves forward with mandatory electronic reporting and they don't report and SERO or National Marine Fisheries chooses not to renew their permit, they just go spend twenty-five dollars to get another one, and so that's a point that I would like to bring up. Again, I'm not trying to persuade anybody, but I just wanted to make that point. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ATACK: Okay. I think maybe we have beat the horse pretty good here. Let me read the motion. The AP recommends that the council consider limited entry for the for-hire sector. I think there was a lot of good discussion. It was good to hear both sides and kick it around. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; all those opposed. One opposed and two abstentions and the motion carries.** Now, we will probably want to talk about sector separation. Do we want to talk about that?

MR. JOHNSON: I would, because my intent of this whole document is that some of these things may not have to happen. I'm not a guy that loves regulations, but I just also know that what we're doing isn't working. What sector separation would mean is that you look at the allocations, and I don't think that's a battle that we need to go down right now. I know it's a very unpopular issue in the Gulf, but I will just say this.

If we go to a fishing season, which is another thing that I've got in this letter, because that seems to be one of the few solutions that would really help in the dead discard issue, and we can dig our heels in and just say no. Then we're going to get whatever they give us, and so I mean that's something for us all to think about, but, myself, I am in favor of sector separation, again, to protect the participants, but how you would go about identifying how to do that is above my pay grade.

MR. ATACK: On that, I guess I could see -- If we're moving into the required reporting by the charter/for-hire, in a period of time, you will have some pretty good data on what their landings are. Right now, it's pretty much commercial versus recreational, and the for-hire is a part of the recreational, with the purely recreational. If you were to try to separate it right now, I think some of that is going to be guesswork as to which goes to which sector, but, once the data is there to mine, a couple or three years down the road, then you would have some good data, I think.

MR. JOHNSON: Let me be clear too that I'm not talking about individual allocations. I'm talking about the sector as a whole, just like we do the commercial sector. You get X amount of B-liners or something like that. Again, a lot of these things are just things for people to think about, as is the fishing season.

Who knows? You might be able to get the reef fish stamps in place and MRIP might be able to adjust there and that might be enough, but, in my heart, I don't think that's where we're going to end up, again, because of the dead discard issue.

MR. ATACK: I could see, down the road, you could then manage those different sectors by different management things. Like if you do the for-hire, you could have actually trip limits on for-hire boats, if you want to extend the season. Once there's an ACL set up for for-hire, you could extend your season by having trip limits, like you do on the commercial side. That really doesn't work real well right now, because it's one big thing, but that could be also part of the future, as you go down the road with the data and as things are collected.

MR. MUNDEN: Just to be clear, when you say sector separation, you're talking about an allocation for the charter and headboat and then a separate portion of the allocation going to the recreational fishery.

MR. JOHNSON: That is correct. Then the whole idea of limited entry is you have now capped the for-hire sector, just like you have the commercial sector. You know who they are, and you

know what their effort is. Whereas, on the recreational side, we're never really going to know, but we can maybe take some steps to get a better idea of effort and who they are, but that number can constantly be changing.

The needs of these sectors are totally different. I do a lot of reading. If you go on some of these recreational fishing websites, they look at the charter boats just like they do the commercial boats. They don't differentiate between the two. It's all of our fault that they don't catch fish, and it's no one's fault. The fish belong to everybody. I am not looking to take something away from somebody. I am just looking to protect the participants that are in the fishery, that make a living doing it.

MS. BROUWER: I just wanted to clarify your statement that we can't actually separate landings that belong to for-hire versus private recreational, but we in fact can. MRIP has the various modes, and so we have a way to quantify those and ascribe them to the appropriate mode.

MR. ATACK: I guess what I was saying is I think there will be better data once we get the mandatory reporting done, and I do think Zack made a good point about having some teeth in that would be a good thing also to consider. Kerry, did you have --

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm moving on. Is that okay? Are we done this? Okay. After the meeting yesterday, there were a group of AP members who were talking casually, and there was a lot of frustration expressed about the number of times that this panel has discussed the issue with latent permits, permits that are leased, armchair captains or whatever we want to call them. I am very frustrated. I don't feel like we're getting anywhere with this issue.

What I would like to figure out is a way to compel the council, once again, to please do some sort of analysis of what is happening, socially and economically, in the commercial snapper grouper fishery, and I would like to remind everyone -- Do you guys remember when Kari did a portfolio analysis of the black sea bass fishery? I think it was two meetings ago, and it was incredibly informative as far as where people were fishing and who they were and what other fisheries they were involved in. We had a good look at who that population was, recognizing that it would be much more complicated to do this for the snapper grouper fishery at large.

Nonetheless, we're getting ready to, as we go through the outcome of this visioning project, we're getting ready to make some big, huge decisions about this fishery, and we have no idea who is operating in it, and a lot of us are frustrated, because we know there are a lot of people who own permits who are not first-hand participating in it. I just want to find a way to compel the council to look at this issue stronger or I'm not even using my right words here now, because -- I was not alone in this. There was a big group of us who were really, really frustrated.

MR. BUFF: It kind of goes hand-in-hand with what Robert was saying, and kind of like Don driving off the cliff. We have these conversations over and over and over. It's data and timeframes to make things happen. The bottom line is what we're doing, we really don't even have a business model. If you were outside of this business today and you wanted to get into it, you would have to absolutely be crazy to invest your money and your effort in this business, because it's mostly a dying breed.

I think, for the most part, everybody sitting at this table has been in this business for a very long time and they're vested in this business, and I don't know what the correct answer is, but I can tell you, even with the vision project, we're supposed to have a direction of where we're going to wind up in ten years, and I think that needs to be decided, which direction we're going to go and how this is going to progress in ten years.

What we're doing now, whether it's the data or the permits or whatever, but what we're doing, it doesn't make sense. We're all dying a slow death, if you want to really get down to the bottom line, and somehow or another, we've got to address this, whether we reduce the permits or we get rid of all the leases. I lease one of my permits. I've got six and I lease one, and I really don't know how we get rid of those, because I thought about this a lot last night, after we talked about it.

Even with the sea bass endorsement, a lot of these people -- I may be wrong, and if I am, you can correct me, but I think you've got to actually put the endorsement in the boat owner's name. Basically, on the lease side, all that person would have to do is put the boat in the person's name that owns the permit, and so that eliminates that issue. The lease proposal is, I don't think -- It's not going to do anything, and I don't know that going to three-for-one even works, but somehow we have got to get this down, and I think Robert brought this up yesterday, I think.

We need to get rid of 30 percent of the permits somehow to make this a viable business, and I don't know how we get there, but what we're doing don't work. We're just all struggling. I've got big boats and small boats and it don't make no difference what size the boat is. We're all dying, and so, somehow or another, I think one of the biggest directions is we need to factor in what are we going to cater to? Are we going to make everything across the board for a forty-foot boat or a forty-five-foot boat or a thirty-foot boat? I'm talking on the commercial side, strictly, and so we need a direction in how we're going to move forward and how we're going to make this business viable.

As one of the things they've done in the Gulf, they actually have a business model that works. You can hate it or like it or lump it or whatever, but they actually have a captain that can say that he wants to run a boat because he can make a living. He can make a good living running a boat. Over here, where we're at, it's basically take what you can get, because you're going to work six months out of the year.

I just think there's a lot of issues here that somehow needs to be addressed. Guys, I don't have the answer. I am just telling, like Robert and Don, what we're doing don't work. We're just kicking the can down the street, and we're going to come back here in three months and we're going to kick the can again. We're going to come back in three more months and we're going to kick it again. Where we're at, we've -- Somehow or another, we've got to make a direction.

I think, on another point, Jack had brought up about taking ten of the boats and doing some sort of yearly -- Something completely different with ten of those boats and I don't want to use the IFQ or the permit stacking. I don't know how all of that would work, but if you took a boat from each sector, and maybe somebody that had multiple boats, so that if it doesn't work that it doesn't kill them, but see what works and what don't work, because what we're doing it, it doesn't work. We're just constantly kicking the can.

I've been to two meetings, and all you hear is kick the can and the data is wrong. That's all you hear, and nobody does anything about it to try to correct it. As Rusty brought up the other day about the blueline tile data, the first meeting I was here, and I didn't say anything, because it was my first meeting, but I sat at breakfast and listened to all this conversation about how bad the data was. Everybody walked right in this room and voted and never even brought it up. We just basically sat here and voted on a bunch of stuff that was probably worthless, and we're just all sitting here and lying to ourselves, because it's never going to change. If we don't fix it, why are we even here? Why are we wasting our time?

MR. JOHNSON: I don't think I put a number to it. The two-for-one was working great, until fishermen found a way around it. That is the leasing. The intent of that was to allow somebody, like myself or you, Scott, that you've got a boat and B-liners open up and you're on your way out and you blow your engine and you have to get towed back. So you don't lose your season, you could take and lease somebody else's boat and put your permit on it and go fishing, so you could make a living.

That was a great idea, but, unfortunately, what has happened is now you have people, like the guy in my town, and you sold one of the individuals a boat, that he has been leasing a permit from this gentleman -- The gentleman has been leasing his boat for I don't know how many years. This guy has got two single South Atlantic, and he leases both of them. He leases two boats. He hasn't been on either one of those boats. He has never made a trip on any of those boats.

That is a widespread problem. Now, a lot of people disagree. They say, well, we need those fish for the market. The one boat doesn't fish, and so he's really -- You could make the argument that he's not hurting anything. He goes two or three times a year, but the other guy, he's a high-liner. Why he won't go buy a permit, I don't understand. The permits are out there for sale. You can buy them, but he just doesn't want to -- Either he doesn't have the money to invest or he doesn't want to, because he doesn't have to, because he can get this one for six-grand a year, and it's just like part of the -- I don't know how the council could address that.

Maybe you could look at having some verbiage that required the permit holder to be on the vessel that he's leasing. That would solve a lot of it. If you did that -- That way, if a guy owned a boat and it had a problem -- That doesn't address the guy that's got a fish house that has two or three boats, if an issue happens to one of his boats, and so there's a lot of things to consider, and I don't know -- The only way I would think you could handle it would be to have some kind of requirement that if you lease a vessel and put your permit on it that the owner of the permit has to be on it.

The problem with that is if it's a corporation. It's a big problem, and it's a loophole that should have been thought about. I hate to see just do away with leasing altogether. There is probably somebody that is smart enough to figure it out though, but I would say that I think the 30 percent you heard, I would estimate 30 percent of all South Atlantic snapper grouper permits are on leased vessels, and that's people sitting at home kicked back and not fishing and just getting a check every month, and that's affecting Mark, and that's affecting you, Scott. It's affecting me, and it's affecting Kenny, and it's affecting the guys that actually have a boat and fish, or even have a crew that fishes their boat. It's still the same thing. You're in the fishery.

MR. STIGLITZ: I agree with Robert. That's one part. If you have to lease a boat, I believe the permit holder should be on the boat. To go with the corporations, I don't think you should be able

to lease a permit more than twice. That could resolve the corporation part. If I lease your boat and put my permit on your boat, I could only do it two times in a lifetime. After the second time, you can't lease another boat ever again. That permit has to stay with whatever -- That would help cure the corporation part of it, but my latent permit sitting there ain't hurting you one bit until now. My latent permit is hurting you, because I'm putting numbers on it, because I know you want to take it away from me. I did. I am putting numbers on my latent permit, because I refuse to lose it, and that's what is going to happen.

I have talked with Charlie, and I've talked with Roy Crabtree, and we might be careful what we do here, because there is unintended consequences that may be coming down the road that some of these people that are holding these permits are going to start selling them, and there's people with lots more money than most of us have, and they're going to start buying these permits. There's unintended consequences down the road that we really, really need to be careful of, but I am dead set against these people that keep leasing and leasing and leasing and they're sitting home, and that's why I'm so dead set -- I think most of us are dead set against ITQs, because of what goes on the Gulf.

The people that own them red snapper quotas in the Gulf, they sit at home on their couch and they collect \$3.50 or \$4.00 a pound, and the fishermen go catch them for a dollar and a dollar-and-a-half. Why they would do that is beyond me, but I don't think we have a permit that -- You can't lease the permit. There is an intention there to not lease the permit, because these permits need to stay in the fishery, and I don't think the intention of the council or anybody else was to make it so that you can lease a boat, with a little bit of a loophole in there, to let these guys sit on the couch and \$12,000 a year. He's probably retired and just collecting twelve-grand a year sitting on his couch. That's paying his retirement, and I don't think them permits were put out there for somebody's retirement fund. Thank you.

MR. HULL: I am fish house owner, and I have multiple vessels. I have different corporations. I own them all, but a lease situation that I have is so my one corporation has let's just say a snapper grouper permit, but a vessel that I own, I have to, for the permitting process, to get the one permit that I have on that vessel, that corporation has to lease -- We have to lease from myself, and so you have to be careful what you're doing here and that you're not making it -- There may be a way to solve that somehow, through the Permits Office, but, right now, that's the way that we have to do certain things.

am not leasing it out to somebody else that I have nothing to do with it after that. I have everything to do with it, but I do have to do the leasing to move that permit around in my own interests, in my own company. I know that's different than the intent of what you guys are talking about, but, in trying to solve that problem, you've got to be careful that you don't screw up other people's business model and how they work.

MR. STIGLITZ: Back to what I was saying, Jimmy. Then there's something -- If you're the president of the corporation and you own the boat, I mean -- That's what I just went back to saying. Be careful what we do, because there is -- God only knows what we open up, but that's another answer for that. If you're the president of the corporation and your own the boat and your name is in both places, I am not a lawyer and I don't know how this can all work, but I do know this was not set up for where you can't lease a permit, but you can lease a boat and the reverse deal, and I know it wasn't set up this way.

MR. FREEMAN: I believe it was a year or a year-and-a-half ago at the AP -- We sat here at the AP meeting and we said that the -- They were saying that the snapper grouper permits were at a number that they felt was okay, and I think we're at 536 or something like that. We all voted. We sat right here and voted and said if you have a single that you should have an option to make it a corporate. Is that correct, Jimmy?

MR. HULL: I don't recall exactly.

MR. FREEMAN: Eliminate the two-for-one on that, and we've never heard about this ever again after we voted on it, have we? I mean on a council level or anything like that? I know it was at the AP meeting that we voted on this, but we never heard about it again. I have purchased a snapper grouper, a golden tile, and a shark permit that I've got to lease my boat, because it's a single snapper grouper, to the single snapper grouper permit holder, and I fish the boat. I don't understand. I'm holding off because I keep thinking that I don't need to go spend another \$25,000, if they're going to do this, to make it another two-for-one. Where are we going to go from here? I don't understand. That's where we need to go with this.

MR. DEMARIA: I know in the Gulf there were some problems with the licenses, and there was some talk about making it the permit holder actually had to be on the vessel. I don't know where that went, but, as far as the Gulf goes, they're having their own problems over there. A lot of it is they've got another layer of complication with the catch shares.

A friend of mine from Jacksonville went over to run a boat, and you probably know him, and somewhere out of Madeira Beach or Tampa with a crew. They spent ten days out and caught like \$9,000 worth of fish or so. By the time they got back, none of them made a penny, by the time the catch shares got paid and the boat share and all of that. It was just they went home, after ten days, with nothing. It's not really working great in the Gulf either, but then they've got that other layer of catch shares in there, which we don't have, and so I'm not sure what the answer is.

MS. MARHEFKA: That's not the can of worms that I intended to open right now, because I think everyone around this table has a unique situation of how their business operates, and my intention is until we know how everyone's business operates, we can't move forward. **I would like to make a motion that we request that the council request to staff that there is some sort of analysis, portfolio, whatever you want to call it, of the snapper grouper commercial fishery that can be presented to the advisory panel the next meeting or two, however long it takes them.**

I recognize that's labor-intensive and it may be longer. Also, I believe there was like some sort of growth potential analysis that was done by staff, and I would love to see an updated version of that. Let's get all the information in front of us, and then let's get into the nitty-gritty of how it may work, but let's identify who is doing what with their permits in this fishery right now.

Maybe we don't have a problem. Maybe it's perceived, but I don't know how you're running yours and how many permits you have, and you don't know how many I have. We don't know really who is operating in this fishery, and so let's get an idea of that and then let's see where to go. I mean I think we could sit here all day and discuss the merits of latent permits and leased permits and all of those things, but there is no point until we know what we're talking about. I just know a number of permits. That's all I know that we have. We don't know anything more specific than that.

MR. ATACK: Anybody second the motion?

MR. BUFF: Second.

MR. ATACK: Any discussion?

MR. BUFF: I'm glad Jimmy brought that up, because I'm in the same situation. I have a single permit in my personal name and a boat and a corporation. There is a ton of stuff here that will have to be addressed, but let's also be aware that there is people that has made a business out of this. They go buy the permits and they stack them up and they lease them out. I know one person, and you know who I'm talking about, and they've got fourteen or fifteen or twenty of them.

As far as the comment that Don made, as far as the people going to the Gulf, I think that is misleading. I am very familiar with the guy that went and the situation, and you're expected -- The catch over there is basically double, and so you're getting paid for half. When we're catching twenty boxes here, you've basically got to catch forty boxes over there. The moral of this story was there was not enough product produced in the timeframe that they fished, because of the knowledge of what they were doing. That's why that did not work.

Also, back to the two-to-one. I don't know where we go with that. I just know that, kind of like Kerry said, I guess we're just kicking the dead horse. At the end of the day, we just need to address it, and I want to make sure that everybody here understands that I don't want to take nobody's permits, but there are some of us that are vested in this business that they have put their entire -- I have put my entire life savings into this business. Everything that I have ever made, I have put into this business, 100 percent.

Somehow or another, I would like to see, number one, it work, because, at some point in time, I'm going to need it, but the people that have been here and poured their heart and soul into what we're at, and they take the time out of their busy schedules to come and sit at this table and kick this horse, at some point you would like to think that it was worth your time and effort.

MR. ATACK: In the analysis, I think it will come out. Last time, we saw it was how many were in corporations and how many were singles. Therefore, you knew what the reduction could go to if the two-for-one continued, the max.

MR. FREEMAN: Kerry, I understand what you're asking about in the early stages or whatnot, but if this moves forward, what's your thought? Is it a use-it-or-lose-it? Have you thought about the next step of it?

MS. MARHEFKA: Sometimes I sit and think about it, but, to be honest, it wouldn't even be worth sharing until we know what we're talking about. That was the other point I was going to make. I don't want someone just to go into the permits database and just break down what's already there. I want to know really who these people are. How old are they? Someone like take a subsample and call them and find out what their intentions are. What kind of business do they have? Do they have a child they're going to -- I mean these are important. We don't know who this fishery consists of anymore.

I don't know how we make huge social and economic decisions without that information, because everything else -- I will say it again. The biological stuff is done. We have an ACL. That is set by someone else. Everything else that we do through management is based on social and economic information, and we don't have that, and so I don't know how we manage without knowing that, and so I think we need as much information as we can. I say this every meeting, and I know staff is sick of hearing me say it.

There was a study done in the late 1990s that sort of is exactly what I'm asking for that could be updated, and so I just don't -- The biological stuff is set by the SSC. Everything else after that is divvying up some fish, based on social and economic factors, and we don't know those.

MR. ATTACK: In response to that, then we really need to know the list of what data you want, so that they don't come back with what you -- If it's the report what was done in 1990, then it might be good if we could get our hands on that and make sure we get that, so that you don't just get half of your data that you want or half of the picture.

DR. CHEUVRONT: To follow up with what Kerry was saying, there have been some other things that were done. I did a study in North Carolina in 2004 that did exactly what Kerry is talking about, and when I left North Carolina -- I left that position while I was still in North Carolina, but some of that research was still carried on.

The good news is that when I became the Deputy Executive Director for Management for the council, we just hired the guy who was doing it in North Carolina, and this has been a goal that we have been talking about in our office for a while, and we are actually trying to identify the funds to be able to do this. I mean it's a workflow issue for staff right now as well, but we're trying to secure funds where we can -- We've got the expertise in house to collect that kind of data and we're beefing it up even more.

Kerry, it has not fallen on deaf ears, and we have talked about it very much in house, among council staff, and we have identified that as this is something we really want to do, and so we're trying to head in that direction. It's just right now I think the thing that's holding us back is getting the dedicated funds. The amazing thing that people don't realize is that doing this kind of research is not terribly expensive to do. Compared to a lot of the biological research and stuff that gets done, this is a drop in the bucket.

You can do amazing stuff with \$25,000 in socioeconomic research, and so we're trying to figure out ways that we can make this happen. We want to go in that direction. I, for one, clearly understand the value of that research that Kerry is talking about, and we need it for the entire South Atlantic. Doing it piecemeal isn't really helpful when you're managing fisheries that go across state lines.

You need to have a dataset of people who participate by fishery, even sometimes by species, and the kind of data that we have collected in the past would allow to do that, so that even when doing management plans that affect just a couple of species, we can identify the participants that participate catching that species of fish, and so it's possible to do it. We have the knowledge of how to do it, but it's just we're working on trying to get the resources to make it happen. I'm glad to hear you keep pushing for that, because that just makes it sound like there is really a lot of interest in folks doing it, and I think for all the reasons you're saying, Kerry --

MS. MARHEFKA: Please don't think I'm criticizing, because I just want to make it very clear on the record. In no way, shape, or form am I criticizing staff. I know how hard you work. I just know that sometimes the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and that's all I was trying to do. I am not criticizing at all.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I understand that completely, Kerry, and I appreciate you bringing the issue up, because it does help bring it more to the forefront, and if you all do pass a motion along these lines, that's just more support for what we're trying to do that can try to make this more -- I guess the squeakier wheel and move it further up on a closer burner or whatever you want to talk about, whatever you want to use for that, but thank you for bringing it up, and I just want you to know that we really are trying to work on this. We haven't been very public about it, because we haven't identified it all yet, but we're working on it.

MR. ATACK: Thank you, Brian. We'll try not to squeak too much more on that.

MR. HULL: Hopefully, if we do get some type of information from this, it will show how valuable and important the commercial sector is to the consumers of this nation that are deriving access, their access, the non-boating consumers, to this resource through this small number of businesses and this small number of permits that is providing access to the largest stakeholder in the room, the consumers.

We have a situation where you have a very limited number of permitted people that hopefully this will show how important that is and show that in the future, when we're looking at allocation issues and the way we conduct business, because the consumer's access is directly derived from these people.

MR. JOHNSON: I had looked into this a few years ago, and you will find that -- I can't remember exact percentages, but close to 50 percent of all federal permits are in Monroe County. Almost 70 percent of all federal permits are in the State of Florida. Now, whether it's people that have retired and they're sitting on the couch holding a permit or not, but -- That may have changed, and that's why I put that South Florida issue in my paper, because, like Manny said, people down there don't really -- He has no intention of coming up to North Carolina to fish.

For simplification of how he fishes, the Gulf, a little bit of the Gulf, and a little bit of the South Atlantic, and if you could just take those permits and those people -- If they want to stay there and fish, they get a South Florida permit, and that South Atlantic permit and that Gulf permit are no longer there. They just went away. It's just something to think about.

MR. HERRERA: Absolutely, Robert. I'm glad you pointed that out, because I was trying to point that out when Richard said it. We have roughly 250 of the South Atlantic permits in Monroe County. The carrying capacity of the Keys cannot support 250 active South Atlantic permits down there, I promise you that, and so something has to start with catch history and the people who actually participate in the fishery, because it just cannot -- It will not support 250 active members participating in Monroe County. The fishery is not big enough or is the area big enough to actually support that.

That's why I was talking with Kerry and stuff, and the leasing problem, it continues to bring people into the fisheries and cause a problem. Jimmy, I also have the same issue that you have. I have a

snapper grouper corporate permit that the only reason it's leased is because that's the way business is conducted. However, I think that there could be -- As long as the owners are using it, I think that could be addressed easily, without all the lawyers and the logistics. I want to shed some light into that, too.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think you seconded me, but I just wanted to amend my motion slightly to say that I would request that there be -- I'm trying to think of how to word it. I want an agenda item on the next couple of AP meetings to specifically give the advisory panel an update on the progress of what's happening with this information. I am not articulating it right, and, Myra, you can feel free to -- **Basically, I want an agenda item at the next meeting, or maybe the meeting after that, where there is time set aside to hear how far we're getting with learning about the social and economic situation of this fishery, including permits and such.**

MR. ATACK: The one that seconded it, are you good with the amended motion?

MR. BUFF: I'm fine with the amended motion and second it.

MR. ATACK: Okay. I think we've had some really good discussion on this. I'm going to go ahead and read the motion. It's request that the council request the staff to conduct a characterization of the snapper grouper fishery and add an agenda item on future AP meetings to receive updates on progress of this analysis. **All in favor of the motion, raise your hand; any opposed.**

MS. MARHEFKA: It just has to be clear that we're talking commercial. At this point, I can't imagine -- I just wanted to make sure the intent is in there that we're strictly speaking about the commercial fishery at this moment.

MR. STIGLITZ: At the bottom, on the intent of that, I would like to put in there the part about the leasing, too. All it says is about the latent permits. I would like a portion of that, the reverse leasing or -- I don't know exactly what you call that, but, as far as I'm concerned, that leasing of it is a bigger problem than latent permits. A permit sitting on the shelf ain't catching fish. That one that's leasing, whether they're just catching enough so they can pay for their vacations or whatever, it's putting numbers on everybody's ticket, but that one sitting there on the shelf, it ain't doing nothing.

MR. BUFF: I just want to bring this to everybody's attention. This leasing issue, I don't know how you're going to address it. It only takes a couple of strokes of the computer to make an owner, and so I'm just throwing that out there, so everybody understands. Just keep that in mind when you're trying to make your decision on what you're going to do. As we have discussed this today, really all we have accomplished is made another paperwork layer for somebody to get around it. I just want everybody to know that, so when you're thinking about it.

MR. ATACK: Thank you. Was there anything else?

MR. MARHEFKA: Just one more thing. It's unrelated, and it's really quick. I just wanted to know if someone can answer the question about -- I noticed yesterday that gray triggerfish, when it closed, it closed at 85 percent, and it's been a couple of weeks now, and I'm wondering if that's

just a matter of waiting for landings to come in or if we really shut down 15 percent early and if we're getting that back in June.

MR. BOWEN: I haven't actually talked to the Regional Office, but I have had some other council members discuss that same issue with me. Right now, it is intended, from what I understand, to open back up for the other remaining percentage that is left on the table. Right now, we're just waiting on a date.

MS. MARHEFKA: So instead of it being added to the second half of the quota, there will be a short little run at it?

MR. BOWEN: It is my understanding that the remainder is coming in the first season, yes.

MR. ATTACK: If there is nothing else, I think -- Zack.

MR. BOWEN: I just wanted to let everybody know that -- I'm going to speak on behalf of the council. We know, and as you all definitely know, that it's a sacrifice for you all to be here, with jobs and work and family. I don't know if you all noticed, but we had six council members here, or six voting members here, from all four states of the region. Your voices are not falling on deaf ears, and I appreciate, and the rest of the council appreciates, your involvement. I know, and I can speak from experience, some people get, as I do, really distraught and kind of fed up with the process. At the last council meeting, I was in that same position. Don't give up. Keep up the fight, and we appreciate you being here. Thank you for your service.

MR. ATTACK: I think Gregg Waugh wanted to address the AP.

MR. WAUGH: Thanks. You know Zack covered some of the points I was going to make, and I know you guys get frustrated, and I think hogfish was a good example of it, where you feel the council isn't listening to you, but I want to reassure you that the council listens to what you all have to say. As Zack pointed out, you can gauge that by the number of council members that are sitting here listening to you all, and so your input is very, very valuable.

The issues that are important to you, keep raising them and something will happen. We know you all take time from your fishing operations to come here, and we appreciate that investment. You all are a very important part of this management process.

If any of you are thinking about, in the future, and I'm not sure why you would wish this on yourself, but if you intend at some point to try to become a council member, this is a good place to get some experience in the process. Certainly if you know individuals who are interested in getting on the council, tell them to get involved in the AP process, so they know what they are getting into. We've got a number of council members, and Zack just having spoke, Zack was on the Snapper Grouper AP, and so he knew exactly what he was getting into when he moved up to the council. We save a few things to make it interesting when you make that jump, but just, again, I wanted to thank you all for your time and effort, and I know it's an investment. If there's ever any questions, you all have -- You can call Myra or call any of us in the office, but thank you very much.

MR. ATACK: I want to thank everybody for their participation, their input, their discussion, and their experience.

MR. JOHNSON: One more thing, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to thank you for your leadership and guidance and everything you've done.

MR. ATACK: Thank you very much, and you're welcome. Kim would like for everybody to hang around for a picture right after this, and Michelle has a comment.

DR. DUVAL: I apologize. I just want to add -- I had to go check out of my hotel, but I just wanted to add my thanks to Gregg's. We all very much appreciate the difficult conversations that you all have around this table, as well as the experience that everyone brings to this table. I have been incredibly impressed with the conversation that you all have had the past two days, when I've been around to listen to it. I thank icons like Don DeMaria, who is out in the hall on the phone right now, for all the contributions that they have made over the years, and it will certainly be different without him. Thank you to to you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership over the past two years, as well as to the folks who are also stepping into those leadership roles. I look forward to working with you all as well. Again, thank you to everyone and safe travels.

MR. ATACK: Thank you. We will adjourn. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned on April 27, 2016.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Amanda Thomas
May 9, 2016

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*

Richen M. "Dick" Brame
Coastal Conservation Association
517 Braddock Street
Wilmington, NC 28409
910/599-5245 (ph)
dbrame55@gmail.com
(NGO) 9/15*

✓ Scott Buff
109 SE 36th Street
Oak Island, NC 28465
910/294-1463 (ph)
buffbuildersinc@yahoo.com
(Commercial) 9/15*

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*

✓ Manuel "Manny" Herrera
707 S.W. 28th Road
Miami, FL 33129
305/951-2069 (PH)
guelsy28@gmail.com
(Commercial) 12/14*

✓ Rusty Hudson
P.O. Box 9351
Daytona Beach, FL 32120-9351
386/239-0948 (ph)
386/253-2843 (f)
DSF2009@aol.com
(Commercial Industry) 9/15*

✓ 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*

✓ Deidra Jeffcoat
20 South Cromwell Road
Savannah, GA 31410
912/308-5317 (ph)
912/897-3460 (f)
dcjeffcoat@comcast.net
(Charter) 3/16*

✓ Robert Johnson
804 Shore Drive
St. Augustine, FL 32086
904/794-2628 (ph)
ilfishing@bellsouth.net
(Charter/Headboat) 3/10*, 6/13*, 3/16*

(Continued)

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL (continued)

✓ Robert Lorenz
1509 Meridian Terrace
Wilmington, NC 28411
910/232-4755 (ph)
rjlorenz@ec.rr.com
(Recreational) 12/14*

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
954/214-7954 (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) 9/12,9/15*

✓ Kerry O'Malley-Marhefka
976 Houston Northcutt Blvd.
Suite 3-141
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
843/452-7352 (ph)
abundantseafood@gmail.com
(Commercial/Dealer) 6/14*

✓ Scott A. Osborne
5615 Shannon Drive
Port St. Lucie, FL 34951
772/313-7972 (ph)
Osbornescott23@gmail.com
(Commercial) 12/06, 9/10*, 12/13*

✓ J. Andrew (Andy) Piland
58058 Hwy 12
Hatteras, NC 29943
252/216-9273 (ph)
andypiland@gmail.com
(Charter) 9/15*

✓ Richard J. Stiglitz
1068 Lemon St.
Okeechobee, FL 34974
386/580-6975(ph); 863/467-0234 (f)
ladycrys@aol.com
(Commercial) 6/09, 9/12, 9/15*

✓ David Snyder
55 Cinema Lane
St. Simons Island, GA 31522
912/399-3813 (ph)
912/638-9163 (f)
dave@halyardsrestaurant.com
(Consumer Representative) 12/13*

William "Lange" Sykes
836 Riomar Drive
Vero Beach, FL 32963
772/473-7983 (ph)
langesykes@gmail.com
(Recreational) 9/15*

✓ Robert Thompson
5241 Hwy 17 Bus.
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/602-0910
Capt.Thompson@gmail.com
(Charter/Headboat) 6/11*, 6/14*

(Continued)

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL (continued)

AT-LARGE

✓ Dr. Todd Kellison
Chief, Fisheries Ecosystem Branch
NOAA - Beaufort Lab
101 Pivers Island Road
Beaufort, NC 28516-9722
252/838-0810 (p); 252/728-8784 (f)
Todd.kellison@noaa.gov
(NMFS SEFSC Liaison – Non-voting)

PAUL RUDERSHAUSEN

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2016 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

COUNCIL CHAIR

✓ Dr. Michelle Duval
NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street
(PO Box 769)
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/808-8011 (ph);
252/726-0254 (f)
michelle.duval@ncdenr.gov

VICE-CHAIR

✓ Charlie Phillips
Phillips Seafood/Sapelo Sea Farms
1418 Sapelo Avenue, N.E.
Townsend, GA 31331
912/832-4423 (ph); 912/832-6228 (f)
Ga_capt@yahoo.com

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

Anna Beckwith
1907 Paulette Road
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/671-3474 (ph)
AnnaBarriosBeckwith@gmail.com

✓ 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

✓ 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

Ben Hartig
9277 Sharon Street
Hobe Sound, FL 33455
772/546-1541 (ph)
mackattackben@att.net

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
COUNCIL STAFF

Executive Director

✓ Gregg T. Waugh
gregg.waugh@safmc.net

Deputy Director – Science & Statistics

✓ John Carmichael
john.carmichael@safmc.net

Deputy Director - Management

✓ Dr. Brian Chevront
brian.chevront@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist

✓ Myra Brouwer
myra.brouwer@safmc.net

Fisheries Social Scientist

Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net

Financial Secretary

Debra Buscher
deb.buscher@safmc.net

Purchasing & Grants

✓ Julie O'Dell
kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net

Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator

Cindy Chaya
cindy.chaya@safmc.net

Senior Fishery Biologist

Roger Pugliese
roger.pugliese@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist

✓ Chip Collier
chip.collier@safmc.net

Fishery Outreach Specialist

✓ Amber Von Harten
amber.vonharten@safmc.net

Administrative Officer

✓ Mike Collins
mike.collins@safmc.net

SEDAR Coordinators

Dr. Julie Neer - julie.neer@safmc.net
✓ Julia Byrd - julia.byrd@safmc.net

Fishery Biologist

✓ Dr. Mike Errigo
mike.errigo@safmc.net

Public Information Officer

✓ Kim Iverson
kim.iverson@safmc.net

SG AP 4/26/16

Burgess	Erika	erika.burgess@myfwc.com
FARMER	NICK	nick.farmer@noaa.gov
Helies	Frank	fchelies@verizon.net
Iverson	Kim	kim.iverson@safmc.net
L	I	captaindrifter@bellsouth.net
Markwith	Anne	anne.markwith@ncdenr.gov
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov
O'Hara	Tim	tohara@keysnews.com
O'Kane	Beverley	bev.o'kane@mcsuk.org
Sedberry	George	george.sedberry@noaa.gov
Wood	David	Dwood@carolina.rr.com

SG AP 4/27/16

Burgess	Erika	erika.burgess@myfwc.com
DeVictor	Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov
Helies	Frank	fchelies@verizon.net
L	I	captaindrifter@bellsouth.net
MacLauchlin	Kari	kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net
Markwith	Anne	anne.markwith@ncdenr.gov
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov
Sedberry	George	george.sedberry@noaa.gov

4/26/2016	Wally	Bubley		Charleston	SC	29412	bubleyw@dnr.sc.gov	SCDNR
	Dean	Foster		Charleston	sc	29449	dfoster@pewtrusts.org	<i>Pew Trusts</i>
	Ernest	Muhammad	217 Fort Johnson Road	Charleston	SC	29412	muhammade@dnr.sc.gov	SCDNR
	Bob	Crimian	PO Box 484	Darien	GA	31305	rcrimian@tnc.org	TNC
4/27/2016	Dean	Foster		Charleston	SC	29449	dfoster@pewtrusts.org	<i>Pew Trusts</i>
	Gregg	Waugh					gregg.waugh@safmc.net	SAFMC
	Lora	Clarke		Charleston	SC		lclarke@pewtrusts.org	<i>Pew Trusts</i>
	Bob	Crimian	PO Box 484	Darien	GA	31305	rcrimian@tnc.org	TNC