

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront
Atlantic Beach, NC**

December 7-8, 2016

SUMMARY MINUTES

Snapper Grouper Committee

Dr. Michelle Duval, Chair
Jessica McCawley, Vice-Chair
Anna Beckwith
Mel Bell
Zack Bowen
Chester Brewer
Mark Brown
Chris Conklin

Tim Griner
Ben Hartig
Doug Haymans
Charlie Phillips
Tony DiLernia
Dewey Hemilright
Dr. Roy Crabtree

Council Members

Dr. Wilson Laney

Lt. Tara Pray

Council Staff

Gregg Waugh
John Carmichael
Myra Brouwer
Dr. Chip Collier
Mike Collins
Dr. Mike Errigo

John Hadley
Kim Iverson
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
Roger Pugliese
Amber Von Harten
Kimberly Cole

Observers/Participants

Erica Burgess
Rick DeVactor
Dr. Marcel Reichert
Patricia Bennett
Tracy Dunn
Dr. Jack McGovern
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Monica Smit-Brunello

Adyan Rios
Dale Diaz
Dr. Erik Williams
Erin Schnettler
Dr. Jessica Stephen
Kenny Fex
Brendan Runde

Additional Observers Attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, Wednesday morning, December 7, 2016, and was called to order by Chairman Michelle Duval.

DR. DUVAL: I will call the Snapper Grouper Committee to order. I think the first order of business is to offer congratulations to the newest member of the Piled Higher and Deeper Club, which would be Dr. Chip Collier. We will be putting that degree to use for you later on today during the agenda. All right.

Rolling right along, the first thing is approval of the agenda. Are there any modifications to the agenda? Seeing none, the agenda stands approved. The next item is Approval of the September 2016 Committee Minutes. Are there any modifications or changes to the minutes? Seeing none, the minutes stand approved. The next item is the Status of Commercial and Recreational Catches Versus Quotas for the ACL Species, and Rick DeVictor is going to take us through that.

MR. DEVICTOR: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to go through the South Atlantic commercial landings through December 2. In the briefing book, under Tab 10, Attachment 1, there is landings through November 14. That has been updated, and so that spreadsheet that I have on the screen here is in the presentations folder.

Just going through the species, as I normally do, black sea bass, 35 percent of the ACL has been met. Then, on the right-hand side, you can see where the final 2015 ACL landed, and that was 42 percent. Blueline tilefish, 114 percent was landed, and that closed on August 30. If you recall, we had Amendment 32 put into place and then Regulatory Amendment 25 changed the ACL, and so had a few ACL changes with blueline tilefish.

Moving down, golden tilefish hook and line is currently at 83 percent of the ACL. The longline ended up at 101 percent. That closed down early in the year, as it normally does. The gray triggerfish second season, that's at 85 percent right now. The jacks complex, that closed on August 9, and that's at 109 percent, and so we've stayed fairly well within the ACLs. We went over on a few of them, but we're doing pretty good, it seems like.

Red porgy is at 64 percent. Snowy grouper is at 117 percent, and that closed down during the summer, June 14. Moving on down, greater amberjack is at 97 percent. We've got a few questions about if we will reopen that fishery, but we're at 97 percent. Vermilion snapper, currently we're at 94 percent, and, with yellowtail snapper, we changed the start date of the fishing season to August 1, and so that's showing up to be at 28 percent.

I do want to ask about reopening the fisheries. Vermilion snapper currently is at 94 percent. We looked back in the minutes, and the council last talked about when to reopen the fishery in 2012. Currently, at that time, the criteria, the recommendation that the council gave us, was to consider reopening when it's less than 95 percent. Currently, with vermilion snapper, we're at 94. Projections from the Science Center say that we can reopen for two days, and so, of course, there's a question of should we reopen or not.

There's a couple of factors to consider there. Are we creating a derby fishery? Certainly, for two days, it seems like. If there's bad weather, are you forcing fishermen to go out? Fishermen would go out in bad weather, perhaps, for those two days. If it's good outside, perhaps we can go over

the 100 percent, and so there's a risk there, increasing the probability of exceeding that catch limit, and so maybe a discussion on what criteria NMFS should use when we consider reopening fisheries would be helpful for us.

MR. BOWEN: Good morning, everybody. Has there been a thought about maybe adding what's left to the following fishing season, to add what's left to the first part of 2017?

DR. CRABTREE: That would be the carryover provision that we talked about yesterday. That would be one way to address this, but we would have to go through a plan amendment and modify the control rules to carry that over, and so it's not something we can do now. We did have a discussion, I think two years ago, and I went back and read through the minutes. The gist of it was, if you're over 95 percent, don't reopen. In this case, we are fractionally below 95 percent with vermilion.

MR. HARTIG: I think, looking at vermilion in particular, I would look at it in the context of have we gone over in the recent one or two years? If we have, I would weigh the amount of catch versus the overage. If we have an overage that's more than what we're going to allow to be caught, I would not reopen the fishery.

MR. PHILLIPS: A couple of quick things. Back to Zack's point. If we carried it over, we probably would only carry over maybe half of it, because that's the way the carryover is. It's not 100 percent. If we open it back up, then we may want to consider -- Obviously, we would look and see whether there is an overfishing or overfished status for the species, so we would know what kind of wiggle room we want to use, and then maybe look at where we are with the ACL versus the OFL, what kind of buffer we've got in there.

Another thing that we may want to think about is 5 percent of one species may not be 5 percent of another species, i.e., amberjack. Even though it's 3 percent, that may give you three or four days, and so we may want to kind of look at a cross between how many days actually could we open it up for and let the Science Center say, at this percent, you can open it up for three days or five days and then maybe have a hybrid of a percentage and how many days do they think they could open it up for and give us a little more wiggle room there.

DR. DUVAL: One thing on the carryover is there's nothing that has been set up, and there's nothing that says that you couldn't carry over all of the unharvested amount. Those were the different components of what we were looking at yesterday, but it's just that we have yet to set something up.

MR. BOWEN: As Charlie and Roy were speaking, I was trying to think about -- I mean, these commercial guys have suffered so much. I need to look to make sure, but I don't think the recreational sector is coming close to meeting their ACL, and so, to Charlie's point, maybe we could open it up for a few days. If we do go over, we wouldn't be exceeding the total ACL, because the recreational guys aren't coming close to our ACL. I just feel like we should try to open the fishery for the fishermen as much as possible.

MR. CONKLIN: We can reopen the fishery, and we should reopen the fishery. If we have a projection that we can open it for a couple of days, we ought to afford these guys an opportunity, especially before Christmas. There is some fish that we're going to be losing if we don't catch

them. Red porgy and gray trigger and the amberjack is really hurting a lot of guys' pockets this time of the year. I know that all of my boats have been tied to the dock since before Thanksgiving, and we sure could use another trip, even if it's just one, and we certainly would want to be afforded the opportunity.

DR. CRABTREE: I get, Chris, that people want the days, but the problem is, if you reopen, there is a good chance that that will cause us to go over, and that's the problem. To Ben's point, you can look on our website and find the historical catch levels, and we've been over a lot, particularly back around 2011 and 2012, when we were first putting in the quota monitoring program and things. We're doing better now, but I think last year we were over by a few percent.

If you get a fishery where 95 percent or more of the quota is caught and you open for two or three days, there is a good chance that you're going to end up going over, because it's just hard to predict, and we've also had a tendency for late reports to show up after the fact, and, even after the fishery is closed, what has been caught goes up some.

I am kind of looking for some pretty hard and fast guidance that we can use and not just subjective look at a whole host of things and sort of decide. That really doesn't help me very much, and so what I have right now from the council is, if you're above 95 percent of the quota, you don't reopen. That's close enough, and the risk of going over is too much, but, if you want to give some solid guidance beyond that, that's fine, but understand that anything you do, once you reach that 95 percent reopening, there's a substantial risk that you're going to go over the quota.

MR. BELL: Roy touched on part of it, but I was just going to ask about the possibility of late reports in this particular example. I would think, in a general sense, you would want to make sure that you had real good confidence that maybe there wasn't a high probability of late reports, but that could always turn around and bite you.

The other thing is, if you were to decide to have a couple of days where you did open, and particularly at say this time of the year, I would assume we could pick the days and maybe, realizing that the weather varies a lot from one end of our range to the other, but try to pick a two-day period by getting some data from NOAA Weather, just to pick the best two days we could to minimize the risk, if that's possible.

DR. CRABTREE: That sounds very reasonable. The trouble is that it takes us probably four or five days to get a package and get it to the Federal Register, and then you've got to give the fishermen a few days' notice that you're going to open. You don't want to announce that we're opening fifteen minutes from now and you've got two days. When you do that, really the weather information is not too useful. Then, if the weather is terrible, everybody will want you to reopen again, but you really can't until you get the dealer reports. At this time of year, by the time you get that, it's next year already.

MR. PHILLIPS: Back to average catch per day that the Science Center can give you, maybe it's simpler if we just say, if you've got two days or more, that we will try to open it. If the species is in a rebuilding plan or something -- Well, if it's in a rebuilding plan, we're probably not going to open it anyway, but just set it on a -- Use the Science Center projections. That way, it kind of takes away is 5 percent 20,000 pounds or is 5 percent 40,000 pounds. That may be a fairly clean way of doing it.

MR. CONKLIN: If we did reopen, we would still be under the 500-pound trip limit? Is that correct? Okay. Historically, when you guys reopen fisheries, the weather is always terrible, and so we could probably count on that. What I would offer up is, if we have a two-day window to catch fish, if we cut that in half, would we be minimizing our risk if we just gave one day, to avoid going over?

DR. DUVAL: I fear a one-day fishery. I don't know.

DR. PONWITH: If you're using 95 percent or less as a trigger, the point about 5 percent being one thing for one species and 5 percent being another for another is true. The burn rates by species are kind of a characteristic of the fishery, and those burn rates actually can be sometimes reasonably stable, and sometimes they can be very, very spiky. Even the burn rates, we're talking about averages, and averages are a combination of things that are lower and things that are higher. That's by nature.

The trick you find yourself in is we could certainly look at the data and give you burn rates and say this percentage of underage at the current average burn rate equals X number of days, to help the council make a decision either as a framework or on a one-time basis, but, again, those are projections predicting the future, and so there is uncertainty there and that would have to be taken into consideration.

The other thing that I would like to do is just -- Again, it gets back to the compliance issue with the dealer reporting. When we look and make decisions about how we transfer data to the Regional Office for closures based on projections of those landings, there are two parts to the actual landings, the dealer reports that came in exactly on time and the estimates we had to make for the dealer reports that are late. The smaller that estimate is, the more solid the state of play right now is and the easier it is to do a credible projection going into the future, and so, again, just to -- I never miss a chance to reinforce how important those timely reports are.

DR. DUVAL: What I was thinking, in terms of the Regional Office looking for some kind of framework, is, like Charlie said, you can use the projections from the Science Center. You can say, if the fishery is less than -- If the ACL is less than 95 percent of the way there, and then, if the projections demonstrate that X number of days are available, then the fishery could reopen. If it's less than X number of days, then the fishery stay closed, or, if want to do a rollover if it's less than X number of days, you could roll that unused quota into the next fishing year.

DR. CRABTREE: That's essentially where we are now, because I don't think we would reopen if the projections showed we could reopen for eighteen hours or something like that, but, in the case of vermilion, we are slightly below 95, and we could probably open for two days, and so I expect that we will reopen vermilion for a couple of days, based on that, and so that's kind of where we are now. If folks are comfortable with that, then we will continue down that path.

LT PREY: Just an opportunity to get on the record again that the Coast Guard is not a fan of the one to two-day reopening for vermilion snapper, just due to safety concerns.

DR. DUVAL: So what's your pleasure? Roy has indicated that it's likely that they will reopen for a couple of days, but is there some additional guidance that we can provide for down the road?

MR. BROWN: Would there be any consensus to have another step-down when it gets within a certain percentage towards the end, from 500 pounds to 250 or something? Would that be anything that anybody would be interested in doing? No?

DR. DUVAL: Charlie is shaking his head no.

MR. HARTIG: I think it would be prudent to have staff put together a little paper about the things that we've discussed here and anything else they think might be appropriate to do this, and then we can have a more informed discussion at our next meeting or whenever you would determine we would have that.

DR. DUVAL: I will have to get with my cruise director here and see about what the schedule looks like for the next meeting, but I do agree. I think putting together some kind of framework based on what the Science Center projections are and what the percentage of the ACL is that's been caught and how many more days there might be left of fishing, almost like a decision tree approach. That might be useful. Is everybody okay with that? Roy, is the answer that, yes, you're likely to reopen for two days, just to wrap this up?

DR. CRABTREE: I think, looking at where we are, given that we're under 95, and that's what the Center indicates, I think we will likely open up for a couple of days, and we'll try to move as quickly as we can to do that, and then I think, if you want to make some adjustment for carryover or whatever, that would be great, but that has to go through the whole amendment process.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Thank you very much. Anything else on commercial landings?

MR. CONKLIN: If you guys are going to reopen it, should we talk about some ideal days, because we certainly don't want to reopen on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, do we?

DR. CRABTREE: I understand we want to stay away from the Christmas holidays, and we'll try to look at the weather and see if that gives us any indication, but my view is we would open as quickly as we can make it happen.

DR. DUVAL: Just give me a couple days heads-up, okay?

DR. CRABTREE: We will give everyone -- My guess is it will file at the Federal Register and then we'll send out a Fishery Bulletin saying it's going to open two to three days from now, so people have a chance to get ice and get ready and go, and we'll make sure that all of you guys get a call and a heads-up.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Ben, did you have one more thing on commercial landings?

MR. HARTIG: I just didn't know how to look at it regionally in December. Where in December do the landings usually come from? If the weather is going to be horrible in North Carolina and they don't usually catch fish, that may be a partial consideration.

DR. DUVAL: I think, if it had been open, folks would have been out. Are we ready to move forward with the status of recreational landings? Rick, are you doing that, or is Jessica doing that?

Dr. Stephen. I believe there was an updated presentation that was sent to folks, and it would be under the presentations folder, if you're looking at the briefing book on the website.

DR. STEPHEN: These are the updates on the recreational landings. Take note that landings are summarized using MRIP or MRFSS calibrated from MRIP, depending on how the ACL was calculated, and these landings were updated by NMFS SERO to be consistent with our ACL monitoring, which means a sample post-stratification of the estimates, and we have information through Wave 4 of 2016. All landings are preliminary, and, of course, include both MRIP/MRFSS as well as headboat landings.

I will first go over the 2015 landings. In 2015, we were over in the blueline tilefish by 361 percent, golden tilefish by 128 percent, and hogfish by 330 percent, and all of those had closure dates within 2015. Looking at the rest of the species in 2015, we were doing fairly well, with only higher values in the porgies, at 90 percent.

The preliminary 2016 landings have us over again in blueline tilefish, 197 percent. They had a closure on 9/1/2016, and that was a fixed closure and not due to being an in-season monitoring closure. Golden tilefish were over by 404 percent and closed on 8/27. Hogfish were over by 105 percent and closed on 11/30. The 11/30 is highlighted in this graph because that was different from what the original briefing book had given to you. We hadn't closed it at that point. The jacks had originally been closed on 8/9/2016. Since the briefing book, we got additional data from the Science Center which allows us to reopen the jacks, and they reopened on December 2.

The porgies were also over in 2016, at 109 percent, and we closed them on 9/13, and snowy grouper closed, due to a fixed-season closure. They were only at 32 percent, but they were closed, due to the fixed season closure.

Amberjack and black sea bass have the split year season cycle, and so they go from 2014 into 2015. In the 2014/2015 season, both of these complexes were under their ACL. In 2015/2016, greater amberjack is sitting at 76 percent and black sea bass at 29 percent. In the 2016/2017, greater amberjack was at 98 percent, and we closed them on 11/30/2016. Again, this is a value that was different than what was in your briefing book.

These, again, are just the tables that go through the landings over the different time and the way it was broken out among the charter, headboat, private, and shore modes. You can see, for black sea bass, for the last couple of years, we've been under the ACL. Here is gag grouper. Again, for gag grouper, we've been under the ACL since we set it in 2011. Here are the greater amberjack landings. Greater amberjack, in this year, you can see we came very close to the ACL, but we were still under it.

Mutton snapper, again, we were under the ACL for mutton snapper for the last few years, and here are the yellowtail snapper recreational landings. With yellowtail, we've been under the ACL as well. Here's red porgy. Red porgy has also been under the ACL, and you can look at how effort has been shifting, particularly within the headboat region. Vermilion snapper, you can see, in 2016, we were under the ACL by quite a bit, if that has any implications to how you're thinking about commercial.

The snowy grouper landings are in numbers and not in weight, and we have been significantly under the ACL in the last two years. Golden tilefish are also recorded in numbers. As you can see, we were significantly over the ACL in 2016. Scamp recreational landings, these were under the ACL. I will take any questions at this time.

DR. DUVAL: Questions for Jessica? I was a little concerned by the blueline tilefish numbers. The season opened July 13, I think, and so it's a May through August season, and we changed the bag limit back from one fish per vessel back to three fish per person within the three grouper aggregate as of last year, based on the data and projections that we had through Regulatory Amendment 25, and I know that the majority of that harvest was coming from North Carolina, pretty much split equally between, at least according to the MRIP estimates, between the charter vessels and the private sector. The PSEs on the private sector were higher, and almost all of that harvest was coming from north of Hatteras.

I've reached out to a few folks, and I know that a lot of the same captains who will fish for blueline tilefish will also fish for dolphin. Folks reported not seeing very many weedlines this year, and so their dolphin catches were not as good as they might have been, and I just throw this out there, but I'm wondering if, based on snowy, and they're at one per vessel still, and if there was an ability to maybe go to one per person, if that might take a little bit more pressure off of blueline.

This is just sort of speculation on my part about it would be nice if we were in a place where we could look at the performance of our ACLs and then also make adjustments for the following fishing year in some kind of timely fashion, in order to potentially prevent something like this, like drop back down to two fish per person within the three-fish aggregate.

DR. STEPHEN: I just want to note that the blueline tilefish recreational landings were high in Wave 4. That's what led to this.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, and there were very few, almost nothing, in Wave 3. It's all in Wave 4. Any questions for Jessica?

MR. BROWN: I was looking at the black sea bass numbers, and it showed the decrease, and so we were having a discussion about that, how it was 39 percent in 2014 and 29 in 2015 and then now it's 13, but I guess we haven't gone the complete calendar year or something. Also, I had a question about the jacks complex and how that closed. When that closed, I called the NMFS office to ask about that and how it was so coincidental about the commercial and recreational closing at the same time, and then we went for a few months and then it opens back up. Why did it take so long to recalculate all of that and for us to be able to see that fishery open back up?

DR. STEPHEN: Part of the way it works is we get the landings from the Science Center and there is an average weight assigned to them, and Bonnie can correct this if I get this slightly wrong. We need a sample size of a minimum of at least thirty to get an average weight within that. Early on, with Wave 1, we had to keep expanding to get an average weight, until we get to thirty, and so it left an overly high average weight. I think the average weight was initially around nine pounds.

As more samples started to come in, we eventually got more samples in, which then lowered the average weight to about four pounds. As soon as we got that information from the Science Center, which was later in the year, by the time we got that, we were able to -- The Wave 1 landings

basically cut down in half, and that allowed us to reopen the jacks, because that wasn't there in the prediction anymore.

MR. BROWN: So you're talking about average weight between all of the different species within that complex? If so, what was the driver species?

DR. STEPHEN: The driver species was almaco jack.

DR. DUVAL: Does that answer all of your questions on jacks?

MR. BELL: Sea bass just seemed a little low, but it is what it is.

DR. DUVAL: Well, we've had an analysis done on that. The majority of sea bass caught are being discarded, because they're all undersized, and we'll talk about that a little bit later.

MR. DELERNIA: I had a comment about black sea bass, but, first, I was wondering, could someone please explain to me the bottom scale, the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009? I am trying to interpret the graph there.

DR. DUVAL: The fishery for black sea bass does not run on a calendar year. It started previously June 1 and ran through April 30, and so those are the years. It's split across years, and we just recently, in the last -- I think, starting in 2014 or 2015, we moved the start date of the fishery from June 1 to April 1, and so it's split across years.

MR. DELERNIA: Thank you for that, and the comment I was going to make was that we in the Mid-Atlantic have seen a shift of the distribution of black sea bass to the north and to the east, to the northeast, much like summer flounder. Many of our southern states, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, have been unable to -- Their recreational fisheries have remained open for twelve months, whereas, in the northern states, some of the states' recreational fisheries are only eight weeks long, and that's because, in those northern states, the abundance of black sea bass is so high that, in order to avoid going over the ACLs, the season has to be kept very short, whereas, in the southern part of the Mid-Atlantic region, the black sea bass availability is so low that the season has remained open for twelve months out of the year, and so perhaps your reduction in black sea bass catches may also be an artifact of what we see as a species shift, and I just offer that as a -- I don't state it as a fact, but I just offer it as something that you may want to consider. Thank you.

DR. CRABTREE: It's kind of backwards, in a way, but I look at a report like Jessica's, and the species that we're busting the quotas on, I feel pretty good about that, because I think there's a lot of fish out there. I look at sea bass and think we've got a real problem. My recollection is the MARMAP numbers were straight down on sea bass, and I think we've seen substantial declines in the sea bass population, and I don't know when the next assessment is coming in, but, in my way of thinking, we've seen enough out of sea bass to justify a more conservative management.

MR. BOWEN: I totally agree from my experience on the water this year. Our sea bass weren't there. They're not there now, and they should be, since the water temperature is cooling down. We didn't have them in the spring, and we didn't have them in the summer. Usually we get another wave of them about July. They will roll back in, even with the warmer water, and we didn't see that off of Georgia at all. Our sea bass are in trouble.

DR. DUVAL: Just to let folks know, sea bass is gearing up for a standard assessment. I think, right now, it's due to be delivered sometime in 2017. This was one of the ones that we bumped up on the schedule because we were concerned in seeing that MARMAP index. If there is no more on recreational landings -- Any other questions? Thank you very much, Jessica. We appreciate it. The next item is Status of Amendments Under Secretarial Review, and Rick is going to take us through this, and I am very anxious to hear about the first item under this update.

MR. DEVICTOR: I am going to go through Regulatory Amendment 16, Amendment 36, and Amendment 37. Regulatory Amendment 16 would specify the areas where fishing could occur with black sea bass during November 1 to April 30 each year and also enhance gear markings for the black sea bass sector. The proposed rule published on August 11, and the comment period closed on September 12. We are currently working on the final rule right now.

Amendment 36 would implement spawning special management zones in the South Atlantic, and we are currently working on that proposed rule right now. Finally, Amendment 37 deals with hogfish, and this specifies the ACLs, the recreational ACTs, the AMs, and the management measures for hogfish. The notice of availability of the amendment published on October 7, and the comment period ended on December 6. We sent the proposed rule package to Headquarters, and so hopefully that will publish soon, the proposed rule for Amendment 37. That concludes my report.

DR. DUVAL: I can't help but ask, Rick, because I've been bugging you about this for at least the past month or so -- You know we've gotten a lot of questions from black sea bass pot fishermen up here, and you're sort in the heart of sea bass pot country, and do you have any indication about when that final rule is going to publish? Is it going to be before Christmas?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: At this point, we can say that the rule has not been issued, and it's under review. There's a lot of things that go into the timing, including new administrations coming in, and so I know the Service and GC is doing our best to try to get this done as soon as possible.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Monica. Any questions for Rick?

MS. BURGESS: Rick, I am just curious about hogfish, since we've got this new management boundary with the Gulf. The Gulf's proposed rule has already published, and will you hold the Gulf rule package until the South Atlantic rule is ready to go for the final rule?

MR. DEVICTOR: I'm not sure if I quite got that. You're saying are you going to delay action?

MS. BURGESS: The rule for the boundary line and the size limit increase in the Gulf has published as a proposed rule. We don't have the proposed rule out yet for the South Atlantic, and I was wondering, once you've finished with the proposed rule stage, if you will hold the Gulf final rule until the South Atlantic final rule is ready.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I understand, we understand, the timing of those two rules, and we will try to -- I am not sure. I will have to get with my counterpart to see exactly how we intend to do it, but I think those two rules should be issued pretty simultaneously, but I will check back and update you on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just want to point out that at the last FWC Commission meeting that the FWC adopted consistent regulations with what both the South Atlantic and the Gulf Council did, and so they adopted the same regulations for state waters and the boundary.

DR. DUVAL: Those are effective?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're not going to make them effective until after the federal rules are effective, and so we will not file ours until the federal rules are filed.

DR. DUVAL: Great. Thank you. Any other questions on the status of amendments? Seeing none, thank you very much, Rick, and the next item is our Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Report, and I would like to welcome Kenny Fex up to the table. Kenny is the Chair of our advisory panel, and he's looking a bit gimpy than the last time I saw him, and so thanks for being here, Kenny.

MR. FEX: Thank you. My name is Kenny Fex. I would like to comment that I just hurt myself playing on my jet-ski, and so if you wonder why I'm hobbling around. I would first like to comment, before I say anything about the meeting, that you guys invited me to go to the SSC meeting, and that was very informative.

In that meeting, I did note that one of the recommendations was to go ahead and better identify the user group of the recreational sector, and I was glad to hear that, because, as we as advisory panel members have done, we have seen how much it affects stock assessments. We're the ones appointed, and we're the ones that see the outcome, and so I was glad to see the SSC finally take what the AP has always tried to push forward.

Also, a comment to that is the SSC thought it would be a good idea to have public comment during the sessions at their meetings, and I understand that's a great idea, but some people can be outrageous to be speaking. We are professionals, and we were able to communicate with them, whereas the general public might not be as forgiving to them and vice versa. They also thought about a webinar and allowing people to speak in, and I think too that would be somewhat cumbersome, because people throw a lot of stones from the back of the computer, and so I would just take that into consideration for the respect of the SSC.

As for the AP meeting, we started on October 31. Thank you for all the excellent members you guys have appointed. They are well educated and very informed. I would thank the council staff for doing their hard work that they do.

First off, John did a presentation on the limited access. I know there's going to be a lot of repercussions from that, accountability and sector separation, but, again, that's part of trying to secure better data to find our user groups and better identify the catches. We went on too to go ahead and look at the mutton snapper. I talked to Jessica prior to, to find out what Florida wanted, and I pushed it in front of the AP, and they considered it acceptable, and so we went along with Florida's ideas on the mutton snapper.

We further went on to yellowtail. The commercial representatives on there saw no reason to try to get allocations from the other sectors, because they believed that the quota was pretty much on track with what it was. They wanted the spawning closure to be the end of the season, so that

when the season starts that it's after the spawning closure, so, if it does close, it will be during the spawning closure in the summer months, when they usually don't need to fish as much, because, in the Keys, that's usually not the prominent time to be there.

I would like to thank the council for the visioning amendments, for what we believe would be a good idea, as an AP. We really didn't change anything on the commercial. We looked at a 750-pound trip limit on the second season, the rationale being the second season we have a lot more fish to catch, and that would help make our trips profitable, and so we saw the rationale, and we accepted that motion. We also looked at the split season for the red porgies. We pushed that as the AP put forward.

On the recreational visioning, it was pretty much status quo on the spawning closure. We as the AP have seen that it has kind of helped, and we need to kind of protect those fish when they are spawning. The other alternative that they pushed forward was the size limit on the black sea bass. As you guys just commented on, there is a lot of discards, because of the size limit on the recreational sector being so high, and so that was pretty much the only thing we put forth, but, again, thank you for that opportunity to put in a visioning of our own towards the future.

Towards the end, the only motion we put out, besides the ones to the amendments, was the South Florida management, and there's a lot of rationale to that. We just sat in the AP meeting on two species, yellowtail and mutton, that had nothing to do with most of the people in that meeting, and I'm fine with being there, and that wasn't the point, but I still think there ought to be some rationale to southern Florida management.

I talked to Jessica, and I talked to Ben. I know that the leaps and bounds you've got to go through, an act of Congress or whatever, but maybe consider a South Florida Advisory Panel. Get people from the Gulf in southern Florida, southern Florida representatives, and just have them as a panel. It's not going to be anything to change any management or whatever, but it would be useful. Then the people that really are voting on the things are the people that make the difference in their area, and so that was pretty much the end of our meeting. Do you guys have any questions?

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Kenny. Are there questions for Kenny about any of the motions that the AP made or any of their discussions? I do think that most of the AP recommendations have been put into the visioning decision documents or options papers, and so we will see those later. Kenny, if you're going to be around for the rest of the day, if we have any questions, we might call you back up to the table.

MR. FEX: Yes, I will be around, and that was pretty much all they wanted to change on the commercial. I know it's just the beginning of it, and so there will be public comment into it, but they really weren't wanting to jump anything on the commercial side, just because it's hard to tackle all of that at once, but thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Kenny. The next item on our agenda is our SSC Report, and Dr. Marcel Reichert, who is our SSC Chair, is going to come up here and provide the report.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also want to say that I appreciate having an opportunity to provide reports at the committees, and I remember that, the last time I gave my

report to the Snapper Grouper Committee, there were some items that were relevant for other committees, and so I appreciate that opportunity.

There was some talk about the ABC control rule, and so that's what I would like to start off with, although this is also relevant for other fisheries. Off and on, the SSC has discussed the ABC control rule, dating back to 2014, and we discussed issues like stock status determination, the productivity and susceptibility analysis scoring, the PSA, and the rebuilding, the ABC control rule relative to rebuilding. We also looked at the prescriptiveness of Levels 2 and 3, and that's in the data-poor stocks, because it looked like we were precluding new methods that were developed. In June, I reported on the results of an ABC control rule sub-committee that we had, and we discussed this further at our last meeting. The council requested that we reconsider stock status in determining the P* and our ABC control rule.

We recognize that stock status is provided by the agency, and both the stock status and the PSA are elements that include the risk of overfishing, and we feel that's appropriate for the council to consider when determining the acceptable risk of overfishing, and so, after some discussion, the SSC recommendation is to remove both stock status and the PSA from the ABC control rule, and that has some consequences for the scoring of the ABC control rule.

We, however, did feel that the current PSA information should be updated. We discussed that while discussing the ABC control rule for several species, and we would like to have an opportunity to review that and provide some recommendations to the council. However, as you can imagine, that will require some modifications to the overall scoring system of the ABC control rule, and we've been discussing to provide some options. Some options were provided at the last SSC meeting, but we would like to continue to work on that.

At our next SSC meeting, we will continue to discuss the changes in the ABC control rule and then further refine that rule and scoring, and I think it was important to compare scorings of the old control rule with the new control rule, to see how those compare, and also to use economic and social indicators of stock abundance in our considerations, and that was something we briefly discussed at the last SSC meeting, but they were very recently published, the new National Standard Guidelines, and I think what we will add is the ABC control rule relative to the overages, and that was something that the council discussed yesterday, and so we'll add that to the list.

How we are doing that, we are not entirely sure, because it may be good to have some homework done by perhaps a subcommittee of the SSC, and so I will be discussing the best way to approach that with John Carmichael, Mike Errigo, Ben Hartig, you, and maybe some other people to see how we can best approach that. I will pause here to see if there are any questions. Otherwise, I will move on to the next item.

DR. DUVAL: Not a question, Marcel, but just a comment. I think, in terms of the new NS 1 Guidelines and looking at revising the ABC control rule to allow for carryovers, as well as phase-in of reductions, I think your conversation at the SSC meeting was really more focused on a phased-in approach, but you heard yesterday that we had a significant amount of discussion on how to potentially take advantage of the flexibility afforded through the allowance of carryovers, and I think there were questions yesterday with regard to do you revamp the entire ABC control rule or do you look at this more specifically for certain species, just because we're facing the

possible use of the carryover provision, in particular, through the mega-amendment that we reviewed yesterday. I guess I would just ask that you guys take that into consideration as well.

MR. HARTIG: Not a question, but a comment. I appreciate the SSC for -- You guys were a little bit reticent to address the ABC control rule, but you are. Actually, you were kind of forced to by the NS 1 Guidelines, in a way, but I'm glad you're ahead of that. You were ahead of that, and so I like to see what you're doing, going forward, and I will certainly participate any way I can to help.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and this obviously will be some extensive discussions, and so that's why I said we may need to discuss how best to approach that, the process. The SSC reviewed the goliath grouper assessment, and, after some discussion, we accepted the recommendations of the review panel, and that is that we concluded that the assessment is not the best scientific information available and that, as a result, it should not be used for management advice. We largely agreed with the panel's research recommendations, in particularly relative to alternative models to be used, and also to address critical data needs, and a lot of that is detailed in the review report.

We received the same presentation that the council received from Dr. Rudershausen, and I believe you saw that in your previous meeting. Dr. Rudershausen presented the results of his study, and we felt that it was very well designed and executed, and we only had some minor comments, and we felt that all major sources of uncertainty were very well addressed and the model fit the data quite well, and our recommendation was to consider that study as the best scientific information available and appropriate for use in management. The SSC also looked at the Snapper Grouper Amendment 41, and we had no additional comments.

We had extensive discussions on the tilefish assessment, and one of the things I want to highlight is that we made a correction in our overview document. It should have read that the tilefish was undergoing overfishing, and it initially stated that it was not undergoing overfishing, and so we made that correction. The council requested that the SSC review some of the SEDAR 25 information and results, and we were very appreciative of some of the information and analysis that Mike Errigo provided us.

As it was noted in our report and the stock assessment report, the remarkably strong year class in the terminal year of the assessment was very influential to the outcome of the assessment. We also extensively discussed that the uncertainty was very high, and that was not only discussed within the SSC, but also indicated in the report.

That uncertainty was subsequently carried forward in the ABC control rule, and the council recognized that uncertainty in the associated risk in the selection of the ACL level. What's important was that there were two points that were very influential to the update assessment, and those modifications were the use of a robust multinomial likelihood function and the age and length data that were added since the terminal year of the previous assessment. I also want to indicate that many other key parameters, like natural mortality and steepness, were the same as in the SEDAR 25, or those were the same in the update as well as the SEDAR 25.

MR. HARTIG: Just one thing. If you go back to the last slide, you're talking about the assessment, and that was SEDAR 25, the previous assessment. Now we're focusing on the update.

DR. REICHERT: Exactly.

MR. HARTIG: When you talk about the usually-strong year class, that was in SEDAR 25 and not in the update.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and thank you for --

MR. HARTIG: I'm just trying to do this for the public, just to keep us straight.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you. Yes, that's a good point, and I was setting up the update, but you're absolutely right. What I'm saying here was kind of a review of the SEDAR 25 and then, the influential modifications, at that point I was talking about the update. Does that make sense? Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

Fortunately, Dr. Erik Williams was at the SSC meeting, and we appreciated his presence, and he provided an overview of the robust multinomial likelihood function. In applying that robust multinomial likelihood function, it provided more robust results, and the SSC considered that the best scientific information available, and I believe that Erik will address this in a little bit and explain the details of the use of that function.

That's what the SSC recommended at our October SSC meeting. On November 30, there was a red grouper webinar, assessment webinar, and there was a new likelihood method that was presented and accepted by that assessment panel for use in the red grouper assessment, and Mike Errigo mentioned yesterday that the SSC discussed that, and I want to clarify that there were three SSC members, including myself, that were present at that webinar, and so those three SSC members became aware of that new likelihood method, and so the SSC as a whole has not had an opportunity to evaluate those new methods and the possible consequences for assessments, and so I wanted to mention that, and maybe this is a good moment for me to ask Erik, if you don't mind, but we asked Erik if he was willing to give the council a little bit more technical information on the likelihood functions, and so thank you for doing that, Erik.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Dr. Williams. You know how this gig works.

DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to brief you guys on this, and I'm open to all kinds of questions, which I expect there will be a few, but, just to kind of review what the likelihood is in our model, it is sort of a mathematical function that we use to basically fit the model. It guides our parameters, and part of that likelihood is we want it to match the error structure that we suspect is happening in the model, and so we're getting into statistical details here, but the error tends to follow statistical distributions.

One of the ones that we believe age data follows is a multinomial distribution. The problem is that, when we use a multinomial, we're assuming that we're sampling the fish perfectly, and we're not, because of various factors. Either we're fishing more heavily in one region than another that may have a concentration of a certain age or size of fish. Because we're fishing on schools of fish, which tend to follow similar sizes or ages, we're not sampling the population perfectly, and so we have to try to account for that, and it's been an active area of research in trying to determine the best way to account for that.

Up until recent years, it's been sort of an ad hoc thing. There's been a lot of adjustments, where they say, well, if your sample size should be capped at 200, you shouldn't say that your model has more than 200 fish sampled, because the reality is, because of all of these factors that I just discussed, the real sample size is something less than that. That's sort of an ad hoc way of adjusting for this correlation, and so this property of fish not being sampled perfectly is often termed a correlation problem for these sort of distributions.

In recent years, they have been working on other methods to try and at least make it more objective in the way that we adjust these likelihoods to account for this correlation, and so that's what we've seen. In 2011, we had a paper, an influential paper, come out by Chris Francis that sort of introduced this idea of the robust multinomial and also this concept of using standard deviation of normalized residuals. It's a highly-technical term, but, basically, it was an attempt to try and get us to an objective way of adjusting these weights so that we could fit the data better and account for this correlation that we know exists and is unavoidable.

Then, in the most recent year, we've had a couple more papers come out. It's been a very active area of research. We had an important workshop on the west coast in 2014, I think it was, or 2015, where they actually tackled likelihood functions as a topic for the workshop, and what came out of that is there are a couple of new papers that are in press right now, and we're actually moving towards those. Even though we used the robust multinomial likelihood in the tilefish, and it was sort of the best state-of-the-art science at that time, we're already moving past that, it looks like, and that's what you'll see what we're doing with SEDAR 53. We're already moving to this other function.

In a nutshell, that's kind of where we are. It's an evolving science, and when we do updates -- I will just remind everybody that when we do updates, I know we don't want to mess with the model too much, but, in this case, I think the likelihood function, we didn't expect it to have as much of an influence as it did on tilefish, but I think part of that was also that big year class kind of got wiped out.

It wasn't real, and the new data that we added had probably as much influence on that as the robust multinomial likelihood did as well, and so keep that in mind, that whenever we do these, we've got new data coming in, and so we should expect some change, because of the new data, but, also, we try to incorporate some of the new methods, if we can, but try not to deviate too much from changing the original model. That kind of, I think, lays out why we did what we did with golden tilefish, and I will open it up for questions.

DR. DUVAL: Are there questions for Erik? I know you said this is a very active area of research, and I was wondering if you might be able to just highlight -- I assume that this evolving science of development of likelihood functions -- There is a lot of folks involved in that, and I would expect that these different functions are also being used in other models, and so I didn't know if you might be able to provide some information on maybe the time series of use of different multinomials and other models as well. I mean, you're specifically talking about the Beaufort Assessment Model, but there are other age-structured models that also use different multinomials, and I didn't know if you might be able to provide some information on that.

DR. WILLIAMS: Sure. That's a good question, and thank you for asking that. Stock Synthesis is probably the biggest or most widely-used model in the U.S. right now, and it has already

incorporated the latest multinomial -- What we're calling the Dirichlet multinomial likelihood, and it has already incorporated that. There was an intermediate stage, and the slide is up, that talks about another method, the logistic normal distribution, and that actually has already been implemented in another model called iSCAM that comes out of Steve Martell's shop out of UBC, I think.

Anyway, we're not the only model that is incorporating these new methods. I think it's going to eventually catch on with all the models. They're going to start using one of these newer ones, and probably -- I think the science is leaning towards this Dirichlet multinomial right now, but, again, the issue here is what we're trying to do is match the error distribution of our data, and that's the hard thing to get at.

We're kind of guessing at what this error structure may look like. These methods are meant to try to be an objective way to get at that, but what hopefully we'll learn over time is what our error structure in our region may look like and maybe more accurately sort of represent that. We might realize that maybe one of these is a little better suited, just because of the error structure we have in our data, but it's a hard thing to get at, because it's really the part we don't know. We kind of have to just guess at it, in some ways, and base it on other experiences from other regions and other fisheries that do have better information and they can kind of characterize their error a little better.

I guess the best way to try to explain why we can't do that is because our samples are kind of low. In fisheries where you have the luxury of having a lot of sampling, you can kind of look at subsets of the data and you can kind of see then what the error is when you look at subsets of it. We've never really gotten to the point where we have such good sampling that we can really key in on what some of our error distributions might look like.

MR. HARTIG: To that last statement, even in vermilion and black sea bass? Even where we have a tremendous number of samples compared to everything else? Even that you couldn't get that error estimation?

DR. WILLIAMS: Vermilion gets pretty close, and, to be honest, we haven't looked at it in detail, but you're right that vermilion is probably the one where we can come pretty darned close to getting sufficient sampling, as I would term it, but, the rest, we're sort of woefully behind.

MR. HARTIG: The other thing I would say is it's just a little bit concerning, and I understand why it happens. You mentioned the low sample sizes, but it's a unidirectional result in our assessments that we've used it in so far. It lowers the MSY estimate going forward, and so that's the -- The discussion at the SSC and that you provided was that, yes, it's the low sample sizes that is causing that uncertainty, that increase in uncertainty, and so, in theory, it should not be unidirectional, but, given the data we have for a number of our stocks, it would probably be unidirectional. Now you've moved on to a better one, and I hope it might provide some different answers, but, the low sample sizes, we're never going to get away from that, unless we change that, and so that's a real concern.

DR. DUVAL: Marcel, did you have a question?

DR. REICHERT: No, and that was the exact point. That was the discussion that we had at the SSC, and we asked Erik about that, because obviously the SSC also had some concerns of the

potential of this being unidirectional, meaning that it would always lead to lower SSB and higher F estimates, and Erik addressed that at the SSC meeting, and so thank you. That's the point I was going to make.

DR. DUVAL: I just have two more quick questions for Erik. The first one is so it's the same -- It's the same researcher, Francis, who has been actively developing these different likelihood approaches, and so it was his paper in 2011 that produced the robust multinomial, and was that also adopted in SS3, the robust multinomial, prior to the change that you're talking about now with a couple of these other likelihood functions?

DR. WILLIAMS: I am not 100 percent sure, but I think it was. In fact, I think SS may have had an older option for the robust multinomial. There was actually one that was proposed way back in the 1990s, but I'm not sure, because I'm not that familiar with the interworking of SS.

DR. DUVAL: Those were my questions, the researcher who was doing it, and so are there any other questions for Dr. Williams about likelihood functions and everything?

MR. HARTIG: I mean, is this possibly a way for us to estimate the cost to our fishermen, based on the lower sample sizes that we're collecting for our species?

DR. WILLIAMS: I don't know if this particular topic, the likelihood function, is the way to address that. I think the better way is a management strategy evaluation or a sampling strategy evaluation, and Katie Siegfried and I put out -- We have a paper that just came out recently in the *Canadian Journal* that talks about that, where we basically, with a simple analysis, showed that age and index information is the most valuable information. In particular, age information.

Actually, I will give you guys a heads-up. We just got funding to look at this situation in more detail on a species-specific basis. We're actually hiring a post-doc, and we're going to explore this on a species-by-species case and look at, okay, where is our best bang-for-the-buck in sampling, and maybe we can gain some efficiencies in just some small tweaks to our sampling regime to improve our estimates.

DR. DUVAL: Was that the ACCSP grant?

DR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

MR. BREWER: Following up on Ben's question, is there -- I understand this certainly probably is not the right method, but is there a method of estimating the cost to -- In other words, let's say that, based on one model, your ACL is up here, but, because of uncertainty and lack of data and whatnot, your ACL is down here for specific species. In other words, it's much lower. Therefore, both the commercial people and the recreational people are more constrained in their ability to fish and they're not spending as much money and they're not contributing as much money to the economy. Is there a way, that you are aware of, of trying to estimate what that cost is? In other words, here, we're talking about the economic cost on the recreational side and the commercial side for the lack of data, which then forces a much more conservative estimate of the number of fish in the species.

DR. WILLIAMS: That's an excellent question, and, again, I think the research path we're on is - We hope to try to address that. With the data we have now, what makes it tricky, and it gets back to a comment I made earlier, is, if you don't have plenty of samples to begin with, you can't sort of back off and look at, okay, what is the effect of having a subset.

We're actually in the situation where we kind of already have the subset and we want to look at the effect of having more data. The problem is we don't know which direction that more data is going to go, and so we have to kind of guess at that, and so that's where it gets a little tricky. You're in a much better situation when you have lots of data and you can say, well, maybe we're oversampling and we can look at efficiency and subsets and all of that, but we're not in that situation.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you very much, Erik, for letting us drag you up here to the table. It was much appreciated. Marcel, back to you.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Erik. As Erik indicated, another important factor was the age and length composition since SEDAR 25. Data from the years following the terminal year in SEDAR 25 did not support that strong year class, and the additional age data also changed the selectivity of the hand-line gears to a greater selectivity for older fish.

The increased age sampling, although I have to say that, in spite of the fact that there were more age data, the age data were still relatively sparse, but it increased the confidence in the selectivity estimates in the update, and, assuming that the selectivity remained constant, that selectivity, or that new selectivity, was applied to the entire assessment period. The changes in selectivity resulted in an increased estimate of the fishing mortality and a decreased estimate of FMSY and the projected catch levels.

Another issue that the SSC discussed was that the model predicted a very high increase in F over FMSY in the early 1990s. It went from less than one to over eight, which is about a 700 percent increase, although that wasn't reflected much in the change in the spawning stock biomass over SSB MSY, which was about 30 percent, and the SSC noted that the fishing mortality is reported as apical F, and apical F is the highest fishing mortality across all ages in a given year.

Both the apical F and the abundance at age expanded in the early 1990s and declined after that, and so we felt that the severity of the overfishing experienced by the full stock, and that was F over FMSY, was approaching eight. It may have been exaggerated by the use of this apical F as the reference metric for F, which is generally done in the assessments, in the modeling, and so one of the SSC's recommendations was to explore other fishing mortality metrics to potentially better characterize the fishing mortality.

There was a question about the productivity, and the SSC discussed that. Given the acknowledgement of the overall uncertainty that was, as I mentioned earlier, extensively discussed, the stock productivity is not well estimated, and that brings me to the next slide that talks about the buffer between the OFL and the ABC. The council had asked the SSC to comment on that buffer, and we felt that the large buffer was not surprising, again, given the uncertainty and the relatively low age sample size.

As you know, by design, the ABC control rule dictates, when you have a high uncertainty, you should have a large buffer, and we also noticed that the buffer magnitude of the update was similar to that of the SEDAR 25, and also, and Mike Errigo provided some comparisons, and it doesn't seem like the tilefish was different from other species in the South Atlantic.

Species that have low buffers generally have much larger sample sizes, in particular the ages, which are influential, and they also have a more informative fishery-independent survey with a higher sample size and also greater geographic coverage. Maybe you will remember that the fishery-independent survey on tilefish is the MARMAP longline survey, and that's mostly executed off of South Carolina and Georgia, and so there were some -- There is a relatively narrow geographical range.

The ABC control rule and the P* approach are intended to reduce the probability of a rebuilding situation, and it's there for precautionary, especially when the stock is near target levels and when the uncertainty in the assessment is high, and both were the case in tilefish. The SSC recommendation was that we felt that the P* approach was appropriate for this assessment and does not consider it necessary to base the ABC on yield at 75 percent of FMSY or OFL on yield at FMSY.

The council also asked us about market categories, as are used in the Mid-Atlantic region. In this region, we felt the uncertainty and the lack of data in how the market categories are classified and the potential changes in how those market categories may have changed over time and may be different between regions -- There was a high level of uncertainty, and so we felt that it may not be possible to use these market categories, currently, across the entire stock. However, maybe within regions or within time blocks, they may be informative in geographically-localized areas.

Also, if the consistency in size resolution is sufficient, those cohorts could potentially be tracked, and so, if we know that there is a consistent definition of those market categories, those cohorts could be tracked. We also felt that this information would be extremely useful in a potential rumble-strip-like approach that the SSC has discussed on various occasions, and we also felt that annual updates, and there were some examples in the SSC briefing book, that are provided in the Mid-Atlantic could aid in formulating our recommendations here in the South Atlantic, and so we felt that that would be very useful for us to potentially have.

Furthermore, the SSC was asked about the phased-in implementation approach. As I mentioned earlier, we, just prior to the SSC meeting, became aware of the final rule of the National Standard 1. Obviously, a phase-in approach may moderate socioeconomic impacts. As was discussed earlier here in the meeting, the council meeting, the revised National Standards allow for this phased-in approach over three years. However, we did not have an opportunity to review that, and, as I mentioned earlier, in the ABC control rule discussions, that is something that we will discuss in the near future.

We were very happy that Mr. Shepherd Grimes from General Counsel was at the meeting. I mentioned earlier how much we appreciated that, and he provided some clarification. You were provided with that same information earlier, and that means that the council can still not exceed the SSC's ABC recommendations and that the phase-in needs to be part of a fishery management plan and the ABC control rule.

The SSC recommendation is, if the council chooses a phase-in, it's to consider management uncertainty and recent overages, which occurred in the tilefish fishery, as you saw earlier today, and we also felt that the ACLs should possibly not exceed 90 percent of the OFL. That, again, had to do with the fact that the ACL was exceeded in recent years, and, of course, if this phase-in approach is implemented, new projection estimates are needed.

The SSC also commented on the ABC in three-year blocks, and we recognize that consistency in the ACL, of course, makes it a lot easier for fishermen to adjust business models. There is a little less uncertainty there.

The overall research recommendations from the SSC were, of course, to increase age sample size, and you've probably heard that a lot from a variety of stock assessments, and, as Dr. Williams mentioned earlier, we are in a region where generally we don't have a high sample size, but age samples are very influential in stock assessments, and so that is something that we think would have a big bang for the buck.

For the tilefish, in particular, possibly explore time blocks with a different selectivity. Maybe explore alternative models and multi-modeling approaches. As I mentioned earlier, the current fishery-independent survey has a relatively limited geographical span, and so it's very important to think about developing a more comprehensive regional fishery-independent survey, and that's not just true for tilefish, but true for deepwater snapper grouper species. These surveys should collect life history samples, again, age distributions, and also reproductive information is important.

Then some spatial distribution of the fleet relative to the population distribution should also be investigated. It would help to work towards a finer spatial scale for catch reporting. That goes back to the market categories. In order to use market categories in formulating recommendations, it is very important to investigate the differences between the definitions of market categories and establish a consistency in those categories, and that would mean that those data would be a lot more useful in the assessments. That brings me to red snapper, but I will pause to see if any one of you has any questions, and I will be around today and tomorrow if any questions may come up.

DR. DUVAL: Are there questions for Marcel on the remainder of the golden tilefish SSC discussion?

MR. HARTIG: Not a question, but a statement. After our council meeting and we looked at this originally, we had a number of ways we thought we could move forward with golden tilefish and get a better result. However, looking at all the data that Mike E. put together to help the SSC, those questions were answered quite sufficiently, and I would like to commend Mike, in conjunction with the SSC, for delving into that in great detail and showing us why the great ideas we asked the SSC did not materialize into what we thought they would. The questions that we had were answered.

DR. DUVAL: I agree. It was a very robust discussion at the SSC, and we definitely appreciate that. I did just have a couple of quick questions. Was the recommendation for further exploration of the use of different fishing mortality rate calculations, was that just specific to golden tilefish or was that examination of apical F and other methods sort of writ large?

DR. REICHERT: This was specific to golden tilefish. However, it is certainly also relevant for other stock assessments, I would say.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you. Anything else for Marcel?

DR. CRABTREE: Marcel, I know one of the things the council has been concerned about is the magnitude of the buffer between the OFL and the ABC, which is, I think, just a little less than 150,000 pounds or so, and so it's pretty large. The P* value we're using, what is that right now?

DR. REICHERT: I would need to look that up. Mike, do you know that? 0.3?

DR. DUVAL: I think it went up with the update compared to --

DR. ERRIGO: It went to 35 percent, 0.35.

DR. CRABTREE: So it's 35 percent, and that essentially equates to the risk of overfishing that the council is willing to accept?

DR. REICHERT: I believe so, yes.

DR. ERRIGO: It equates to a 35 percent probability that that level of fishing will result in overfishing.

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, and so it's a risk tolerance that the council sets. Have there been any runs done that looked at higher levels of risk, 40 percent or 45 percent?

DR. REICHERT: Mike, jolt my memory, but I don't believe that was done, was it?

DR. ERRIGO: Just 0.5, 50 percent, for the OFL.

DR. CRABTREE: That gets you to the OFL or --

DR. ERRIGO: 50 percent is the OFL.

DR. CRABTREE: If the council decided they were willing to accept a slightly higher level of risk, it would presumably decrease the magnitude of the buffer between ABC and OFL.

DR. ERRIGO: Yes, but that would go against the current control rule.

DR. CRABTREE: The council would have to modify the control rule for golden tilefish to do that, but they could do that, but we haven't seen projections that would tell us what that would mean at this point.

DR. REICHERT: That is correct.

DR. CRABTREE: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: All right. Are we ready to move on to red snapper?

DR. REICHERT: The SSC had extensive discussions about the MRIP estimates in the most recent and previous meetings and, again, we appreciated the overview that Mike Errigo provided. One of the things was that the number of intercepts is relatively low, and that means that the expansion factor is high. By design, 90 percent of the effort is on the so-called inshore and 10 percent is on the offshore. Of course, and this is obviously not new, but better data would be ideal, but the MRIP is currently all we have, and, as such, best available scientific information, and the SSC discussed that and was pondering what are the alternatives.

However, we did say, and there was an ACCSP workshop that addressed this, but PSEs could be informative in determining the adequacy of the estimates, and that workshop reported that perhaps PSEs higher than 40 to 60 percent may not be usable. The uncertainties relative to the MRIP estimates, again, were extensively discussed in the various assessment reports and SSC reports, and so the SSC recommended that the survey efforts perhaps should be focused more on offshore trips. That means that you can increase the amount of information you receive. Perhaps a simulation evaluation to determine the effects of the PSE values on reference points could be done and also potentially explore effort-based assessments or Bayesian frameworks that would allow the fitting of the catch to better incorporate estimates of uncertainty, including PSEs. Right now, in the stock assessment models, we assume that we know the catch with very little uncertainty, and so that addresses that point.

Of course, for red snapper, a lot of it hinges on discard mortality, and so I think a very big bang for the buck would be to improve or validate discard estimates and the discard mortality estimates. Also, Dr. Barbieri mentioned some alternative approaches, such as stamps, that are now in the Gulf of Mexico, and perhaps studies into other data collection approaches could be very useful. Also, the ABC should be specified. That was a specific question. The ABC should be specified in total yields, and that includes landings and discards. As one of the SSC members mentioned, a dead fish is a dead fish, and I also believe, currently, in the revised National Standards, it also specifically says that all sources of mortality, including bycatch, should be accounted for, when practicable, and so there is, I would say, some leeway there.

In terms of alternative SPR metrics, that goes back to the risk tolerance of the council, the risk tolerance the council is willing to take, and, by definition, of course, F_{max} and F_{20} have a higher risk than, for instance, F_{30} and F_{40} . The analysis that were presented, however, showed very similar results and the differences in yield were relatively minimal, and so the SSC discussed that, and that recommendation was that we felt there was no compelling reason to change the proxy.

Relative to the fishing level recommendations, the SSC's recommendation is that, currently, there are no new data that would justify a revision of the fishing level recommendations, and so the SSC was also asked to comment on the ACT, and obviously the choice of an ACT is a management choice. However, we felt that having an ACT is preferable over not having one, and that is because a percentage of ACL recognizes that landings are not known precisely and they also could be used for in-season monitoring, and they can also be used to adjust as time progresses or if management changes or if data collection improves.

We also know that Alternative 6 was consistent with the Gulf methodology. However, it does not explicitly consider uncertainty in the point estimate of landings, which Alternative 2 does, and that concludes my report to the council, and I am willing to answer any questions you may have.

DR. CRABTREE: Marcel, I am looking in the SSC report, and there is a table there that gives the OFL and ABC recommendations.

DR. REICHERT: Is that Table 3?

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, and one of the things that I think we need to address is, right now, the fishery is closed, and it's not clear when or if we're going to be able to open it, yet the projections we have, they have both landed fish and discards in them. My understanding is the selectivities for landed fish are very different than the selectivities for discards, and I think what we have been doing is summing the landed number and the discard number to come up with a total removals number, but it seems to me that's not appropriate in a discards-only fishery, because it ignores the differences in selectivities. It seems, to me, to come up with an OFL in these numbers, we need some discard-only runs that have zero landed fish and everything is in discards, and does that line of thought make sense to you? If Erik wants to weigh in, that would be fine.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, I think it does, and I think you're correct, but, again, Erik may want to address that. I believe the landings is what's available minus the dead discards is the landings, and so I do not believe there was a different selectivity selected, but I don't remember that the SSC discussed this particular point, but, Erik, maybe you can clarify that.

DR. WILLIAMS: Roy is absolutely correct. When we have a mini season, the landed catch has a very different selectivity from those that are discarded and we have not -- We have run some runs in-shop with just discards only, and so we're capable of doing that, but I just don't think we actually did any and put them in a report, and so, yes, Roy is correct that there's nothing on the record that shows a discard-only projection analysis.

DR. CRABTREE: But, in terms of us looking at the discarded fish and trying to judge if we're below the OFL or not, we would need discard-only projections in order to make those comparisons.

DR. WILLIAMS: That's correct.

DR. CRABTREE: It seems, to me, that that is something that we need to request from the Center, because I think, in some cases, we may be fairly close to getting the discards below the overfishing level, and so small changes could become important in terms of what the status of the stock is.

DR. DUVAL: So we'll tentatively put that down on the task list as a request for discard-only projections. Are there other questions for Marcel?

MS. BECKWITH: This is sort of along the same lines, but a bit broader. I know I listened to part of the discussion on how the ABC -- If it should be specified in total yield or landings, and I understand that the SSC came back and the recommendation was that it should be specified in total landings, but, if the council disagreed with that recommendation and we wanted the ABC in a different fashion, just landings, like we have on so many other species, are we able to move in that direction or are we bound by this SSC recommendation to have the SSC specified in total yield?

DR. REICHERT: That may be Monica, or maybe Roy could chime.

DR. CRABTREE: The ABC has to take into account the discards, and so I don't think, for example, you could take what they've given us and say, okay, it shows landed numbers of 18,000 fish and so we can land 18,000 fish. That's correct, but only if you can keep the number of dead discards at 35,000 fish. The trick is, if you want to be able to land that portion of the fish, you've got to do something to bring the discards down, and that, we have an assortment of things in the amendment to try and bring the discards down, and we will have to go through the analysis of how effective we think those are going to be and see where that leaves us.

DR. REICHERT: That's also one of the reasons the SSC recommended that research into the number of discards, to get a better estimate of the number of discards, as well as discard mortality, like looking at descending devices and also include how well a certain device or the best devices are being accepted within the fishing community, because that's important. Those should have high priority, in terms of research priorities.

DR. PONWITH: I agree that looking at those discards is going to be really important, and the descending devices, research into that can be important. There are a couple of extra steps, and that is, first of all, you need to know, is there a difference in discard mortality between fish that are simply released versus fish that are released using a given descending device, and you need to know that with enough scientific certainty to be able to actually mathematically credit the fleet for that delta, and so getting on top of understanding how these different descending devices work is good. Getting on top of, if we do encourage this or require it, what the compliance with that is, and then what that actual delta is, mathematically, would be what it would take to actually credit the industry for that. It's all doable. I've seen it done before in other regions, but there are a number of steps.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Anything else for Marcel?

DR. CRABTREE: I believe, in 2017, late 2017, and maybe Bonnie can -- I think the plan is that we will rerun some of these assessments, bringing in the calibrated recreational landings from the new mail survey, and is that approximately right, and so late next year? Since, in this fishery, almost all of the removals at this point are from recreational discards, and I suspect the vast majority are from the private vessels, it's reasonable to assume that that will have potentially a great impact on the outcome of the assessment when it's run, and it will potentially spill over into all of the analyses and things we're doing, and is that a fair assessment, would you say, Marcel?

DR. REICHERT: I would say that is a pretty fair assessment.

DR. CRABTREE: I think, as we move forward on red snapper, we need to keep in our minds that potentially these outcomes, these OFLs and all of this, could change quite a bit mid to late next year, and we may have to be ready to be pretty nimble to rethink and reanalyze where we are at that point.

MR. BOWEN: Roy, when you say great impact, that's a great negative impact?

DR. CRABTREE: I am not even going to go there, Zack. I don't know what it's going to mean.

MR. BOWEN: Well, I mean, I am just going by the --

DR. CRABTREE: If the effort estimates are doubled or tripled, that means that these discard estimates are actually double or triple what we think they are and have been higher for at least some time, but the key to it is how do they calibrate it and how long have they been high, and I don't know what that will mean in terms of the assessment, and I don't think we will know until we see the outcome of the calibration workshop and really until the model is rerun with the new numbers in it, but it's not going to give you the same output that it's giving you now, and things are going to change. I think that much we can count on.

DR. DUVAL: I think that's true for all those species.

MR. WAUGH: Just in terms of timing, Roy is right that we're starting that MRIP rerun, but that starts late in 2017. That won't be completed until 2018 and won't go to the SSC until April of 2018, at the earliest, and so you won't see it until June of 2018, and the track we're on with this red snapper amendment is to have that finished up so that the regulations are in place on January 1 of 2018, and so I think there's going to be a two-step process where we're going to have to get something in place and then respond to what comes out of that MRIP updated assessment.

DR. DUVAL: Anything else for Marcel? Any other questions? Thank you very much, Marcel, and I know you're going to be around the rest of the day today, and hopefully tomorrow as well. What I'm going to suggest is that we go ahead and take a ten-minute break, so that we can get loaded up for the next presentation.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. DUVAL: Let's come back to the table. I've been very generous on the ten minutes. As folks are coming back up to the table, I would just like to remind people, members of the public, if you can please sign in at the back of the room. Amber Von Harten, our Outreach Specialist, is back there. She's waving her hand. Our public comment this afternoon starts at 4:30. Kim Iverson is back there as well, and so these two staff members can help you sign in, so that we can get an accurate count of the members of the public attending the meeting. If you would like to provide public comment tonight, please sign up at the back as well. We have a kiosk where you can sign in electronically, and so thank you.

Our next agenda item is a presentation by Brendan Runde. Brendan is a student in Dr. Jeff Buckel's lab at North Carolina State University, and he is down here in Morehead City, at the Center for Marine Sciences and Technology, and Brendan is going to give us a presentation on some ongoing research that you've been working on in terms of the effectiveness of descending devices, specifically for deepwater grouper, and so I'm going to turn things over to Brendan, and this is Attachment 3 in your briefing book. Brendan, take it away.

MR. RUNDE: Thanks for the introduction, and thank you for the invitation to be here speaking to you. I want to point out that the presentation has evolved slightly since it was sent out, and so there will be a couple of differences. Nothing really substantive, but just an additional slide. There is also a video about halfway through in the PDF. In the attachment that was sent out, it just says "this is a video", and so, at that time, I would recommend viewing the monitor.

Again, my name is Brendan Runde. I'm a master's student at NC State University, in Jeff Buckel's lab, and I'm going to speak a little bit about using a descender device to increase survival of

deepwater groupers. I want to acknowledge the funding source for this study, which was the cooperative research program through NOAA. There were a variety of individuals and organizations that helped out with field work and preparations for this study, and they are acknowledged on the right.

This will be review for the vast majority of the individuals in the room, I suspect. There are a variety of reasons why reef fish might be discarded, ranging from size limits, bag limits, to seasonal closures and total fishery closures or moratoria. The general trend through time has been an increase in regulations, which has led to an associated increase in discards of reef fish.

There are several potential causes of injury when reef fish are caught and brought to the surface that might lead to mortality. One is exhaustion or fatigue, just by pulling against the hook and struggling, and one would be water column predators, either on the way up or, more likely, on the way back down, and then the third one that I will point out that is most pertinent to this talk is barotrauma, or pressure-related injury. On the right-hand side of the screen, you can see a small snowy grouper that has experienced stomach eversion, and so the gases in the abdominal cavity have expanded as a result of the pressure differential between the sea floor and the surface and have pushed the stomach out the mouth.

Immediate discard mortality in these fish is easy to determine if you use proxies like severe injury or floating, but delayed mortality is very difficult to determine, and better estimates are needed for U.S. Southeast reef fish, and so the three species that we studied with this work were snowy grouper, scamp, and speckled hind, shown on the left-hand side of the screen.

Because these fish live in deep water, sometimes upwards of 300 or 400 feet of water, they experience severe barotrauma when they are caught, and this leads to high discard mortality rates, often at or near 100 percent, and, in fact, some of the regulations put in place by the council reflect that assumption of 100 percent mortality. For example, there is currently no size limit for snowy grouper in the U.S. Southeast and so, for the recreational fishery, for example, that eight-and-a-half-inch snowy grouper that's shown in the upper left would be the entire limit, vessel limit, for the day, and all subsequent snowy grouper would be legally be required to be released.

Our question was can we increase survival of these fish when they're discarded by recompression using a descender device, and we decided that conventional tagging would not be effective for these fish. These are large apex predators, and there are typically only one or two of these species on a given hard-bottom structure or reef and so, in order to come up with a robust statistical conclusion using conventional tagging, we would have to have achieved a sample size much higher than possible to get enough recaptures to say something definitive.

What we did was we used acoustic transmitters. It's a VEMCO product, V13AP tags, and "AP" stands for acceleration and pressure, pressure being a proxy for depth, and so those tags have incorporated sensors, accelerometer and pressure sensors, that give us information on what that fish is doing, and so we were able to use those behavioral metrics as a proxy for fate determination. In other words, whether each individual fish survived or did not survive being captured and released.

Traditionally, acoustic transmitters would be implanted surgically into the abdominal cavity of teleost fish, but surgical implantation requires, of course, opening the abdominal cavity, which

would effectively vent the fish, and we would be unable to tease apart whether survival was a result of that venting or as a result of recompression, and so we chose to attach the transmitters externally. You can see, at the bottom-left of the screen, we're putting one of these V13AP tags through the dorsal musculature and using dart tags. That's a large speckled hind that I'm tagging in the bottom-left there. In addition, surgical implantation requires long deck time and anesthesia, and we chose to avoid both of those, because we were attempting to mimic normal fishing operations.

There was a little bit of discussion with the last presentation about different types of descender devices. We used the Seaqualizer tool that's shown in both photos, but it's pointed out in the left. It looks basically like a hand scale that you would see an angler using to weigh their catch. It's a black device with silver jaws that attach to the lower jaw of the fish to be released, and the interesting thing about the Seaqualizer is it has an internal pressure sensor that you can select which depth you would like that device to release the fish at, and so we used a Seaqualizer that you could set to 100 feet, 200 feet, or 300 feet, and our fish were released at 200 feet.

What happens is you attach the Seaqualizer to the fish and then you attach that rigging to a device that has a lot of weight on it. On the right, you can see we had to use three or four pounds of lead to pull that large speckled hind back to depth. After you drop the device off the side of the boat, it reaches the pre-appointed depth and the pressure that trips that Seaqualizer device is reached and the jaws of the device open and, in theory, the fish swims away and lives. Then you pull the whole rig back to the surface.

What I'm going to show you now is a very brief video, about thirty seconds, of descending a speckled hind using the Seaqualizer tool. There are some happy researchers on a nice beautiful day of field work, and that's a speckled hind. You can see the transmitter attached through the dorsum. Near the surface, the fish is not swimming very hard. It's not making very many movements. Then, as the device gets deeper, the fish appears to become resuscitated. When the jaws open, the fish swims away.

Another thing that has not been investigated, but I think is really important to note about the types of descender tools that attach to the jaw of the fish, is that you're pulling it down head first. These fish have been on the surface. They have an oxygen debt. You're pulling them down headfirst, and that's forcing fresh water over the gills, and it may be helping these fish overcome that oxygen debt, and that is in contrast to descender devices like an inverted milk crate or an inverted net that would not force oxygen over the gills, necessarily.

In order to track the movements of these fish, we moored several VT2W receivers at the bottom of the ocean using sacrificial ballast and SubSeaSonics acoustic releases, and so the acoustic release is attached to basically an anchor that we don't care about losing. On the right, you can see that large square piece of metal. That was a sacrificial ballast for that anchor.

We deploy the fish and we deploy the receivers with these acoustic releases. Then, when we're ready to retrieve them, we go back and signal the acoustic release. It separates from the ballast and then the float pulls it to the surface. As long as you're in the right place, you'll see the big orange float. You go over and pick it up, and then you have your equipment back and you can download the detections off of those receivers.

We deployed nineteen transmitters total between our three species in August of 2015, and we recovered our moorings in September of 2015. Over those forty-four days, we had accumulated over 60,000 detections of those nineteen fish. In order to come up with a survival estimate, we used a Kaplan–Meier survivorship procedure. With that procedure, each individual is considered one of the following. It's either at risk, or, in other words, it's still alive, it is censored on a day where data runs out or where we don't have enough data to make a fate evaluation, or it is a considered a mortality on whatever day we have that information for.

There are some individuals that pose problems based on the information that we were able to gather for them, and there is some uncertainty with these individuals about where we should place them, as far as fate determination, and I will get into that a little bit more here in a moment when I show you some examples of acoustic detection histories from some of these fish.

Here is an example, and I'm going to walk you through this plot here. On the X-axis, along the bottom, we have day, ranging from the beginning of the study, which was August 17 for this fish, and the point at which we recovered our moorings, which was September 30, and so this snowy grouper was detected for the entire forty-four days of the study. On the top, in blue, you have acceleration. You can see blips of acceleration, ranging up to four or five meters per second squared, that occurred throughout the entire study.

In the bottom, in black, we have depth in meters, and so you can see that this fish was moving, exhibiting changes in depth and blips in acceleration, throughout the entire forty-four days, and so we consider this fish definitively to have survived being captured and released.

On the other side of the coin, the plot I'm showing you now is from a scamp grouper. You can see there were a few initial detections and then, about twenty-four hours later, there was a single detection, both for acceleration and depth. What you can't see there is the spatial nature of these detections. The first few detections occurred on a receiver that was local to the release site, and the final detection that occurred twenty-four hours later was actually on a receiver that was about two nautical miles away. Given that spatial information, the most parsimonious explanation is that, for that final detection, that transmitter was probably in the stomach of a large predator or a scavenger, and so this fish, Scamp 8, we considered to be a discard mortality.

Fish like the one I'm showing you now is an example of one of those uncertainties that I spoke about, and so this fish was detected for about sixteen days, and it was doing what we might call grouper-like things when it was last detected, and so this fish we consider an emigration from the array. The ocean is a big place, and while these fish do exhibit high site fidelity, it is likely that at some point they will move away from that area, and so this fish appears to have moved out of the array after sixteen days, but it was alive when it moved away, and so, given that sixteen days is a pretty long period of time, in the scope of determining discard mortality, this particular fish, we feel, probably did survive the capture and release event.

Fish like Scamp 5 that I'm showing you now are really, really difficult to determine the fate of, because, at some point, the tag stopped moving. You can see the acceleration went to zero and the depth became constant. Now, it doesn't really look like depth, in black, is constant after September 21, but, when you notice the Y-axis scale, that's a relatively fine scale, and so those fluctuations of one to two meters -- Remember this is a pressure sensor, and so tides, currents, and waves can affect the pressure at the sea floor, and so that's actually what is going on there.

I'm sure you can notice the contrast between the fish changing depth when the transmitter was attached to it and then the constant depth after September 21. The question with these fish, where the tag stopped moving, is did the tag stop moving because the tag fell off, or did it stop moving because the fish is dead and is lying on the seafloor? Determining between those two fates is really, really crucial to the result of the study, and so we analyzed these data under a couple of different scenarios that I will get into.

This plot that I'm showing you here represents the detection histories for all nineteen of our transmitter-tagged fish. I spoke specifically already about Snowy Grouper 3 that has the longest detection history, the longest horizontal gray bar. That fish was detected for the full study. That's represented by an "F". We think that fish survived.

Scamp 8, I also spoke about. We think that was a predation mortality. It's represented by a "P", and then there are three fish that are represented by a "U", or unknown. For these fish, we had either zero detections or very few detections that didn't give us any information as to the fate of that fish. They may have immediately emigrated or the tag -- Probably the tag did not fall off, because we didn't have any flat-line detections either, and so, in theory, it could have been transmitter failure, although VEMCO tells us it's highly unlikely. For those fish, they were censored from the Kaplan-Meier analysis from the get-go. They were never at risk.

The other fish, there were seven fish represented by an "E" for emigration and seven represented by a "T" for the tag ceasing to move. Those fish are where it really gets interesting. The determination here has to be made at what day are we going to call an emigration. This fish has already survived being discarded and has now left the array, and so it's a survival, or, if it's before whatever our cutoff day is, we are going to say we don't have enough information and so we're going to censor that fish.

For the fish indicated by a "T", the tag stopping movement, if that occurred before the cutoff day, then we will determine or consider it to be a discard mortality through the most parsimonious explanation, but, if that tag stopped moving after our chosen cutoff day, then we will say it was probably tag shedding or a transmitter loss event and that fish survived.

The first cutoff day that we chose to use was two days and so we said, okay, any emigrations that happened after two days, they survived and then they left the array. Any tag loss that happened after two days, they survived and then lost their tag. Survivals, under this scenario, are indicated in green. Discard mortalities, or mortality in this case, single, is indicated in red, and then the three unknowns, which will always be unknowns, are shown in blue.

Under this scenario, the Kaplan-Meier procedure, it estimates survival at 94 percent. Under the four-day cutoff scenario, you can see one more discard mortality is predicted by that model and three more emigrations or censorships are predicted by that model, but, still, survival is at 88 percent. When you move to six days, which is extreme, in fact, in the scope of many discard mortality studies where there is such a cutoff, six days would be quite a long cutoff.

We see five discard mortalities because of the tag ceasing to move, and then we see several more censorships, but still survival is at 63 percent. I want to remind you that, for these species, the

assumed discard mortality is currently 100 percent, and so even 63 percent is a huge, huge improvement that seems to be able to be achieved through the use of this descender device.

Here is the Kaplan-Meier survival with confidence intervals for days one through 6, and so you can see it stays at 95 percent for the first three days and then, as we become more conservative, we see that the survival decreases and the confidence intervals widen significantly, but we still have survival of substantially more than zero.

In conclusion, the use of the Seaqualizer tool for these species in this environment does appear to promote survival. As I'm sure you're all aware, the management implications of this could be enormous, and gear requirements in the regulations are not unprecedented. For example, circle hooks, de-hooking tools, and venting tools have all been regulated for in the past, and so this would not be so much of a huge leap if it were incorporated into the regulations.

Future work with this study, we do hope to improve on this study. We're putting it in a Saltonstall-Kennedy grant proposal, and a shameless plug for that, if anyone here reviews for S-K, but we hope to have more transmitters and put out a larger array. That would help us to reduce the possibility of emigration, if we had a larger array covering more ground. We also want to address that tag shedding versus discard mortality, and we've come up with two ways to do that. One thing that we want to do, if we get funding for the next step of this study, would be to use a couple of deceased grouper and attach a tag to them. These are known dead fish, and then descend those fish and observe what sort of acoustic information we get from a known dead fish. What does a scavenging event look like? That could help us pick apart what is a tag shedding and what's a discard mortality.

The other thing that I am unaware of any research groups doing with external attachment of acoustic transmitters is to double-tag a couple of fish, and that is a technique that is frequently used in the world of conventional tagging. You double-tag a fish and then, if you get it back with only one of those tags, you know that one of those tags was lost, and that can help to estimate the tag shedding rate, but, to my knowledge, no one has done that with acoustic transmitters, because very few research groups attach transmitters externally. What I would like to do is take a couple of grouper and put a transmitter on each side. Then, if we get detections from one of those transmitters that flat lines, stays at the bottom and shows no acceleration, but the other one continues to move and do things that look like a grouper, then we can say that was definitively a tag loss, since the other one is still moving.

On the other side of the coin, if both stop moving at once, then the parsimonious explanation is that that grouper did suffer a mortality, and so those are the future directions with this work. At this point, I think I would be happy to take any questions that you might have or any comments.

MR. BREWER: One question and then a comment. How much do these tags cost, the transmitters?

MR. RUNDE: The transmitters are \$775 apiece.

MR. BREWER: So they're at least cheaper than satellite tags.

MR. RUNDE: They're substantially cheaper than PSAT tags, and usually PSAT tags have a pretty large spade or shovel that has to be barbed that has to be put into the fish, and so I think these are less invasive than satellite tags as well.

MR. BREWER: Also, if you do get additional funding, and I certainly do hope that you do, something that might be of most benefit to us and what we're having to deal with here would be red snapper and getting some information on release mortality for red snapper. It's a big problem.

MR. RUNDE: Thank you.

MR. HAYMANS: Through FishSmart and others, I guess one of the recommendations is, if you can't put them back on the bottom, at least get them back to two atmospheres, and so your study had them back to 200 feet.

MR. RUNDE: That's right.

MR. HAYMANS: That was for some fish caught at 300, and so perhaps you could look at shallower release depths, because I know that's one of the complaints for anglers, is the time to take them back to where they're caught from or depth.

MR. RUNDE: Thanks for the comment. It's our thought and our observation that once you get a barotraumatized fish down even a few feet, it's that first sort of level that's most crucial to helping them swim back down, and that's related to Boyle's Law of gas expansion. I think it might be interesting to look at a shallower release depth. They do make Seaqualizer tools that release at fifty feet, for example, and so it's my personal belief, and this has not been evaluated, but it's my personal belief that if we did descend those fish to fifty feet that they would have the same fate as if we released them to 200 feet.

MR. BELL: Doug actually jumped on that part. I was going to say basically in the first thirty-three feet you double the pressure and sixty-six is two more, but most recompression tables that we use, sixty feet is where you go. If you can release the fish earlier and he can go on down himself, that's great. Then you've got less chance of injury, maybe, with fighting against the device.

Also, Dr. Ponwith mentioned earlier that these are actually used in California maybe, or on the west coast somewhere, perhaps in like the rockfish fishery, but, in your research, your literature review going into this, did you come across things that they've done out there? Where I was going with this is we mentioned that for us to basically prescribe or suggest that these be used, we would like to have a real good, solid foundation in the science to base that on, but is there a lot more that we need to do that hasn't already been done, maybe? Did you get into the literature, I guess, in terms of what has been done?

MR. RUNDE: A couple of things to address there, and thanks for the questions. On the west coast, there is a group -- Nick Wegner is a guy on the west coast, in the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, who has done a lot of work, in fact pretty much the exact same study, with several species of Pacific rockfish. It's the same tag attachment method. That's where we got the attachment method, and he was acknowledged at the beginning of the talk.

There is not any literature actually yet for those studies. They are struggling as well with fate assignment, and so they were uncomfortable putting anything out as of yet, but he does things as extreme as taking those \$775 transmitters and just throwing them off the side of the boat in the middle of his array to see what a transmitter laying on the deck looks like, but we're a little more -- I don't know if "frugal" is the right word, but hesitant in our poor lab with no money to throw \$775 off the side of the boat, but there is some literature with some species using external attachment of transmitters for determining discard mortality, but that that literature does not encompass any serranids, any sea bass, including groupers, at this time.

Because of differences in physiology and behavior between families of fish, I think this work fills a major gap, and if we can do it again and do the things that I've suggested we would like to do in the future with more funding, then I think it could be really a cornerstone of the body of literature that refers to using descender devices, but, for this species, no, but I will say, in the Gulf of Mexico, there has been a lot of work on red snapper. If you believe their results apply to the red snapper stocks in the Southeast, then that might be something the council should take a look at.

MR. BROWN: Brendan, I would like to get together with you sometime, when we have a break or something, but I've been tagging red snapper and putting a South Carolina tag in them, and I've got a descending device, the same one, the Seaqualizer, and I've got a GoPro on my line, so that when we release them -- It goes down and shows them after the release and them swimming off. We were trying to set up a -- I've been talking to Todd Kellison and a couple of other people about how to set up a guideline for the tagging of them and releasing them, as far as whether to vent them or not to vent them, and to mix it up, so all the tags have information of exactly how we release the fish. I am talking about the shallow depth too and not what you're doing, a hundred foot or something, and some of the fish we will descend and some we won't, but we're tagging all of them and trying to get them back over.

MR. RUNDE: A question for you. When you're tagging them, are you tagging them abdominally or with internal transmitters?

MR. BROWN: No, we're doing the same thing you did, right in the back, but it's not a transmitter. It's just a yellow tag.

MR. BELL: They're dart tags.

MR. RUNDE: Okay, and I'm sorry, but was that a comment or a question?

MR. BROWN: Well, my question for you is, when you were descending the fish, did you vent any of them, or did you send them down just whole?

MR. RUNDE: No, we did not vent any fish. There was no other attempt to increase the survival. It was just descended.

MR. CONKLIN: Did you guys use the Seaqualizer that goes down to 150 feet or the one that goes to I think 300?

MR. RUNDE: Thanks for the question. It was the deepwater one that you can set to 100 feet, 200 feet, or 300 feet, and we set it to 200.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay. I'm in the commercial fishery, and my boats have been using them for a while, and we're able to put it on our gear and descend the fish and still re-bait and send it down at the same time, and we have tagged a couple of fish with the state recreational tags, but it would be interesting to see if we ever get any recoveries, but I think it works great, and I hope that sooner rather than later we can come to a decision on when we can actually validate this and have it come before the SSC and see if it's something we can mandate.

DR. CRABTREE: Thanks for being here, Brendan. This is something that we've talked a lot about, and I've thought quite a bit about it. I guess out on the west coast they do require the use of descending devices with rockfish, but they're almost always in extremely deep water, and the complicating thing, it seems to me, with something like red snapper is I suspect a great many of the discards are actually in fairly shallow water, and there's got to be some point at which using a descending device does more harm than good.

If you catch a fish in thirty feet of water, I suspect clipping this thing on it and sending it down with it probably does more harm to the fish by increasing handling time than the benefit is, and so the trouble is, if we were going to mandate this, how do you figure out -- How do you deal with that? We went through this with venting, because there are instances where you catch a fish in shallow water that poking a hole in it probably does more harm than it does good, and that's where it gets complicated in trying to mandate this, and I wonder if you have any thoughts about how that might play out.

MR. RUNDE: Thank you for the question. I think it's an important point. I do not believe that this particular descender device has the possibility to physically damage any of these fish, but, as far as handling time, that could be where you run into problems, and so we occasionally in red snapper, when we're doing other research with hook and line and we have descender devices onboard, frequently what we will do is try and give the fish a chance to swim down on their own.

Then, if they don't -- Again, we're researchers, and, as you pointed out, it's impossible to observe or mandate how fishermen handle these fish that they're releasing, but what we do is, if they are unable to swim down, we have the fish still in the water and we attach the jaws of the device to the fish and then drop it down.

I think that's the ideal scenario, but I'm sure what happens a lot is, well, we're being good stewards of the resource and we're going to descend this fish, but it's a thirty-pound red snapper and let's bring it onboard and take a picture. Then you're back with white marlin and sailfish, bringing them onboard, and that might be pretty harmful, but, as far as the device itself damaging the fish, I don't think so.

DR. CRABTREE: I agree with you that the way to go might be to see if the fish can swim down on its own. Then, if it can't, use the descending device, but then that means there is an element of angler discretion involved in that.

MR. RUNDE: As always.

DR. LANEY: I'm not on the committee, but, Brendan, I was wondering about the possibility of distance to cover as being another variable that should be considered when you're setting your

release depth. For some of these reef-dwelling, more sedentary fishes, at least fishes that we think have a home range and territory, it seems that you could minimize the likelihood of a predation event upon release if you set the release depth deeper, closer to cover, depending on what the depth of the reef is over which you're fishing, and so that's something to think about. I don't know if that -- Your sample size is relatively small, and I don't know that you have enough of a dataset yet to be able to say if that makes a difference or not, but do you know if anybody else has considered that when they were doing these sorts of studies?

MR. RUNDE: Thanks for the question. Distance to cover, I don't know if anyone has considered it. I know there are some descender devices that do release fish at the bottom. The mechanism is when it hits the bottom it opens, but I would say that, if there is a predator that's going to go after a large grouper, and I didn't get into this, but we only tagged grouper over 350 millimeters, which isn't huge, but it's not small either.

If there is a predator that's going to go after one of these fish on the way down, it's not like the fish that you're releasing is invisible when it's attached to the device, and it wouldn't be a great mental leap to think of a large shark or wahoo chasing a fish even if it's still attached to the descender device. That bad boy is not going to care about your three pounds of lead and your GoPro. That fish is gone either way, whether it's released at 200 or right on the rocks. I think it's something to think about, but I also think, because of the scarcity of predators that are capable of devouring one of these large groupers, I'm not sure that there would be a robust way to document any effect there.

MR. BOWEN: Great presentation, Brendan. A couple of questions. You just had nineteen total samples?

MR. RUNDE: Nineteen total fish tagged, yes.

MR. BOWEN: With three different species, were they all caught together? Were they cohabitating?

MR. RUNDE: In some areas, yes, and this was actually -- I didn't get into this, but we were fishing at the Snowy Wreck Marine Protected Area, which allowed us to catch -- Again, this is personal opinion, but I think the density of groupers, especially these species, is probably higher inside that MPA than elsewhere, which is why we went there to do this, so that we could accomplish our intended sample size in a two-day fishing event, but we did see them cohabitate, particularly speckled hind and snowy grouper. We also caught scamps mixed in with them, but then there was one cluster of scamps where we caught like four in a small area and we didn't catch any of either of the other species in that other area, but there were areas where we had all three.

MR. BOWEN: You were in 300 feet?

MR. RUNDE: It was a range. It was a range between about 250 and 450. Most of them were over 300 feet of depth, yes.

MR. BOWEN: The video evidence that you have when it's descending, which is great video, by the way, but do you have any video evidence of the bottom?

MR. RUNDE: Unfortunately not. We dropped it down to beyond the point where we knew it would release and then we just hauled it back up, and we had the cameras pointing upwards, because you lose so much light down there. Unless you were to attach some sort of waterproof light pointed downwards, you wouldn't have a good view of that fish, and so we wanted to have the silhouette of the fish against the surface to see whether it swam away, and so, unfortunately, we don't have any footage of the bottom down there, but there are some areas that have been multibeamed by the Southeast Fishery Independent Survey, and so there is data, as far as relief of the bottom, if that's what you're interested in.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: All right. Doug has indicated that he is good on his question, and so thank you, Brendan, for being here. We really appreciate it, and it sounds like maybe some council members might have some questions at the break. I don't know how long you were planning on being around, but definitely we appreciate you being here.

MR. RUNDE: Thanks for having me.

DR. DUVAL: Chris had mentioned SSC review of this, and I have to apologize. Really, the way that this should work is that a presentation would come before the SSC first. This is an area of ongoing research, but I had been having some conversations with Dr. Buckel about his lab's ongoing research into barotrauma, and it just so happened to work out, the convenience of location and everything else, that we were able to get this presentation on the agenda, and so this would require any SSC review before we could do it, and, as Brendan has indicated, there is still other steps in this research that they plan to pursue, and so I just wanted to let folks know about that. All right. Thank you very much, and we will go ahead and move on to our next agenda item.

One of the requests from our last meeting was looking at red grouper discards from the commercial discard logbook data, and I am inclined to perhaps hold off on this until the next meeting, although we won't -- The red grouper standard assessment is going on right now. The SSC will review that in April, which means that we would see that in June, and I know that there have been some questions about red grouper discards and the size of those discards.

Size information is not captured in the discard logbook forms that fishermen fill out. I think one of the pieces of information is why was the fish discarded. Is it because it was undersized or because you were over a trip limit, due to regulation, or some other reason? All we have in this presentation is just numbers of discards. There is no other identifying information that might let us know as to whether or not those fish were discarded due to size or some other regulation.

In the interest of time, I was going to recommend that we kind of hold off on that until we receive the results of SEDAR 53, which is the red grouper update, and I was going to see if perhaps I could talk with Bonnie. I didn't know if we might be able to update that to include disposition of fish, the information in that presentation on red grouper discards, because that is not currently included. I don't know how -- I understand that that information is not always filled out in the discard logbook forms, but I think it might be more helpful if we were able to get that information on the disposition of the fish. I don't think that discard presentation actually includes -- It doesn't actually include the reason for discarding.

MR. HAYMANS: I would add, when you look at that table that's presented there, there seems to be at least two major shifts in discards, and perhaps we could look at a regulatory analysis during those times, to see if there was a reason why.

DR. DUVAL: That's a good idea, how did the regulations change, and so, if everyone is okay with that, maybe we can work with Bonnie to perhaps get a little bit more information that would be more useful when we have our conversation about the results of the red grouper standard assessment in June. You guys just had a break and so I know everybody has got to be awake. Is that okay? Okay. I am not seeing any dissention, and so that's the way we'll proceed.

The next item on our agenda then is Snapper Grouper Amendment 41, mutton snapper, and we are slated to take final action on this during this meeting, and, Myra, are you going to be working from the --

MS. BROUWER: This should be Attachment 5a, I believe, in your briefing book. I wanted to just make a correction on the record. Mike Errigo pointed out that the P* for golden tilefish is indeed 30 percent and not 35 percent. That was the P* that was used in the update, and so I just wanted to clarify that for the record. Then let me try to open this up.

DR. DUVAL: While Myra is doing that, we don't have a decision document for this amendment. We're simply going to walk through the amendment document itself. We did receive the codified text a little bit late, and so I just want to make sure that folks have had a chance to look at that.

MS. BROUWER: My Word document is not cooperating with me, and so I'm going to use the PDF, which I mentioned is Attachment 5a in your briefing book. There has been very few changes since you last saw this in September. I did not prepare a decision document because of that. There is only a couple of housekeeping sort of items that we need to do. There has been some suggested edits to -- I apologize that I'm having to scroll through this.

The first change is the minimum size limit, Action 5. We needed to clarify that that minimum size limit is being changed for both the commercial and the recreational sectors, and so we had to add some language to make that clear. Even though the analyses reflected that the minimum size limit would be changing for both sectors, we needed to make that change to the title of action and then add that language in the alternatives, and so I would just simply need a motion to accept these changes.

Before you do that, let me tell you about some more editorial changes, so perhaps one motion can just capture all of them instead of having to do it sort of piecemeal. The other change had to do with the no-action alternative in Action 6. Recall that you've already given us editorial license to make edits to no-action alternatives, to make sure that those are clear for regulatory purposes and such.

The regulations writers in the region had suggested different language than what we had there, and so what you can see there on your screen for Alternative 1 under Action 6, which is to designate the spawning months, we are suggesting that it reads "seasonal harvest limitations apply to the commercial sector during mutton snapper spawning in May and June each year.

Recall that there are some harvest restrictions for the commercial sector only during those two months, but the regulations don't really specify that those two months are indeed the spawning months for mutton snapper, and so there was a little bit of a gray area there, and so we're also adding that there are no comparable seasonal restrictions during May and June that apply to the recreational sector, and I think that just makes everybody happy, and it makes things clearer for the codified text.

The last change was in Action 8, which is the one that would modify the commercial trip limit in the South Atlantic region. Again, a change to the no-action alternative, to make it clear that there is no possession or trip limit for the commercial sector in the South Atlantic from January through April and July through December, instead of saying from July through April. That just makes it clear that there are those two months, May and June, during which there are some commercial restrictions.

Then the other thing that we had not added, and, after talking with FWC -- Recall that the FWC has issued compatible regulations that will become effective on January 1, 2017. To make the regulations the same as those being put in place by Florida, we needed to add this little bit of language here to the Preferred Alternative 3 and the sub-alternatives that the trip limit during the spawning months would be a certain number of fish per person or that same number of fish per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and that is also reflective of how the regulations currently are in place. The reason that was put in there was to put a cap on multiday trips, of which my understanding is there are very few taking place anyway, but, again, for consistency, we needed to make these editorial changes, and so if you would like to now make a motion to adopt all of these, then I can tell you a little bit more about what else changed in the amendment.

MR. HAYMANS: A question before that, if I could. The per person and per vessel, those are -- You're going to select both of those. That's why the more restrictive or whichever is more restrictive statement, right?

MS. BROUWER: I'm sorry, Doug, but I didn't follow that.

MR. HAYMANS: In Preferred Alternative 3, we're going to select -- Our preferred is five fish per person per day. That's our current preferred, right, or it's going to be per trip, whichever is more restrictive, but whichever is more restrictive to what?

MS. BROUWER: Basically, it's the same thing. It's five per person per day or five per person per trip, and so it's a personal limit.

MR. HAYMANS: That's added to. I'm sorry. I was reading that as a replacement to that language. I apologize.

MS. BROUWER: No, and it's just to clarify that it would still be a per-person limit per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

DR. DUVAL: Chris, did you have a question or were you going to make a motion?

MR. CONKLIN: I was going to make a motion.

DR. DUVAL: Are there any other questions for Myra before I let Chris make a motion? Have at it.

MR. CONKLIN: **I make a motion that we adopt the IPT-suggested edits in Action 5 and Action 8.**

DR. DUVAL: **And 6 as well.** Is there a second to that motion? Second by Anna. The motion reads to accept the IPT-suggested edits to Actions 5, 6, and 8 in Amendment 41. Any discussion? **Any opposition? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MS. BROUWER: Besides those, what has changed from what you saw in September is we added some information for the effects of the increase in a minimum size limit for the commercial sector under Action 8. That was not included in the version that you saw in September, but, as you know, the commercial sector is catching mutton snapper that are well above that minimum size limit, and so no effects are expected there. The reductions in harvest are extremely small, and, again, I apologize for having to scroll like this. I am trying to get to the tables that show this.

Here is the percent decreases in commercial landings for the trip limits that are proposed. For the regular season, at the 500-pound trip limit, you're looking at a 3.7 percent decrease in commercial landings. I believe these are figures that you may have seen in September, but I'm not quite sure. These are numbers per person per day and per vessel per day. There is a small percentage of vessels that are harvesting above that ten per person per day, but it's a very small percentage.

Then here is the projected percent decrease in commercial landings for the trip limit proposed during the spawning months. For your April through June preferred, the five fish per person per day would translate to a decrease of 13.6 percent in commercial landings.

Other very small revisions that we did had to do with the economic analysis for the bag limit change, and that was just a correction. The consumer surplus values that were included in the version that you saw in September needed to be adjusted, because we used a different baseline to make those calculations, and it was a very small difference between the baseline that was used, which was based on average landings from 2010 through 2014, versus the baseline that was used for the other analyses in the amendment, which came from the projected landings in the decision tool that is part of this amendment, and so that correction was made. It's very minor, but I wanted to make sure that I mentioned it on the record, and I believe that takes care of all of the changes.

We are finalizing. We're editing and putting the final touches on the amendment and finishing out the appendices. The bycatch practicability analysis is being finished up and all the economic analyses that are done at the very end, when the amendment is getting ready for submission. At this point, if you have any other questions or things you want to clarify, I would be happy to do that.

DR. DUVAL: Any other questions or clarifications for Myra? If not, then we would need our usual lengthy, complicated motion to approve for formal review and deem the codified text and allow for editorial license and all that good stuff. I will let Myra get that up there.

MR. DIAZ: I just wanted to let you know that the Gulf Council is also working through a framework amendment right now, and we're looking at a host of management options in that framework amendment, and we will be bringing this up again at our January meeting. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Great. Thank you.

MS. BURGESS: While Myra is putting this up, I just want to thank her and council staff for working with FWC in putting these regulations together. As she mentioned, our regulations will become effective January 1, 2017, and we look forward to having consistent regulations between state and federal waters in the Keys for mutton snapper.

DR. DUVAL: I'm sure everybody looks forward to that, yes. Anything else?

MR. CONKLIN: Just refresh my memory. The state waters, what did you guys do in there, as far as those areas where people were fishing real hard?

MS. BURGESS: Are you referring to Western Dry Rocks?

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and I think we got that in a presentation, and there was another area in state waters.

MS. BURGESS: Yes, there was some interest, and we had a request for a special management action at Western Dry Rocks. The commission has indicated an interest to further research the use of that area by both people and fish species, and so we'll be continuing to understand that area better and understand how people use that area.

DR. DUVAL: Anything else? If not, then I would entertain a motion from the committee that's up on the screen.

MR. HAYMANS: **Madam Chair, I would move that we approve Amendment 41 for formal review and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate and give the IPT editorial license to make changes to the amendment and give the Council Chair license to re-deem the codified text.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Doug and second by Ben. Any further discussion? **Is there any opposition? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** Thank you all very much. Then we're going to move forward with the next agenda item, and this is an Annual Review of the Vision Blueprint, and Amber is going to take us through that. This is Attachment 6 in your briefing book.

MS. VON HARTEN: Okay. As you recall, part of the vision blueprint was to establish an evaluation plan, and so this presentation is going to outline the year one, kind of like a progress report, to talk about the different actions that you all have taken in this first year of the vision blueprint to actually implementing some of the priority action items that you identified for 2016 and 2017.

On November 21, we had two webinars as part of the public outreach for the evaluation plan that Myra and I presented, and we had a handful of people attend the webinars, on each one, and we

weren't directly asking for public input at this point for this year-one evaluation. This was kind of just a progress report.

As you all recall, you all approved the vision blueprint in December of 2015, and so a year ago, and this is going to serve as this living document to help guide future management of the fishery. This first iteration of the blueprint covers the years from 2016 to 2020. The objectives of the first year evaluation review is to look at the management actions and make sure that they're achieving the vision that you all have outlined. It's to continue stakeholder engagement in the process and also allow any new council members to become familiar with the blueprint.

We will go through each of the goals that are in the blueprint. We'll start with science, and I will be covering the different priority action items that you all identified for 2016 and 2017 under each goal and how we've been addressing those.

For science, there was a priority objective for addressing data collection, and one of the actions was to support efforts to create uniform, efficient reporting mechanisms. As you all are very much aware, you've been working on the for-hire reporting amendment and also the pilot project for electronic reporting for charter vessels.

The next two items talk about validating data collection programs and identifying sampling resources to support data programs. Those are items that we're going to need additional guidance from the council on, and you will see these throughout the presentation, these items denoted with an asterisk that we're not really sure how you all want to address those or maybe if there are already some actions that are going on that you all qualify would meet these priority actions, and so we're going to need some guidance on those.

The next priority objective was dealing with cooperative research and citizen science opportunities. One of the actions discussed was using fishing vessels and captains as alternative data collection platforms. Again, you all have been working on the pilot project and the charter vessels participating in that pilot as well as cooperative research on red snapper with some of the fishermen in the region.

Also, looking at sources of funding for cooperative research and other surveys, and so Chip has been working on these research planning meetings for the spawning SMZs that we've had in each state and also identifying different funding opportunities through NOAA and other sources to support different research and monitoring needs in the region.

Then the next action was improving partnerships between researchers and fishermen, and we felt that the citizen science initiative has really met a lot of those needs and, in particular, the January 2016 workshop, which brought together over fifty-five fishermen and scientists and managers to talk about the development of that program.

The last action under this objective was supporting partnerships to enhance habitat and ecosystem mapping, and this is some of what Roger has been working on, development of the South Atlantic Regional Mapping Strategy for the FEP II, integrating all the different map products that we have and also planning for this test of mapping and monitoring capabilities with future SEAMAP and MARMAP cruises.

We also had hot topics that you all identified at your October 2015 visioning workshop, in addition to the priority objectives, one of which was the recreational fishing stamp and permit idea. That is an action that's being included in Snapper Grouper Amendment 43. The next two were things that we need more guidance on, and that includes improvements to existing logbook programs as well as working with management partners to secure long-term funding for MARMAP.

Increasing bycatch and discard reporting, again, those are actions in Amendment 43 that would address this as well as the grant proposals that Gregg spoke about yesterday that were submitted on electronic reporting that would address this type of action.

Moving on to management, if you recall, we did not have you all prioritize the actions under the management goal, because you all did that through your October workshop, and we did the subsequent survey at the December council meeting that helped kind of narrow down the specific management action items that you all would want to focus on in any upcoming amendments in 2016.

Some of the activities that have arisen out of the management actions include the vision blueprint amendments as well as Amendment 43 and the Regulatory Amendment 26, which is addressing some of the recreational action items in the blueprint. Obviously, they're going to be reconsidering the aggregate bag limits, the shallow-water grouper closure, possibly modifying the minimum size limit for black sea bass, and removal of recreational minimum size limits for deepwater species, and I know you all are going to be discussing those next. Then there's Regulatory Amendment 27, which is going to be addressing commercial action items, looking at split seasons for deepwater species, trip limits and step-downs, and, again, the shallow-water grouper closure and possible fishing year changes for things like golden tilefish.

Then Amendment 43, which Chip will be walking you through later, has a whole host of actions that would address several of the priority objectives in the blueprint that would address access to the fishery, retention, as well as reducing discards.

For communication, we've got a good head start on a lot of these priority action items. One of the objectives was a better understanding of fisheries science, and one of the action items was to develop more recreational angler education programs, particularly about reducing discards, and, of course, our I&E AP and the Snapper Grouper AP recently provided some input on these types of outreach materials through the actions in Amendment 43 at their recent AP meetings.

One of the ones that we need some more guidance on is some kind of training for new AP members. We haven't had any real guidance on how that needs to happen. Also, continuing support of the Marine Resource Education Program Southeast, and council staff is still heavily involved with that program. They serve on the steering committee and also routinely provides curriculum and presentations at the workshops.

Also, expanding the use of educational webinars, and that's something that we're trying to plan for in 2017, and both the I&E and the council's I&E Committee have provided input on how to address those in 2017, and so we'll be planning some of that. Also, the continuation of Q&A webinars with council staff prior to public hearings and scoping meetings. We had five Q&A webinars that were held in conjunction with those hearings and scoping meetings in 2016.

Incorporating a real-time calendar that displays current fishery closures for each sector, we do have a fishing season calendar as well as a page that lists closures on our website, but we'll continue to work on developing a real-time calendar in 2017.

A couple of the other items that we needed additional guidance on were working with NOAA and the Regional Office to provide information about historical closure dates and advance notification of ACL monitoring. That was kind of coming from making sure that fishermen had more advance notice of when a fishery might close. Also, looking at using more remote listening stations. That's an approach that we used in 2015 and 2016 for some snapper-grouper-related items in relation to hogfish and mutton snapper.

Also, support for more informal port meetings that were used during the visioning process, and the I&E AP and Committee has provided input on those approaches for planning for 2017. Also, diversifying the locations of in-person meetings, and we've been doing that and trying to tailor the meetings based on the amendments that are going out, and council members attend each of these meetings, and so we felt that that was giving the public an opportunity to interact with council members one-on-one.

Use of direct mailings to specifically target permit holders, we need a little bit of additional guidance on how to do that and specifically what would warrant that type of targeted communication strategy. Using web-based tools and other technology for public comment, as you all know, we developed the new public comment approach using the online comment forms this year, and that seems to be working pretty well.

Then also developing one-page fishery management resources for different topics and different sectors, and we continue to provide those summaries and regulations that are available on our website for snapper grouper and also coastal migratory pelagics. We just recently worked with Jessica's staff at FWC on developing a rack card on the bringing fillets back from the Bahamas, and then Chip and I have been working on a booklet that would summarize commercial black sea bass pot fishery regulations to support the implementation of Regulatory Amendment 16.

Then last, but not least, governance is the final goal in the blueprint, and there is a few items in here that need to be provided additional guidance, and that's strengthening relationships with existing management partners. One thing that we have worked on in 2016 was identifying non-traditional partnerships and sources of funding to support different types of science and research, and so we have our contract with Harbor Lights, which is the software company that's working with Mike Errigo on the charter boat ER pilot. We're also working with Pew and Dr. Will Heyman on some of the spawning SMZ research and then also working with Sea Grant to support travel of fishermen to attend the Citizen Science Workshop.

The next action was alternative methods for collecting public input. As I mentioned, we have this new web-based method. We're using the online comment forms, and we're also working on development of an online fishermen's forum for permit holders that may be implemented in 2017.

The last is one of the hot-topic items, which was to provide information to stakeholders in a timely and appropriate format about recent or proposed management actions, and so we've been using the story maps at the conclusion of every council meeting as well as prior to public hearings. It's kind of a new tool to get information out about current management actions by the council.

I also just wanted to highlight the Citizen Science initiatives. Obviously, a lot of what's been happening with citizen science addresses many things in the blueprint, the workshop, and we have our kickstarter project idea that's kind of been floated around over there and also some of the spawning special management zone research and monitoring that's been going on.

A progress summary is, for the science goal, nine of the thirteen items have been initiated for management. We have three amendments that are addressing several actions and objectives from the blueprint. For communication, ten of the thirteen priority items have been addressed, and then, for governance, three of the four, and these are for the 2016/2017 priority action items, and so we still need some guidance on those ones that I highlighted with the asterisk. If you have any questions, we will take those now.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Amber. I think it's actually pretty amazing how much we have been able to do during this past year, and I give staff huge props for this, particularly the communication items. Those are all staff -- Staff handles all of those and many of the governance things. Then, moving forward on trying to address the science priorities, in terms of being creative about looking for other funding sources and things like that, and so I really want to give you guys a huge shout-out for everything that you've done to try to keep us on track in terms of moving forward on the vision blueprint.

I would like to entertain any input from the committee with regard to some of the items that Amber had flagged, in terms of additional input, those asterisked items, if folks have thoughts on those. I don't know if maybe we can go back to the beginning and just kind of quickly see if anybody has any off-the-top-of-their-head types of suggestions.

MS. VON HARTEN: Also, just a reminder that the next step in the evaluation process for the blueprint will be in 2018, and that will be a more formal review that we will do formal public input opportunities for that, and so just keep that in mind.

DR. DUVAL: Can you go back to like the data collection slide that had the -- There we go. I think if anyone has any thoughts on the priority action to validate data collection programs or identify sampling resources -- I think for the latter, for the sampling resources needed to support data programs, we were trying to -- I think the idea was to try to be a little bit more creative about how we could bring more resources, in terms of funding, to allow for adequate surveys to help inform our stock assessments and our management.

I know that, myself, I have reached out to the Mid-Atlantic Council and their Chair, and we crafted a letter that was sent to both Dr. Ponwith and Dr. Bill Carp at the time. He has since retired, but just highlighting the need for a comprehensive deepwater species survey throughout the Atlantic coast, and I think trying to point out how this ties in with many of the policy initiatives that NOAA Fisheries has issued over the last year of ecosystem-based fishery management and climate change and things like that. This is an ideal way. That initiation of a comprehensive deepwater survey would be an ideal way to tie many of those priority items within those policies together.

MR. BROWN: I was just thinking through what I was talking about earlier with the validation on the tagging programs, as far as being able to, whenever you tag something, being able to tell the

survival rate and whether that would be incorporated with citizen science somehow and we could create something that would be incorporated in there for that.

MR. BELL: Just starting with those two, I'm just trying to figure out sort of our role, because data validation is occurring in things already that pertain to us, but we can't necessarily make that happen. I don't know if we have sort of a list or a prioritized sense of what things we would like to see happen, and then some of this is kind of coordination, which is probably beyond our capability to try to bring resources and needs together. We can simplify identify things and maybe prioritize them, from our standpoint, but making it happen, that may be kind of beyond our capability, but we can certainly, I guess, have a sense of what things we consider priority and put that out there.

DR. DUVAL: The SSC reviews this annually, but we do have an annual research priorities document, and so that is very useful, I think, to Bonnie's staff, in terms of identifying priorities for the Cooperative Research Program, for MARFIN, S-K, for Bonnie's staff as well, and so I think if there is an area of emerging research, such as utility of descending devices to improve or to address barotrauma in species, and understanding that we might want to see some validation of those studies for potential use in management, I think those are the kinds of things that we can identify with regard to that and get those in the research plan and communicate those to the SSC.

MR. BELL: That would be sort of a mechanism then, because I was trying not to create work for staff in doing things, because some of that would kind of go beyond our capability, but identify and prioritize, and maybe that's the place to put them, in that research needs.

DR. PONWITH: Our Chair has expressed it really well. Understanding what this council's views are on science they need to do a better job of what they're charged to do is really valuable for us in setting our own priorities for science, and probably the best way to put it is what management measure are you contemplating? Rather than dictating go do this science, describe to us the management measure you are contemplating, and that gives us the feel for what the ultimate purpose is, and then it gives us more breadth, in terms of deciding what science actually contributes to that objective the most precisely.

If the idea is we would like to reduce discard mortality or explore regulations that reduce discard mortality via descending devices, science that supports that is a high priority, and that gives us the feel of, okay, studies like the one we just heard or studies on human behaviors of would people use these if they were suggested or would they use them if they were required, and those kinds of studies could be designed to get at the desired outcome, which is the information you need for effective management.

MR. BELL: What I was getting at was the proper mechanism to get the across, and, if we have it already, great. If we need a separate list or a separate document, that's for us to figure out.

DR. DUVAL: I think we have a vehicle. I think we just need to be conscious of identifying what we think those things are. I mean, there's a lot of moving pieces and parts. We may not always be aware of research that academic partners or the Science Center partners are doing that could help to inform some things that we might be contemplating around this table, and so, if we identify those management priorities and get some of those science needs into that research priorities document, we may find that there is some work that's already ongoing in that regard.

We heard earlier today the importance of sample sizes in terms of ages for our assessments, and so I think, when I think about identifying sampling resources needed to support data programs, I'm trying to think outside the box of federal taxpayer money. Any other thoughts on these right now? I don't want to have us have an exhaustive conversation, but --

DR. MCGOVERN: I just wanted to mention that the Southeast Regional Office has gone through an exercise to identify its science priorities and has relied heavily on what has come out of this council to identify what those priorities are.

DR. DUVAL: I want to encourage folks who haven't looked at that document to look at it. It's a very good prioritization that matches up with ours.

MR. BREWER: I may be getting ahead of this, but with the idea of thinking outside of the box or outside funding to support these different efforts, I saw a reference in here to Pew doing some work regard to the SMZs and with regard to Lenfest getting involved with citizen science, and I am just wondering where those efforts are and sort of like where they are on providing help for those initiatives.

MS. VON HARTEN: I think that was the reference to some of the research that went on with Amendment 36, but, as far as citizen science right now, there is not anything right now for outside collaboration.

MR. BREWER: I did see a reference to Lenfest being involved somehow or other with citizen science and that initiative, but maybe I misread it.

DR. DUVAL: In any event, in terms of citizen science, that is definitely -- That has been the struggle, and we'll hear more about that in the committee meeting, is trying to find some creative opportunities to try to fund the work, given that the council can only accept money from NOAA Fisheries.

MR. BREWER: I understand we can't, but that doesn't mean that there can't be outside funding directed to a particular project.

DR. DUVAL: Exactly. Maybe we can move to the science goals. Improvements to existing logbook programs, I know that we've kind of danced around the edge of some of that in some of our earlier conversations this week, and we definitely have talked pretty extensively about that in the Data Collection Committee. Ben has made some suggestions previously with regard to -- Well, you just highlighted earlier, yesterday, the difficulty in the frequency of filling out the paper logbook forms. I think we've been very supportive of trying to move forward with efforts to implement an electronic reporting mechanism.

We'll hear a little bit more about that tomorrow during Data Collection, and so I think that would be an improvement, but I think the fishermen, or at least many fishermen, would support, at least some fishermen would support, moving to an electronic reporting platform.

MR. HARTIG: We've had a lot of discussion in the past about the grid sizes and how informative they are. We continue to ask the Center to decrease the grid sizes, or at least make them

comparable to the grid sizes they use in other fisheries. Erik has come on the record and talked about they're not very informative, maybe not at the council level, but I have heard him make those statements before.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, having better spatial representation, or more refined spatial representation, of where harvest is occurring.

MR. PHILLIPS: I had a conversation with a fisherman this morning, and they're concerned about the time it takes to fill out these more numerous reports, and we want to make sure as we get our better information that we don't make it so difficult on fishermen that they really can't or have a problem filling them out and getting them in on time. It's a dance, but we definitely need to make sure that we can do this in a streamlined and efficient manner for the fishermen.

DR. DUVAL: I am thinking, perhaps, in terms of this improvements to existing logbook programs, that there will be some things we can harvest from the conversation that we'll have tomorrow during Data Collection. Then, in terms of securing long-term funding for MARMAP, I think we continue to just make the point that this is an extremely important survey and data collection program for us here in the South Atlantic. There is not much that the council can directly do, necessarily, in that regard, other than to highlight the importance of the funds that are dedicated to that program.

MR. BELL: I think we had a little discussion yesterday when we were talking about ecosystem-based management and the need for data and climate change the day before and the need for data, and we just need to be real sensitive to -- We mentioned that, that there are certain core elements of data that are essential for us that MARMAP is a key source for a lot of that, and we've just got to hold what we've got, at least, if not increase, and in a world of competing needs and competing programs, and so we just really need to continually argue for the necessity to keep doing what we're doing or even do more, if we can.

DR. DUVAL: In terms of developing training for new advisory panel members, I know that we had talked about this at the workshop last fall, I think, and there is the MREP program. Of course, not every advisory panel member has the opportunity to attend that, and so I'm wondering if council members are thinking of perhaps working with new advisory panel members as they are appointed, either at the AP meeting or perhaps if we're able to bring new AP members down to the council offices in one fell swoop to kind of maybe walk through one of those MREP presentations. I don't know if that might be a possibility, something like that. Mel, I saw you had your hand raised.

MR. BELL: I was just thinking this is going to be kind of a home-grown effort here and another thing for staff to deal with, but we -- I sat in council meetings for years and then got on the council and realized that, holy cow, it's a little more complicated than it looks. Of course, the council members have the mandatory training that's provided by NOAA, and so that's covered for us, but I guess there is no standardized training anywhere for AP members, and so we would need to develop something, but maybe internally if we could develop a simple introduction to APs and how they work and just how the council works and how decisions are made and things. That would be, again, work on staff, but it could be in the form of a PowerPoint kind of thing or however you want to do it, but I would trust you guys to do it.

I know when we came onboard, or when I came onboard, I remember coming in and sitting down with Gregg and staff and all and kind of getting a here's how everything works sort of introduction, but maybe something not as intense, but something that you could give to all the different AP members as they come onboard and give them some basic level of training.

MS. VON HARTEN: I am going to look to Kim, because I remember, a couple of years ago, Kim did a great presentation at one of the AP meetings, and it kind of gave a nice overview of like how the APs work. I think we have a PowerPoint that is in existence, and maybe it's a matter of, before each AP meeting, we take thirty minutes or an hour and kind of have new AP members come in a little early and we can walk them through that or something like that.

MS. IVERSON: We do have a PowerPoint presentation that I've done. I gave it, I believe, at the Snapper Grouper AP a couple of years ago, when we had several new members that came in, and also for our Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel that was relatively inactive until most recently. That is a possibility. I think the timing of it is how do we -- Is it something that you would want to have presented online or that they could voluntarily view at will?

I found it kind of helpful to give the presentation to the advisory panels, even for the members that were currently there, and kind of reiterating what their responsibilities were and how the council uses the recommendations from the advisory panels, and so I don't know if you want to take that time during a regularly-scheduled advisory panel meeting or to have something separate. If you start talking about bringing advisory panel members in for an orientation, of course, there are costs associated with that, and so there are different options. I think we can certainly explore those, but we do have that information readily available.

We also continue to work, as Amber noted, with the Marine Resource Education Program and encouraging our advisory panel members that currently serve to apply. Again, this is not a council program, and so we don't have a say in who attends those workshops and gets accepted, but we do strongly encourage applications and use that as a training tool as well.

MR. BROWN: I was just going to mention the MREP program too and how supportive that's been for new AP members. They come out of this with a lot of good knowledge.

DR. DUVAL: I think the only issue with MREP, and it's not necessarily an issue, is that not all new AP members have the time or the ability to go attend a workshop for three days, and so I think that's part of the issue.

DR. LANEY: I'm not on the committee, but there are a number of manuals out there and training materials for how the fishery management process works. Auburn Sea Grant put one out a number of years ago which is very good, and I think they updated that. I can't remember if I provided a list of things to Kim in the past or not, but I've got a file on my hard drive that I stick all of that kind of stuff in, because people are always asking me questions about how does this all work.

ASMFC has put together a very good manual, I think, for all their technical committees and AP folks that talks about what the expectations are and how the process works. You might want to look at that as a possible model, if it ever gets to the point where you decide that maybe you want to try and put together a manual that would be directed at AP members.

Finally, the National Marine Fisheries Service, actually, I think it was, and Michelle can help me remember maybe, but they had a training program that they put a bunch of us through, those of us who were technical committee chairs and vice chairs, and I think maybe the AP chairs were included in that, but it was like a meeting management kind of training, to help us know how to moderate and run meetings, and I found that extremely useful. That was about a day-and-a-half kind of course, I think, and, again, it might be problematic for AP members to find the time to attend something like that, but it was a very excellent course, and I think it really helped all of us who participated in it a lot.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for that, Wilson.

MR. HAYMANS: What I was initially thinking, before Mel started, but a half-day training was what I was thinking, and it's for the new members. You bring them in the day of or the day before an AP meeting. It's basically bringing new AP members in a half-day or a day before an AP meeting. It's not a tremendous additional cost, because you're going to pay their travel anyway. It may be an extra night in a hotel for two or three members the first time they step onto an AP, but I always envisioned it as a very minimalized MREP. It touches a little bit of everything, but it really introduces them to the council process and their role as an AP member, but we have a tendency to sometimes go over the top or try to get things too big, and I don't think it has to be that for the AP.

MS. VON HARTEN: Another option is, for the cobia outreach, we did, earlier this year, we did a video PowerPoint on our YouTube channel that gave an overview of the council and how it operates, and so that would be another option, is we could develop a series of videos that they could be required to watch before their first AP meeting and set it up so they get like a little certificate that they've completed or something like that, if we didn't want to have to bring them into a physical meeting.

MR. BELL: I think a combination. If you could maybe do like a face-to-face sort of intro, at the beginning or prior to a meeting, that would be good, but, whatever you do, maybe put it on your website, online or whatever, and then they can come back to things and there is resources, as well as folks who maybe are considering the idea of being on the AP. They can kind of get a sense of what they might be getting into, because I know, when I've asked people about serving on the AP, you go through a long explanation of what it is exactly do you want me to do or what would I be doing, and so, if that were available for folks, they could kind of get a sense of what the APs are all about, and that would be there for anybody to look at.

DR. DUVAL: I think we've had a lot of good input here, but -- Ben.

MR. HARTIG: Just one short thing. I am going to get a little more specific. Computer training is a critical part of this, and everybody isn't up to speed on how much computer training you need for an AP meeting, and it would certainly behoove us to give maybe a short little presentation about how much computer skills you need and maybe a how-to, a short little -- Chester and I resemble that remark.

DR. DUVAL: Great suggestion, Ben. I think there's been a lot of good discussion, a lot of good input, to take back from this one. I think the next item was working with NOAA and the Regional Office to provide information about historical dates and advance notification of ACL monitoring,

and so we already have a historical closure dates on their -- The Regional Office has historical closure dates, and they have the ACL monitoring page, and so I don't know if this is something more like you all are thinking that there is a place on the council's website that links to the Regional Office or what.

DR. MCGOVERN: I think you could do something like that, but I also wanted to add that now we have a texting option, where folks can opt in and they receive a text notifying them of closures, and it's for the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean. That's at the bottom of every Fishery Bulletin. It's announced in there, and it's on our website too, but we do have all the historical closures on our website as well.

DR. DUVAL: I like the text option. That's great. I am signed up for it. Any other thoughts on this one? The information is already out there. I think it might just be a matter of linking to it from our website. Then the next was under communication, which is use of direct mailings or other communication strategies for permit holders, and so I think -- Anna, this might have been something that I think you were pretty interested in, the use of direct mailings to permit holders for notification of significant regulatory actions, and I don't know if you have a sense of where that might be. It seems to me that the guidance that might be needed for staff would be, as those actions might be under development.

MR. BROWN: How about like some type of polling, to where you could poll the permit holders on specific actions that we're talking about?

DR. DUVAL: That's kind of what we're working on or hoping to have through this forum, is being able to poll fishermen on their opinions on upcoming management proposals, what are their thoughts on adjusting the trip limit for vermilion in the second split season and things like that, and so that's one of the things that Amber mentioned that they're working on. It's online and it's not -- But you're thinking about a paper version of something like that or no? Electronic? Okay.

MS. BECKWITH: I was concerned about the direct mailings of surveys, because that could get expensive, but my thoughts on this were I think it would be an issue-by-issue thing that we would give guidance on. Certainly if limited entry were an issue that were going to move forward, then that would have been one that I would have liked to have seen a direct mailing done to all permit holders, so they could be fully aware of what was going on and begin to pay attention, and so I don't think this is general. I think we'll give sort of guidance for this as topics of particular interest come forward.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, it might be of use to get some input on some issues for the advisory panel too. That might help round out some of their thoughts.

DR. DUVAL: Great idea, and maybe this is something, as we're in the midst of developing items for scoping or things like that, that we stop and check in with ourselves as to whether or not we think something like a direct mailing to permit holders would be useful, and so when we're more in the scoping phase of things. That might be a question that we need to stick in our hats.

MR. HARTIG: I agree with Anna, but when do you notify -- In this last discussion we had with limited access on for-hire, when do we notify them? Is it the date we're putting a control date out or before that? I mean, I want to do this. I think it's critical for something that important to that

group of fishermen that they need to know, because a lot of those people aren't paying attention to what we do, to be quite frank. They're not impacted a lot by our regulations, some of them, and so they don't know what we're doing and, oftentimes, at the end of amendment development, we get people up in arms and saying they knew nothing about this, but to try and help that.

MR. BELL: I may be totally off here, but, the way this is worded, it's talking about direct mailings and communication to get specific information out to people, but then I think Mark said the word "survey", and aren't there some like OMB-level restrictions on when you say the word "survey" of what you can and can't do? You all might have looked into that already. If this doesn't count as a survey, then --

DR. DUVAL: Yes, and Monica has given us guidance in the past. I think it was when we were doing the communications survey. There are some restrictions, but I think if you're doing something that directly pertains to a management measure potentially under consideration that you're allowed to do so, I think, kinda sorta.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Kinda sorta. You took the words out of my mouth, but, yes, there are restrictions on it, and polling got my ears up too, but anyway, yes, there are some restrictions, and so I would be happy to work with council staff. On some of these, we involve the Department of Commerce General Counsel too, because they're more experts in PRA, Paperwork Reduction Act, requirements, which affect your use of surveys and all that sort of thing.

DR. MCGOVERN: We're sending Fishery Bulletins out to permit holders for comment periods for proposed rules and when final regulations go into place, and so folks are notified that way as well.

MR. BROWN: So it could be done -- Something like that could be done relatively quickly too, and it wouldn't be like mailing something. You could do it online, and then you would have your information fairly quickly.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, and I think that's the challenge, is that we have stakeholders that have differing communication needs, and some have expressed a desire to receive things via mail, as opposed to email or a text message or other electronic forums, and so I think that's really kind of the question, is when you might use something like that.

MR. CONKLIN: This is a question for Dr. McGovern. Many of the commercial permits that are fishing right now are leasing vessels, which has created sort of a loophole, and so many of the permit holders aren't even fishermen anymore. They are the spouses of the deceased or next of kin kind of thing, and is there a way to get through to the people that are actually fishing for those permits to let them know what's going on or is it just going to be up to the permit holder to disseminate that information to them?

DR. MCGOVERN: The Fishery Bulletins are sent out to more than permit holders. They are folks that sign up to receive the Fishery Bulletins, and so it's a really broad list of people. Other folks that don't have permits and recreational fishermen, private recreational fishermen, certainly sign up for them, and so it's a pretty large group of people that get them.

DR. DUVAL: Operator card.

MS. IVERSON: To that point, all of the Fishery Bulletins that are relevant to actions by this council are also forwarded to our email distribution list, and so there may be some duplicity, but I find that duplicity is not always a bad thing, but it also further expands that universe, and they're also posted on the website.

DR. DUVAL: What I'm taking away from this is that this is going to be more probably an issue-by-issue basis, just given all the other types of communication that we use between the council and the Regional Office. I think Chris brought up a good point, and so this will be something that we'll just have to kind of remind ourselves. Is there some direct mail type of thing that we would want to use?

The last thing, before I let folks go for lunch, is under governance, and that's strengthening relationships with existing fishery management partners to clearly establish roles and responsibilities and accountability systems, and I think we have some tools to do that, and so we have -- Over the past year, we have finalized -- I think it's a memorandum of understanding with the Regional Office with regard to protected species issues and the roles and responsibilities that both the council and the Regional Office share in that regard.

We do have our regional operating agreement here that outlines what Gregg calls the follow-up agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities and dates, and I think we have some mechanisms that outline who is supposed to do what and at what time. I think obviously there can always be better communication and understanding of the challenges that we face as council members and the Regional Office faces in terms of being the heavy and implementing the Magnuson Act, and so I'm just curious if folks have other input on this.

I think we've also tried to reach out to other management partners in regards to having council liaisons from other councils, from the Gulf, the Mid-Atlantic, and New England. We have reached out to the Atlantic States Commission to help us out with cobia issues, and so I just highlight those as things that we have tried to do to communicate with other management partners and some of the tools that we do have in place, but are there other things that people are thinking of that might assist in that regard?

DR. LANEY: I don't know that we necessarily think of them as a fishery management partner, but I am thinking of our efforts with Roger and the South Atlantic LCC and the fact that they're the only LCC that has extended out into the marine environment and is really working hard with us to undertake mapping and identifying areas that should be priority areas for our consideration within the council's habitat deliberation, and I think that same thing extends to our Habitat AP in particular, where we have lots of representation from state agencies that do have habitat regulatory authority that are our partners, from the standpoint of protecting habitat.

DR. DUVAL: You're right, Wilson, and I wonder if those -- I sometimes think about like the LCCs as being more non-traditional partners. I don't know. That's just a thought that I had.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say we kind of do this already. I think we just make sure that, depending on the issue or whatever it is that we're dealing with, we find the appropriate people in the appropriate areas and bring them in. If it's something dealing with an HMS component, then reach out to them, and we've dealt with things related to habitat, you know sound and propagation,

when we were dealing with the geophysical survey work, and so we kind of do this already, but I think we're doing a pretty good job, but it's on a case-by-case basis, really, to just make sure we find the appropriate people that might have a piece of this and bring them into the discussion at the appropriate point.

DR. DUVAL: I think if any of our existing tools that we use to do this need any tweaking that we would need to examine that as well. Okay. I think that was the last thing on the list, in terms of guidance, and, unless anybody has anything else on the status report, I am inclined to let folks go fifteen minutes early for lunch, but I also want you back here fifteen minutes early to start on Regulatory Amendment 26, which is our recreational visioning amendment, and so go forth and eat and be happy. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. DUVAL: We're going to go ahead and get started. We're going to get back to our agenda, and the next item is the recreational vision blueprint, which is Regulatory Amendment 26, and this is Attachment 7a in your briefing materials. I am going to turn things over to Myra to go through this. I will just say that I know we have a tendency to get in the weeds a little bit and maybe get a little bit more specific than we need to on something that is meant to be approved for scoping, and so I would just ask folks to keep that in mind as we go through this document.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Michelle, and thank you for that reminder. I had intended to begin the discussion by reminding you that you are scheduled to approve this amendment and the one that would address the commercial sector for scoping, and those scoping hearings would be held in January via webinar.

This amendment, this options paper, is very similar to what you saw in September. Of course, we included the guidance that you provided then, and this is the options paper that the Snapper Grouper AP used in their discussions that Kenny mentioned this morning, and so it has changed very little. It gives a little bit of background as to how this came to be.

This resulted from your prioritized actions for the management goal in the vision blueprint, and then you reconsidered some of these actions in September, and so this is what is left. What I did was I included the guidance that you gave me in September and then went to the AP and asked for their recommendations, and so I will go action-by-action, or possible action, or topic I should say, and then talk about the kinds of alternatives that could be included and the recommendation from your AP. Then we can go from there.

The first topic is recreational aggregate bag limits. In September, you had suggested perhaps developing alternatives that would combine species that are currently in the ten-snapper aggregate and species that are in the twenty-fish aggregate, and so those are species without a bag limit. There were no changes coming from the committee in September regarding the grouper bag limit. The AP did have some suggestions.

On your screen here is what is currently in place. We have the aggregate snapper bag limit that is ten per person per day with some different restrictions there for certain species and, of course, red snapper. There is the aggregate grouper bag limit, which is three per person per day, and there are specific restrictions for gag, black grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish. There are seasons

there for snowy and blueline, and there is per-vessel limits as well for some of them, and so it's a little bit complicated when it comes to the groupers, and then there is the aggregate for species without a bag limit, which is just twenty fish per person per day, and those are the species that are included.

It includes things like gray triggerfish, and so Alternative 2 would be to establish an aggregate bag limit for deepwater species. This is something that you had expressed some interest in possibly exploring, and so those are the species that are currently considered to be in the deepwater complex. You did indicate that you would want current restrictions to remain in place for golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and blueline tilefish, and so those would stay the way they are.

Then we put in here a little note that sub-alternatives would, of course, be developed based on the range of bag limits that you wished to consider and that, given the limited productivity of these deepwater species and the unlimited number of recreational anglers in our region, the bag limit would need to be low.

Alternative 3 would establish an aggregate for shallow-water groupers. Again, this is something that you had expressed some interest in also exploring, and the shallow-water groupers are listed in parentheses. Again, there would need to be a range of bag limits, whatever you wished to consider there for analysis, and modifying the twenty-fish aggregate for species without a bag limit to whatever lower number you would wish, and then we put sub-alternatives in there in case you wanted to exclude certain species.

There had been some indication that perhaps gray triggerfish would merit its own bag limit and perhaps some of the jacks species would merit their own bag limit, and so those are there for your consideration and then modifying the ten-snapper aggregate to some lower number. Then Alternative 6 is the one that you had suggested that would combine the species that are currently in the ten-snapper aggregate and the twenty-fish aggregate.

Here is where we get into the comments and recommendations from the advisory panel. The AP recommended or talked about removing almaco jack from the jacks complex and assigning its own bag limit. They did talk about there being possible issues with fish identification with other jacks, and so that would be something to consider. The AP had previously also talked about, and I believe some council members as well had expressed interest in reevaluating the composition of some of these complexes and, in particular, the jacks complex, and so the AP discussed this, and their comment was that the jacks complex may not be appropriate the way it's designed currently.

They talked about possibly considering a separate bag limit for banded rudderfish. They talked about there being a demand for that one in the commercial sector, and we'll get to that later, but banded rudderfish is a species that has increasingly become more popular, it seems, probably for both sectors, and so the AP ultimately recommended doing away with the jacks complex all together for both sectors.

They also talked about maybe just retaining the aggregate bag limits, but, within that bag limit, specifying that no more than maybe five fish could be of one species. They did recommend removing gray triggerfish from the twenty-fish aggregate and maybe specifying a lower bag limit, and they talked about maybe on the range of twenty to fifteen fish.

They talked about the importance of maybe specifying the use of single-hook rigs for the deepwater species, maybe beyond a certain depth. 240 feet was thrown out there for consideration and maybe limiting the retention of deepwater species to one fish per vessel and so, for all of those, one per vessel would just be the limit.

Then, as we've heard a lot during this meeting, considering requiring descending devices to fish for snapper grouper species and evaluating the landings of deepwater species to determine the composition of the catch. Of course, this is something that would require a little bit of time to put together, and they suggested promoting education on the use of descending devices and perhaps couple that with issuance of a recreational permit, which we're going to talk about when we discuss Amendment 43. Ultimately, they approved a motion to not change the composition of the aggregate bag limits at this time, but require the use of descending devices of proper design in order to harvest or possess snapper grouper species.

They also talked about considering revisions to the bag limit for red grouper, scamp, and gag grouper, and they suggested one fish per person per day and reducing the aggregate to two fish, where only one could be of each of those three species.

That's where we are when it comes to this topic, but another thing that I wanted to show you is there had been a request from the committee to look at a ranking of the recreational landings, and that is Attachment 7b in your briefing book, and so Mike Errigo kindly put together this spreadsheet that shows you, by mode, sector, or I don't know what to call them, but here's the private recreational. Then it just ranks the species by the level of landings. You can see, over here, for private recreational, we have gray snapper, yellowtail, greater amberjack, mutton snapper, and black sea bass being the top five.

Then, for the charter, charter vessels, greater amberjack is at the top and then yellowtail, mutton, gray triggerfish, and black sea bass. Then, for the headboat, we've got vermilion snapper on top and black sea bass, yellowtail, white grunt, and gray triggerfish. Those are your top five. This is just to give you information to help you with your deliberations on how to proceed and what to put out there for scoping, and so I would stop here and maybe discuss.

MR. BOWEN: Myra, what time series are these landings? Do they cover waves or a year or --

MS. BROUWER: Average landings for 2011 through 2015.

DR. DUVAL: There is an info tab at the bottom of the spreadsheet. One of the things, when I was reviewing the committee minutes from last time, that it doesn't seem maybe quite got here is we talked about modifying the twenty-fish aggregate. It sounded like there was a sense that twenty fish is a lot of fish, in terms of a number, but it seemed like there were sort of three options.

We could modify the total number of fish allowed in the twenty-fish aggregate, which is what you have in here, and then look at potentially some exceptions to that or modifying the ten-snapper aggregate bag limit. Then I think the other thing that we had talked about and Anna had brought up specifically was just having an overall twenty-fish aggregate within which the ten-snapper aggregate would exist. Instead of having your twenty other fish and then you get your ten snappers and then you get your five sea bass and five vermilions and three aggregate groupers, that your

twenty-fish aggregate would include within it the ten-snapper aggregate. I'm not sure that's covered by these alternatives.

MS. BROUWER: I think that may have been what I attempted to do here with Alternative 6. That alternative would establish a new aggregate, and it says ten, but it doesn't have to stay there, and that would include species in the current ten-snapper aggregate and the twenty-fish aggregate, and I guess that's what I thought the committee's guidance had been, but I'm sorry if I misunderstood.

DR. DUVAL: I guess I was thinking that maybe it was an overall twenty-fish aggregate. Within that, you would maintain the ten snappers so that you could still have twenty fish total, instead of a separate ten fish and a separate twenty fish, but I am seeing some nodding of heads. I think the other thing that I would love to get some public input on, in terms of an aggregate deepwater species limit, would also be application of that May through August season.

I think we saw that golden tilefish was over, I think, again this past year, and so perhaps looking at a May through August season for all of those deepwater species. We have it for blueline and snowy, but I think some committee input on what you think is a good aggregate number for the deepwater species. I wasn't even thinking of a number, because I felt like three was plenty for the deepwater groupers, as well as the shallow-water groupers, but I would love some committee input on this.

MR. PHILLIPS: I see where they're talking about maybe one of this and one of that, and I'm wondering how good the average angler is at catching one particular species and then trying to catch another particular species without discarding stuff.

DR. DUVAL: Again, I think that's something that we could get some input on from scoping, in terms of, if you were going to establish a deepwater species aggregate, would it just be the first three deepwater species that you encounter, and then I have had a little bit of conversation with some captains in the northern part of the state, and there was some concern that you could actually overexploit snowy grouper if there wasn't some type of per person restriction within that, a three-grouper deepwater aggregate.

I'll throw that out there, but I think it's one of those things that it would be good to get public input on. Would you want to try to maintain those restrictions of one per vessel, one per person, for those deepwater species, or would you just also want to include an option that would allow for whatever the first three you encounter would be? Those would be questions that I would ask during scoping.

MS. BROUWER: What I would like to do is to capture some of this guidance as we discuss it on the screen, to make sure that I will have the appropriate range of actions and alternatives that you want to take out for scoping. If you will indulge me, I'm going to type up what you just said.

DR. DUVAL: I think that's a fine idea.

MR. BOWEN: I am trying to heed to your advice before we started this and try not to get too deep into the weeds with it, but is this the place where we would consider establishing a recreational fishing season? Is it in this document or -- The ones not pertaining to federally-permitted vessels? Does that make sense?

DR. DUVAL: A recreational fishing season is one of those actions that is included in Amendment 43.

MR. BOWEN: What I was meaning is the non-federally-permitted vessels. I mean, it just came up in visioning, and so I was just curious if this was the place to try to add that action.

DR. DUVAL: I apologize, Zack. I must have something wrong on the brain, but I guess I'm just not understanding. If a vessel is not federally permitted, we can't impose any regulations on them. Maybe I'm just not understanding what your question is.

MR. BOWEN: Yes, ma'am, and we impose regulations on all recreational, federal private recreational.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, because you said "non-federally-permitted" and so --

MR. BOWEN: Right. If Leda wants to go out and catch a fish in federal waters, we still regulate it and manage it, even though she doesn't have a federal permit, as a recreational angler.

DR. DUVAL: That's the phrase I understand. When you said "non-federally-permitted vessels", I was thinking of the for-hire sector.

MR. BOWEN: I think the reason I said that is because of Amendment 43, and we will get deeper in that with some of the actions and alternatives in there, but, just for this document, I didn't know if this was the right place to bring it up, for the recreational fishing season.

DR. DUVAL: I think the idea was that, if we were going to talk about just a recreational fishing season across all the species in the complex, that, rather than have it both here and in Amendment 43, we would just have it in one place, and so Amendment 43 is where it is. Are you saying that you would like to do something different and put it in here?

MR. BOWEN: Whatever the committee and the council wants to do is fine. This seems to be a little more ahead, if you will, than Amendment 43, and I am worried sick about the new mail survey with the MRIP estimates, and I just -- I think the stakeholders don't really understand what's coming down the line when that comes to fruition, and so a season for the recreational anglers is going to be a necessity, in my opinion, if they're even allowed to fish at all.

MR. HAYMANS: Believe it or not, my question was along this similar line, but I was going to hold it, but, for the issue of reporting requirements and the single hooks and descending devices, which may cover the entire spectrum and not just for red snapper, when we have the discussion in Amendment 43, perhaps we could pull those items back over to this as recreational visioning, in order to lighten up the load on 43 a little bit, but --

DR. DUVAL: Sorry. I'm not laughing at you, but I'm just laughing.

MR. HAYMANS: I am quite used to it.

DR. DUVAL: I think, depending -- I understand Zack's concern now about maybe timing of Amendment 43, and so you would just want to make sure that a recreational fishing season action, the potential for that, was included in this for scoping. I guess it's up to the committee. It's currently in Amendment 43. We're slated to approve that for the same set of scoping hearings that's going on in January. The scoping that would be done for this and for the commercial visioning amendment would take place via webinars, and so it's really up to you.

I think staff was recommending that, I think, in order to reduce redundancy, that we just have an action dealing with establishment of a recreational snapper grouper season in only one document. Do we mention in here -- I think we mention in here that some actions are being included in Amendment 43 in the preamble.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so these two amendments -- We felt that it was important for the public to understand that the council was addressing the items that came out of the visioning project directly in these amendments, and the title reflects that, because we have Vision Blueprint Amendment 26.

However, since there is so much overlap, Amendment 43 includes, at the very beginning of it, discussion of how actions in that amendment are also addressing items that came out of visioning, and we purposely put that on the front, to make sure that we covered that and that everybody understood that, even though there is some overlap, the intent is for the council to address all of these prioritized activities, but it's being done kind of on parallel tracks in different amendments, just for convenience or I'm not quite sure.

One of the things was we were talking about this adaptive management approach for red snapper, which included a lot of different components that came out of visioning, but it was sort of like the whole package, and that needed to be presented to the public as such.

MR. WAUGH: I think, as you all start to consider splitting things out of Amendment 43, just keep in mind that, to the extent that you do that, you lose the package that is necessary to document that our adaptive management approach has a chance of limiting catches to on the order of 50,000 fish. We're killing two-hundred-and-sixty-odd-thousand now.

That's a tough sell as it is, and I think part of the discussion yesterday on the limited entry in the for-hire sector for snapper grouper vessels didn't benefit from understanding the connection to red snapper, because we have to put a -- We have a cap on the commercial, and we have to put a cap on the recreational. The idea was that there would be a cap on the for-hire sector, so that you don't have people going out and switching into that sector and to have more vessels that are going to be interacting with red snapper. Just, as you tend to move things out of 43, you lose that connection to that whole package that is going to be necessary to sell that adaptive management approach that Ben has laid out.

MR. BOWEN: To that point, Gregg, that's absolutely my line of thinking when I considered wanting to move the season into this, because, if we don't have a limited entry program, the red snapper amendment is not going to work, because we won't be able to cap effort. We won't be able to decipher the recreational guys can only go to this depth of water and the for-hire can go to this depth of water.

When that's an open access permit, if they want to go fish in a hundred feet of water and they're not allowed to do it recreationally, but the for-hire guys can do it, all they've got to do is spend twenty-five dollars, and so, if we don't move forward with limited entry, then, in my opinion, that whole Amendment 43 is shot, and so, with that being my thought process, that's the reason I was asking the council and the committee if they wanted to bring this recreational fishing season into this document, because it was brought up at visioning as well.

DR. DUVAL: Perhaps a way to address this, since we have two documents that are going to be going forward for scoping at the same time, would be to also include some of the same language that is currently in the introduction to the scoping document for Amendment 43 that talks about the actions that are related to visioning that are being included in that document and therefore not being included in these visioning documents and have similar language in the background information for this document indicating that there are actions that pertain to visioning that are being considered in Amendment 43. That way, we can have everything cross-referenced. Would that be helpful? I think we can make decisions about moving things around a little bit later if you all want to.

MR. BOWEN: To that point, Madam Chair, that's fine with me. I would just note that most people in the general public, when they see red snapper on an amendment or on a piece of paper, on a document, and that document, that Amendment 43, is very thorough, and I just think we would get more public comment and opinion if the recreational fishing season was in this one, because there is so much information in Amendment 43 that it may not -- The recreational fishing season may not pique the interest like the other items in that amendment.

DR. DUVAL: All right. What's your pleasure? I am not seeing any hands, and so I think, for now, things will stay the way they are. We'll add some language to the introduction of this particular document, and, if you all decide that you want to make some changes before we send this out for scoping, we can certainly do that. Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can someone remind me why vermilion snapper wasn't in the aggregate?

MS. BROUWER: There was a bag limit that was put in place for vermilion early on, and I want to say it was Amendment 4 or something. It was early on, and it just had its own, and I don't -- I would have to go back and read the rationale for why that is. I don't know if Gregg remembers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Should we have an option to add it to the aggregate here?

DR. DUVAL: Sure. Would you want it added to the big twenty-fish aggregate that's the snapper aggregate?

MS. MCCAWLEY: The snapper aggregate.

DR. DUVAL: Anna, I thought you had your hand up earlier.

MS. BECKWITH: I've gone through seven different conversations in my head, and I'm good now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would also like to see an alternative for triggerfish, to drop the size limit back to twelve inches and implement a ten-fish recreational bag limit. That's what the State of Florida did in state waters

DR. DUVAL: Yes, and I think that was also a motion made by the advisory panel, to drop that back. Was that for the entire region or was that just off of Florida?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I believe it was just off of Florida, because I believe it was only changed off of Florida.

DR. DUVAL: I think we could include that, speaking to the AP's motion about the size limit of gray triggerfish in federal waters off of Florida, the twelve inches fork length. That way, it will match the rest of the region. Okay.

MS. BECKWITH: When this goes out to scoping, if one of the introductory comments on this action can be that -- I mean, clearly, our intent, ideally, is to simplify this stuff for the average angler, and so, where we can get feedback from the public on what they think would make things easier and just simple and the whole KISS thing of keep it simple.

DR. DUVAL: I agree, and I think the advisory panel had a long conversation about this, and I think the input came sort of 360 from aggregates to having only five fish of any given species within an aggregate to it's easier for anglers to recall or remember individual bag limits for each and every species, as opposed to aggregates, that there's a lot of confusion about that, and so I think the more input we can get on that the better.

MR. BOWEN: Jessica, when you mentioned this, is it FWC or the commission's intent to try to be consistent with the regulations that we're putting in place or that are now currently in place in federal waters? Are you all trying to move to have the state regulations mirror the federal regulations?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't understand. Are you asking me about a particular species? Are you asking me about triggerfish or are you asking me about all species?

MR. BOWEN: Just as a whole, because you said that, with the triggerfish, you wanted it to kind of mirror the state waters.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, FWC was the one that asked for the change to increase it to fourteen inches, and that was because of something that was happening in the Gulf. What's happening in the Gulf is a lot different now, and so that fourteen-inch size limit isn't in place anymore, and so it's already not matching what's in the Gulf. It's based on some additional information and some information we saw out of the stock assessment that wasn't approved for management. Those are some of the reasons why we dropped it back to twelve, and the commission implemented the ten-fish bag limit proactively. FWC was the one that asked for the change and now we're saying we went ahead and fixed it in state waters and now we're requesting the change to match what we did in federal waters.

MS. BROUWER: Just for my own clarification, the alternative would be to remove gray triggerfish from the twenty-fish aggregate and establish its own bag limit, or do you want to have it ten within the aggregate?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would have it ten within the aggregate.

MR. BELL: This may not be the place to bring this up, but I was just thinking about Atlantic spadefish. Right now, they just fit in the twenty-fish aggregate bag. It's a very specifically-directed kind of fishery. You kind of fish for them in a particular way, as opposed to other species in the complex there, and I know we've blown through the recreational ACL in the last year or so, I think pretty high, and so just consideration of maybe a separate bag limit for Atlantic spadefish might be useful, if we're talking about separate bag limits or whatever.

It's kind of unique within the overall complex that we've got it stuck, but it is definitely a -- I think, predominantly, the landings are federal landings, but that's just something to think about, and I've had some discussions. When you get into them, if everybody is working the twenty-fish aggregate bag, you can have some really -- That's probably how we came up with blowing through the ACL. It's kind of a -- When you get into them, it's kind of crazy.

DR. DUVAL: Perhaps that's something we can just put in as a question to folks out there for scoping.

MR. BROWN: Jessica, could you tell me why you wanted to include the vermilion in the snapper aggregate, because they've already got their own separate ACL, and we've already got confusion with other species that are included that are in separate aggregates, and so why did you want to move that into that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It just seemed odd and confusing to some of our stakeholders about why it's not part of the aggregate and why it's separate like that. I was just asking for an alternative to look at it more.

MS. BROUWER: Again, Mel, going back to spadefish, the intent would be to remove it from the twenty-fish aggregate and assign it its own bag limit or, within the aggregate, have something smaller for spadefish, or do you want to just leave it open and request --

MR. BELL: Either way, because people may get other things in a given trip, but I know, when they're focusing on spadefish, that you can get some really high numbers, but it may be a mixed trip, where you may want to have other fish as well, and so if we could kind of just ask about either way to go. It's just something to think about.

DR. DUVAL: The only other thing I was going to say is, just in terms of the jacks complex, perhaps, because there was so much conversation on that -- I know that you've got some examples of a separate bag limit for those species, but maybe if one of the scoping questions could be should the jacks complex be disaggregated and should there be separate bag limits for those species and just get a little bit of input on that, if folks are interested.

MS. MCCAWLEY: In Alternative 4 here, it says to modify the twenty-fish aggregate for snapper grouper species without a bag limit to blank, and then you've got some alternatives under there. I

think that what we're trying to say here is give those species a bag limit within the twenty. I just wanted to make sure that was clear.

DR. DUVAL: It's clear to me, but it might not be clear to others, and so, if we need to clarify it.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so you're okay with retaining this alternative and also requesting input on whether the jacks complex should be disaggregated?

MS. MCCAWLEY: The way that's written, it says exclude those fish from the bag limit. I am saying -- For example, we said give gray triggerfish this bag limit and keep it in the twenty-fish aggregate, and so that would either need another alternative to do what you just said or -- Do you see what I'm saying?

MS. BROUWER: We can modify this to say "and specify individual bag limits for the following species".

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Anything else on this, before we move on to the next one? Okay. Myra, we will keep in here like the recommendations from the advisory panel as part of the scoping document, right?

MS. BROUWER: If that's your request, then, yes, of course.

DR. DUVAL: How do folks feel about that? I just think it would be important for the public to see what the AP talked about in here. Okay.

MS. BROUWER: The next topic was the shallow-water grouper closure, and we talked about this in September. What's included in your options paper includes the rationale from Amendment 16 for when that closure was put in place, and so all that information is included in here as background. The AP, back in 2015, had discussed this, and they had recommended no action on removing the spawning season closure for shallow-water groupers.

They talked about moving forward with identifying, possibly, spawning areas for protection for those species, with the intent to eventually remove the spawning season closure, but they felt that the current closure was working fine at that time, and so we talked about it some more, and these are the same alternatives, as I said, that you saw in September, and so the AP looked at these as well.

Alternative 2 would allow the council to remove specific species out of that shallow-water grouper closure if that was what they wanted to do. Alternative 3 would address some of the suggestions that we heard during the visioning project to do these rolling closures, and so we put that in there just for consideration, to see if that might be something that the committee is interested in getting more input on.

Then one of the things that you suggested that staff do is to go back to the Joint South Florida Draft Amendment and pull some of the alternatives that were developed for that amendment, and so we did that. These alternatives that I am going to walk you through were put together in cooperation with FWC and, from what I understand, and, Jessica or Erika, jump in here if you want, but some of these were suggested during public workshops, and so, not only are they coming

from staffs that were involved in putting them together, but also responding to suggestions that the public brought forward.

Alternative 4 would remove the shallow-water grouper closure south of 28 degrees, which is approximately off of Palm Bay, Florida. Alternative 5 would modify that timing, and so there is different alternatives. Again, that would be south of 28 degrees, off of Palm Bay. Alternative 6 addresses black grouper. It would exclude black grouper from that shallow-water grouper closure. Then you have sub-alternatives for different time periods during which black grouper would be excluded.

Alternative 7 would exclude gag from that closure south of 28 degrees. Alternative 8 would exclude gag south of 28 degrees and assign -- Again, you would have different time periods to choose from. Alternative 9 excludes red grouper and scamp from the shallow-water grouper closure south of 31 degrees North latitude, and, here, there was some confusion. We weren't quite sure where that 31 degrees came from, because it doesn't seem to be a very distinct boundary. It's just somewhere off of St. Andrews Sound, Georgia, and we weren't sure -- I wasn't sure if perhaps the intent had been to align that with the state boundary, so that the regulations would apply just off of Florida. Then Alternative 10 would exclude red grouper, again, south of 31 degrees and establish a separate seasonal closure, and then you have your range of sub-alternatives for that.

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, again, discussed this, and they thought that the shallow-water grouper closure was working fine the way it is, and they acknowledge, as you heard Kenny say this morning, that there are very specific needs for South Florida in particular, and they are very concerned that there needs to be a separate body that advises management just for that region. They did make a motion that got approved to recommend taking no action on removing or modifying the shallow-water grouper closure, and that's what I have on that.

DR. DUVAL: Again, I will just remind folks that we've heard in North Carolina, for the past couple of years, a lot of concern about red grouper, in particular, but I've also heard concerns from fishermen with regard to scamp being found in spawning condition during the month of May, and so that was one of the reasons why we brought this up.

I guess perhaps a question that we could ask during scoping is some specific input with regard to red grouper and perhaps scamp and modifying or shifting the four-month time period for those species. I would just like to get a little bit more input on it. I mean, I know I have been contacted by fishermen who are concerned, and I think there's probably reason for concern, but I know the AP had a lot of discussion about not being able to bracket every species and trying to hit the sweet spot in the middle somewhere. Are there thoughts around the table? Are you guys okay with this range of things in this particular action? I am seeing nodding around the table. Okay. Great.

MS. BROUWER: The next one is removal of size limits for deepwater species, and this is a pretty commonsense sort of thing. There is still three deepwater species that have a size limit, and that's queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper. The AP has recommended removing those size limits, and so we structured the alternatives so that you would have the flexibility to choose all of them as preferreds or one or two or three.

DR. DUVAL: I don't think there's probably much discussion on this. This, again, came out of visioning, and this was in reference to reducing dead discards and so having these sort of extant

size limits on these deepwater species doesn't really make a lot of sense, from a discard perspective.

MR. BOWEN: Up until this morning, I would have thought the same thing, but, after that presentation on the descending devices, maybe we don't want to act so quick on this by removing a minimum size limit, if the survival rates are 86 and seventy-something percent. I just had a quick thought there about it when I saw it.

DR. DUVAL: So that could be one of the questions. I mean, this is just going for scoping, and so I'm sure we'll get some input on that, but, yes, that could certainly be one of those questions.

MR. HARTIG: I appreciate your comments, Zack, but I mean I see descender devices, how people are going to use them, for bigger fish. That's what they're going to try and use them for. I don't know that people are going to take the time for an eleven-inch snapper, to put it on a descender device on another rod and send it all the way down. I don't necessarily see that happening.

I see, for a red snapper that's five to eight pounds, I see there is a lot of incentive for doing that. I don't see as much incentive for a small, eleven-inch silk snapper. I don't see the same -- People value fish differently. I mean, there is a big value on groupers, and so a lot of incentive to use a descending device on a grouper to get it back to depth. I don't know that that small of an animal is going to be targeted by a descender device that much. That's just from thinking out loud.

MR. BREWER: These fish, from what I understand, you're talking 240 down, and, anybody that's recreationally fishing that catches one of these, they're probably going to be using an electric reel, and I just don't know that, when you bring up a fish from that depth on an electric reel, that they're going to really have any chance of survival. You're bringing them up a lot faster. I mean, I've done it, and their eyes are blown out of their head and their stomachs are blown completely out, and they're dead. When you throw them back, they don't even flip on the water, and so maybe there is some rationale to removing the minimum size limit.

MR. BOWEN: To that point, Chester, I did it, too. I did it this past summer, and I did use electric reels, and I descended them, and I have video evidence that they did survive.

MR. HAYMANS: I was actually going to make the same comment, Chester. A lot of the literature shows that -- You may think he's dead, but, if you descend him, he's not. The speed at which he's taken from the water doesn't seem to matter either. I would have said the same thing you did, but a lot of the literature is saying different.

DR. PONWITH: I think that your own experiences on the water are certainly valuable. I mean, that's part of the reason you were selected to serve on the council, and this is really valuable in making these decisions. The presentation was enlightening this morning. The thing that we need to be careful about is those were small sample sizes of three different species, and you do have to factor in willingness to do these, and we haven't really done that analysis yet, the sort of human side of this, and so I think it's smart to take that all into consideration, but just make you weight it in your decision properly.

DR. DUVAL: Anything else on this? Okay. Moving on.

MS. BROUWER: Finally, we have, and I think this is the last one, modification of the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass, and we have here a table showing landings and total discards. This came out of Regulatory Amendment 25, and so it doesn't have the most recent information. This is data from 2013 and 2014, and you can see the high percentages of discarded versus landed black sea bass. There is not a whole lot there to choose from. There is two alternatives. Alternative 2 has sub-alternatives of twelve inches total length, eleven inches total length, and any others that you may wish to consider. The AP approved a motion to recommend that the council consider reducing the size limit of black sea bass for the recreational sector.

DR. DUVAL: That chart, that is numbers of fish, correct?

MS. BROUWER: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: It's pretty sobering.

MR. PHILLIPS: Were you possibly going to couple this with a change in the bag limit, since we're going to cut down a lot of discard mortality?

DR. DUVAL: We just upped the bag limit to seven fish, and so -- I mean, I think the general feedback, or complaints, I guess, that I'm getting from folks is that they're having to throw back so many short fish just to get a few keepers, and it's not that they can't find those fish if you go a little bit deeper offshore, but the concern is that, at some point, this level of discard results in a pretty significant mortality, I think, even during the summer months.

MR. PHILLIPS: I know, and if I remember the presentation we got, you lost -- You kill so many fish trying to get to the thirteen-inch fish that if you dropped it to eleven and actually kept the fish, you could keep seven or possibly even more and have less fish taken out of the water, landings and discards combined, dead discards combined, and that was the formula that I wanted to know about.

You, theoretically, may be able to take eight fish at eleven inches and have fewer fish landed and dead discards total than five fish at thirteen inches with the dead discards. That was the question, but, if we want to leave it at seven, that's fine, but I just wanted to make sure that we considered it all.

DR. DUVAL: Don't forget that we'll be getting a standard assessment probably in between when we would be reviewing scoping and when we would take final action on this.

MR. HARTIG: I just do have concerns, and I'm sitting here and you said it was sobering, and it is sobering that you're trying to help the recreational fishery by allowing them to have more fish, but you look at the indicators we have, and black sea bass doesn't look to be doing very well, and so we'll have to address that at what time it comes, but I'm fine for now.

DR. DUVAL: Right, and so it's a balance. It seems to be a déjà vu type of conversation of are we killing more fish because we're discarding so many fish than if we were to allow a little bit more retention.

MR. BROWN: I talked to Terrill about this yesterday, and we were talking about the closures and everything and the impact that it's had on his business, and he mentioned the discards of sea bass in that eleven and twelve-inch range and how many of them they actually throw back, and I know we have a similar situation off of our coast too, but, also, I have concerns about this distribution of the sea bass going further north too and how much of an impact that's actually having on our fishery, if it's actually redistributing some of the fish that we used to catch in different areas or not.

DR. DUVAL: So are you asking for some information on that?

MR. BROWN: I mean, I'm just putting in my two-cents according to what we're throwing out there for comment, but there could be other factors that are in there other than just plain overfishing is what I'm saying.

DR. DUVAL: Right, and I think Tony has stated that they see their stock of black sea bass moving further north. They're two different stocks, and so we manage them separately broken at Cape Hatteras.

MR. DELERNIA: The Northeast Fisheries Science Center has done some work on black sea bass and, in the Mid-Atlantic region, there seems to be three groups, we'll say, of black sea bass that seem to move. While they interact and they do intermingle, they seem to also move a bit independently of each other, and we're about to conclude a new assessment on black sea bass, where we'll get the results of that in February, but there has been research that has been done that demonstrates that there is three groups. We won't call them populations, but three groups of black sea bass in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Whether or not that extends also to the South Atlantic region, I can't say, and so I would perhaps suggest that if the Southeast Science Center wants to confirm with the folks up in the Northeast Center, and that might be helpful, and, again, we see our distribution of black sea bass has clearly changed over the past fifteen years. The southern New England states are seeing an explosion of black sea bass, and they seem to be retreating from the southern part of the range. Again, I will use that Virginia and North Carolina. Virginia and Maryland and Delaware seem to be seeing a decrease in black sea bass availability.

MR. BROWN: One more thing. In years past, fishing year after year, in the winter months, a lot of times we would see an explosion of the big greenheads would come in on the reefs and stuff and then they would disappear, a lot of times. There would be a few of them left, but there would be huge amounts of them. I always thought it was because of temperature changes or something and they were just moving along with the food supply and the temperature, and I don't know if that is what is redirecting these fish or not to move further north.

DR. DUVAL: I think there was some work done in the last black sea bass benchmark looking at movement, like around Cape Hatteras, on those winter fish, and Chip is nodding his head, and we can certainly dig that up for you. I forget which working paper it is, but I've looked at it before at well. So, timing.

MS. BROUWER: The timing that you see on your screen is, of course, if all goes well and nothing else changes. We would conduct the scoping via webinar, as I mentioned, during January and

review those comments in March, review the effects and analysis, and approve it for public hearings in June. We would hold those hearings in August and then review them in September and you would take final action on this amendment in December, and so we've got the coming year slated to develop this, and that's where we are.

DR. DUVAL: I think what we would need is just a motion from the committee to approve this for scoping.

MR. BOWEN: **I would make a motion that we approve this document for scoping.**

DR. DUVAL: Is there a second? Second by Ben. Is there any discussion? The motion read to approve Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26 for scoping. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** Next, we will hop into Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27, which is the commercial regulatory amendment, and this is Attachment 8 in your briefing materials.

MS. BROUWER: This is an options paper that you have not yet seen. You provided guidance in September to put it together, and so we did, and, again, there is a little bit of background on the vision blueprint and how this range of possible actions came to be. These were prioritized during the visioning project, and they would pertain to management measures to modify commercial regulations, and so the first topic is commercial split seasons.

There had been some interest in exploring concurrent commercial seasons for deepwater species. You had mentioned snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish. We had talked about wreckfish, but that's under its own ITQ program and so it's not relevant. Also, commercial harvest of golden tile, as you know, is managed with gear endorsements, with each gear type having its own percentage of the commercial ACL.

The fishing year for these deepwater species is currently the calendar year, and you currently have commercial split seasons for gray triggerfish and vermilion snapper, and the ACLs for those two are split 50/50, but there is obviously other ways that you could split that ACL. You could do a 60/40 split or whatever.

For red porgy, the council -- We had talked about potentially doing a commercial split season for red porgy a while back. Remember we started developing an amendment, Regulatory Amendment 24, and that was early on when we were doing visioning. We put that one sort of on hold until the visioning project was concluded, and so this came up a while back. The AP has talked about it. They did recommend that the council consider a commercial split season for red porgy, to line it up with vermilion snapper and gray triggerfish, as well as commercial trip limits.

I pulled some of the information that was originally in that amendment, and so there is some -- It's kind of dated by now, but this is the percent commercial landings of red porgy by month from 2010 through 2013, and then over here is information on discards. Of course, you see those error bars are pretty big. Here is the discard estimates by four-month periods from 2009 through 2013.

This is percent commercial landings of gray triggerfish by month and vermilion snapper by month, and so all this information had been reviewed and presented to you, like I said, a while back, and so we structured some alternatives for you to consider, similar to what's in place for vermilion and

gray triggerfish, and so Alternative 2 deals with the deepwater species, and so allocate the directed commercial ACLs for snowy grouper, blueline tile, yellowedge grouper, and golden tile, only for the hook-and-line, into two quotas that would be split 50/50 in two six-month periods and with that same provision that we have currently in place, where there would be a rollover from Season 1 to Season 2, but then any remaining quota from Season 2 would not be carried forward, and so the same thing.

Alternative 3 has the option of splitting that ACL in different percentages, and so however you would want to have that analyzed. Then Alternative 4, again, is the same thing. It's options for different percentages and different time periods. You could have a shorter first season or a longer first season and such.

The Snapper Grouper AP talked about this, and these are the recommendations from their latest meeting. They pointed out that golden tilefish are caught separately from other deepwater species. Apparently that's a very clean fishery, and so it may be appropriate to exclude it when it comes to a commercial split season. They also pointed out that yellowedge grouper is currently in the deepwater complex and hasn't been assessed.

They talked about considering a split season for snowy along with a reduction in the trip limit to a hundred pounds. The trip limit right now, I think, is 200 pounds. Consider including sub-alternatives for each of the species, to allow flexibility in how you want to structure that, and so that's what they talked about for the deepwater species.

Then I have the same suite of alternatives for red porgy. Here, we added another Alternative 4 that wasn't included in the options paper that went to the AP, and that was just for consistency, so you would have it in front of you as well to consider that we could do the same thing that I just talked about, allocating that ACL in different percentages, and also switching the length of each of the two seasons.

AP members expressed support for Alternative 2, which is the one that would basically do the same thing and add red porgy to the same way that we have vermilion and gray triggerfish. Then they just had some comments that this approach may enable the ACL to be caught and that winter months have larger red porgies, and that's what they had to say about that.

MR. HARTIG: Myra, you're combining -- You're not really combining the vermilion, gray triggerfish, and red porgy like you would be with the previous deepwater grouper, correct?

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so I guess what we heard during visioning is that there was interest in lining up the split seasons for the small-mouthed species, so your vermilion, gray trigger, and red porgy, and having concurrent seasons for those, but then we also talked about having commercial split seasons for -- Well, actually, I don't know, Ben. I mean, we could do it as an aggregate or it could be done individually, and I guess that's why the AP suggested having individual sub-alternatives for each species, so that you could have that flexibility to do them all together or for each one.

MR. HARTIG: I think, after I read the red porgy, I liked the way that was done better than the aggregate. That way, at least you still allow your species-specific -- From your assessments, for snowy anyway, we have an amount of harvest we can have. Well, we do with everything, actually.

We have landing limits for everything, but, with snowy in a rebuilding plan, at least you could -- When the snowy level is caught, at least you could shut it down and not combine it with another species or two, where you could actually catch more snowy than you were allowed in your rebuilding plan and that's all. Do you understand what I'm trying to get at? I mean, both of these are written differently. I mean, they both include X number of species in each one of them to be harvested, right?

DR. DUVAL: Right, and I understand what you're getting at, and what the AP suggested was having sub-alternatives that would allow for flexibility, I think, in trip limits and then potentially also in how those split seasons occurred. I think some of the comment that we've gotten is that, with the exception of certain areas, most of those deepwater species do tend to be caught together, and so like north of Hatteras is an exception for blueline tilefish. You're not going to catch blueline and snowy together. There is only a couple of rocks where you would catch snowy grouper up there, and so that's a little cleaner.

I think some of the other comment that we've gotten is that folks would like to see any split seasons aligned for those deepwater species. You might have different trip limits for each one of those within that seasonal alignment, and I think I would like to see just a little bit of language up in the introduction, where it talks about the deepwater species, just noting that there is geographic and temporal inequity in terms of access to the resource from the Keys up through the Outer Banks. I mean, it's just not the same level of access for everybody, and so that's why fishermen have brought this forward again. Ben, what would you -- Would you just want to make sure that there were sub-alternatives, as recommended by the AP, in terms of separate trip limits?

MR. HARTIG: Sure, and that's fine.

DR. DUVAL: Were you also thinking of different seasonal splits?

MR. HARTIG: I hadn't thought about different seasonal splits, but, to me, I am fine with whatever seasonal splits this council wants to put forward. Having debated it among you all, I think we should have different seasonal splits and whatever rationale you put forward, because we have access to the fish for a lot longer period than you do, and so, based on the conditions in Florida versus other areas, I think a fair and equitable way to do it is to have some way to have access for everybody at some level of harvest.

DR. DUVAL: It sounds like we would just want to make sure there was flexibility for differential trip limits for the species. I mean, I'm totally fine with the way these alternatives are written up, in terms of looking at different types of splits, and I don't know what other folks think.

MR. HARTIG: I will just hearken back to the way I fish. When the snowy grouper quota is closed, I am done deepwater fishing. I do not try to target yellowedge, and I do not try and catch blueline, because I'm going to catch snowy, and I'm going to have a cost of doing business associated with that that next year I can capitalize on, and so that's just the way I do it. I am just -- I will think about it now a little bit, and I will talk to Myra a little bit more.

DR. DUVAL: That's why it's scoping.

MR. CONKLIN: It seems like, from what I'm hearing from a lot of guys, is I think we're getting closer and closer to splitting the seasons on almost all the important species in the commercial fishery, in an effort to extend it to more of a year-round type of fishery, which we know that's not going to fix everything, and, the red porgy, I certainly do support separating it and splitting it as well. Thanks.

DR. DUVAL: All right. Next action.

MS. BROUWER: The next topic is commercial trip limits and trip limit step-downs. You heard this morning that there was some discussion among the AP members to potentially change or do a step-down or change the trip limit during the second season, and so step it down to 750 pounds and still keep the step-down to 500 when 75 percent of the ACL is met. Some AP members are in favor of that, and some AP members said, well, no, that's only just going to make some folks increase their effort and it's really not going to make any difference.

There was also some interest among committee members to develop alternatives that would address the needs of traditional bandit boats, and so one of the first things that the AP talked about is what constitutes a traditional bandit boat, and so they had some suggestions for what you might consider as a way to define that particular portion of the commercial fleet.

There is also some interest in exploring whether restrictions on the numbers of trips for golden tilefish or the frequency of trips might be useful to lengthen the season, and this would be for the longline component of that fishery, and then, for the jacks complex, again, there were some options in Regulatory Amendment 24, which never came to be, and there were some options there to consider trip limits for the jacks complex or, initially, it came up that almaco jack, in particular, was signaled as a species that folks were interested in having trip limits defined for, and so the AP approved a motion to recommend that the council consider commercial trip limits ranging from 300 to 500 pounds for almaco jack, in particular.

With that information, there wasn't a whole lot that we could do, as far as developing specific alternatives, and so this is just sort of a bulleted list of things to consider. For Number 1, modify the trip limit for the second commercial season for vermilion, the commercial ACL for the second season would be harvested under X trip limit. Like I said, the AP did have some recommendations. Then, during the second commercial season, vessels with a commercial unlimited snapper grouper permit would be restricted to a certain number of trips per month or per week, if you wanted to explore those options.

As far as evaluating and tailoring management to the needs of traditional boats, there had been some talk about maybe looking at vessel length as a criteria to determine what constitutes one of these traditional bandit boats. There could be consideration of aggregate trip limits for such vessels or assigning an allowable number of trips per month or per week. Of course, some of these get a little bit more complicated and you're getting away from simplifying regulations, and also consider that this kind of thing is not -- These suites of actions may need to be approached from a plan amendment, as opposed to a regulatory amendment, if you're going to go that route, and so that's a consideration.

For golden tilefish, we had, back in 2013, maybe it was, we had talked with the golden tile longliners about how to address the needs for their particular fishery. They had talked about maybe

doing two weeks on and two weeks off, and we held a meeting with them. This was, if you recall, I think right before SEDAR 25. We were in the process of getting that assessment, and so, in the end, they said, you know what, never mind. We're just going to not worry about it just yet, and so you could -- Right now, the trip limit is just 4,000 pounds, and you could consider a trip limit step-down, if you wanted to, or specifying numbers of trips per month or days at sea is another thing that's been suggested.

Then, for the jacks complex, it is a complex, and so, if you wanted to specify a trip limit for one species within the complex, you would first have to disaggregate that complex and then specify a trip limit just for that, and so, again, changing the composition of a complex is not something you can do in a regulatory amendment. You would have to approach it from a plan amendment, and so here is what the Snapper Grouper AP talked about.

They said a traditional bandit boat is a vessel that stays out for more than forty-eight hours. That would be a criterion that pretty much encompasses what they considered to be a traditional bandit boat. They also said, well, fishermen have changed their behavior over time and is the council trying to go back to how the fishery used to be or are we going to change our management approach to how the fishery has changed and what it has become and is in the process of becoming, and so they just said to think about that when you are having your deliberations, as far as tailoring your management approach.

We already talked about vermilion and the jacks complex and they also talked about banded rudderfish. They talked about there being a market for that species throughout the year, and the ACL for that particular species seems very low.

MS. BECKWITH: I've got a couple of thoughts on the bandit boat versus what we sort of consider now the new behavior of the day boats, and this is one that I'm interested in pursuing and sort of exploring, because I agree, fundamentally, that the behavior of the fishery has changed and that we have moved from these traditional bandit boats over to primarily day-boat fisheries, but it seems like, over the past four or five years that I've been on the council, that when we start talking about trip limits or bycatch limits or potential step-downs, that we usually get a point in the conversation where we can't make meaningful change for reducing a trip limit or going to a bycatch limit because we have to take into consideration these larger, multi-day bandit boats that can't make a trip or be sort of financially stable on these smaller trip limits or step-downs.

At one point during the visioning discussion, I had brought up the idea, or we had discussed a bit, about sort of identifying who is currently a traditional bandit boat and maybe giving those guys either some kind of identifier or an endorsement or something that would sort of freeze that effort, because we certainly don't want to encourage the behavior to move back from day boats to the multi-day bandit boats. We are with day boats and it's fine, but I think that the day-boat fisheries should and can be treated potentially different than the multi-day bandit boats.

Where we can at least have a discussion on we don't want to target -- I don't necessarily always want to be targeting our regulations to accommodate for the bandit boats when the bandit boats are now the smallest portion of our fishery, and so that's just overall thoughts, but it is something I think is worth discussing.

MR. CONKLIN: The traditional bandit boats that pioneered this fishery, they catch the bulk of the quota now and they keep the market supplied, and so they're very important. When I think about a traditional bandit boat, and I've been giving this a lot of thought, and the reason why I feel this is in the amendment is -- Something else about the number of trips per month, the language about limiting the trips for the traditional boats, is not something I would like to see in there. It seems like the smaller, faster boats can zip in and out and make more trips in a month, and maybe that's what we should be focusing on, is limiting them, or maybe it's a road we don't even want to go down and we just take it out altogether.

A traditional bandit boat, from my standpoint, would be a fisherman that was issued an original SG 1 permit and is not leasing a vessel, and so he has his own boat. He might have a captain running it, but he's still in business and he's doing it. That could be -- That's traditional, because it's the original permit, or the fishermen that have invested in the fishery and consolidated the permit, like was originally intended, and acquired a corporate permit. It doesn't matter about boat size or horsepower or anything else, and I think that's a tangible way to keep track of them. It's already in place, and so what do you guys think?

MR. BROWN: Were you asking for more discussion on that?

DR. DUVAL: Your hand was up to talk, and so I know Chris is looking for input.

MR. BROWN: I didn't know if Chris was finished and so that's why I said it.

DR. DUVAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Okay. When we were talking about the step-downs and everything, and we talked about this vermilion closure earlier today, and I would like to have some discussion on having a step-down, because, if the vermilion closure happens, you put the brakes on and you stop and the fishermen are going to fish for other species. For us in the northern waters, you've got a lot of bad weather, and so, if we only have a designated one or two days to go fish, you may not be able to fish those days.

Would it not be better to have another step-down and gradually put the brakes on to extend it a little bit longer, so that you would have that opportunity, because you're already fishing for other species anyway, and so to give you this opportunity to catch some more vermilion and maybe extend it out more.

DR. DUVAL: Chris, is it to that point, because I would like to get to Zack. Okay. I would like to get to Zack, and then we will come back to you.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. To Anna's point, I was kind of thinking the opposite. These traditional bandit boats, like Chris said, they do catch the majority of the quota, but the day boats -- If you think about it, you get twenty day boats and they go out on the weekends, when they really have other jobs and retirement accounts and IRAs and 401K and whatever they have, and they suck up a lot of the quota. I think, in this visioning document, commercial visioning document, we really need to decide what we want the commercial fishery to look like.

Do we want the traditional day boats that could be considered weekend warriors? Do we want them eating up the commercial quota, or do we want that commercial quota to go to the traditional day boats that are in the fishery and have been in the fishery and doing it for a true living?

DR. DUVAL: Very quickly to that point. I have other people in line.

MS. BECKWITH: I just wanted to clarify my original point. When I talked about potentially creating an endorsement or something to identify the traditional boats that are still in the fishery, it's actually meant to protect the traditional bandit boats that are still in the fishery, because we keep having -- I think there is a place to treat the day boats differently, with potentially smaller trip limits or more appropriate step-downs or bycatch limits or other things that we cannot do, because we have to accommodate for the traditional bandit boats needing more quota.

I think there is a place to have a certain set of trip limits for day boats and maybe have higher trip limits for the bandit boats, because it takes them more time to get out there and more days out on the water to accomplish a trip, but I don't want to encourage movement in one direction or the other or have those larger trip limits that are more appropriate for traditional bandit boats being taken by the smaller day boats.

MR. CONKLIN: We certainly don't want to come up with a plan that makes anyone's equipment obsolete, and so I do appreciate that. This is in reference to Zack's point, but a large part of our commercial quota is being caught by people who do not make a full-time living off of the ocean. They're not full-time commercial fishermen. I understand there's portfolios and stuff and they might be fishermen, but, five days a week, they might do something else, which I wouldn't blame them, but we're really faced with a problem in this fishery with overcapacity. There's just not enough fish to go around.

At some point, we're going to have to come up with a way to do that, and maybe Anna's idea is a good one, but we would have to incentivize or treat them differently, for sure, and I don't see where a day boat would have a big problem with having a little bit smaller of a catch limit, and maybe we wouldn't have to make the bandit limit any different than what it is now, and so we wouldn't be giving them special treatment, but we might need to get some analysis and see what it would look like, just to see, but something has got to be done to maintain and preserve what has historically been there.

MR. HARTIG: I think what I've been struggling with is not knowing if the efficiencies between the two make any difference. If you have a big boat and you have more reels and you have more crew, you can catch more fish in a shorter amount of time, even though your travel time is longer. If you've got a smaller boat with two crew and two reels, you may be happy with a lower number of fish. You may not have to catch the entire trip limit, but you want to get back at night, and so I think we need to look at the data.

We need to look at the data by size of the vessels of how much of the snapper grouper complex are they catching and does it make any difference before we go down this road of trying to separate these two groups out when we don't know what the differences are between them, if there is any.

MR. GRINER: I agree, Ben. You don't want to make distinctions between these two styles of boats. When you talk about a bandit boat, it's not a style of boat. It's a gear. It's a bandit gear,

and that's the only difference, and you can actually put bandit gear on a center console if you wanted to. You really don't want to start making distinctions between types of vessels.

As Ben said, a center console or an outboard boat can go out and come back in a day, where a bandit boat is not going to leave the dock yet, and so there is pros and cons to running a center console or to running one of our traditional bandit boats, but I don't think we want to go start making distinctions between the two at all. I do think that the split seasons and the step-downs will go a long way to getting us where we need to go.

DR. DUVAL: It seems like some of the things that we're talking about, in this regard, are going to be more appropriate for a plan amendment. I would also draw people's attention to -- We did get some very thoughtful comments from some folks on the vision in this particular document and also after the webinars that Amber and Myra did, in terms of looking at the status of the vision blueprint.

The same person also submitted some comments with regard to what constitutes a traditional bandit boat, and so, if folks haven't taken a look at those, they're on the online comment form, and I would encourage you to do so. The same person had some suggestions with regard to some of the things that came forward from visioning, looking at how you could perhaps reduce the total number of permits, but allow for the larger vessels to be able to operate a little bit more profitably and have a larger trip limit. Those are just all things that I would ask folks to take a look at in the online comment form.

MR. CONKLIN: I had one more question to why we couldn't make a trip limit for almaco jacks, even though they're not separated out of the complex.

MS. BROUWER: The ACL is for the entire complex, and so it would be difficult to track and determine when the ACL for just almaco jack is met, and so I think you would have to disaggregate the complex first and then assign an ACL to each of the individual species within that complex, and then you could establish trip limits to harvest that ACL. We can do it, but it's just not something that can be done in a regulatory amendment.

DR. DUVAL: It's the splitting up of the complex, I think, that cannot be done just in a regulatory amendment, and so, if you wanted to set up just a trip limit for the jacks complex, we could do it. It doesn't matter which of those three species you're harvesting. That ACL is going to close when it closes.

MR. CONKLIN: I would look to Dr. McGovern for this. When we fill out, as dealers and fishermen, when we fill out our trip reports, we report the different species of jacks that we catch, but they go collectively into a jacks complex because that's the way it's set up, and maybe Monica could better fill me in on this, but can you answer the question of is there a reason why we cannot have a separate trip limit for jacks, almaco jack, within the jacks complex? Maybe the way we would need to do it would be to just make a jacks complex trip limit, like you said, but why can't we have a different limit for the almaco, even though they're counted all the same?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I haven't talked to Myra about this, and so I guess I can speak with you at the break, but I am thinking you probably could create a commercial trip limit for almaco jacks or, I guess, the complex, if you wanted to do it that way, but we could talk about it further.

DR. DUVAL: The complex ACL is really just a summation of the individual species ACLs, and so you may just want to -- It would be a good conversation to have, as to how that would work. If you just set an individual species trip limit, how it applies against the ACL for the complex.

MR. CONKLIN: The reason why I was asking that is because this something that needs to be done sooner rather than later, and, if we have to do a whole other plan amendment, then it would just take a lot longer. This is something I would want to see, and other fishermen as well, want to see go into place sooner rather than later.

DR. DUVAL: Mel, and then I'm going to ask us to give Myra a little bit of guidance on how you would like these things split out, because we still have a more actions to get through in this.

MR. BELL: I was going to ask if I could maybe ask that something be considered, and maybe it fits in here and maybe it doesn't, but it has come up, in the time of visioning and for the past couple of years, and it's a very South Carolina-specific thing, but recall that South Carolina is the only state in the EEZ where bang sticks are prohibited for the non-traditional snapper grouper fishery, and so the dive-related.

That is an artifact of something that occurred when there were no ACLs, and it made sense at the time, but it really doesn't make sense anymore, and so I would suggest that maybe we remove that restriction for South Carolina, since we're the only state that has that in the EEZ, and it's come up a number of times. People have come to me, of course, since it's a South Carolina-specific thing. I've talked to my two colleagues here from South Carolina, and we're all okay with it, but I don't know if this is a proper vehicle to accomplish that, but I will throw it out for consideration.

DR. DUVAL: Is that eligible for a framework? I mean, that would just be my question.

MS. BROUWER: I think it is, but I would have to go back and check, but I think that is something that could be done through a regulatory amendment. I don't want to deviate too much from your list of priorities. Remember we went through several prioritization exercises to come up with this suite of actions for these initial visioning amendments, and so that would be my only concern.

MR. BELL: My thinking that this might work is we were just talking about things that we're kind of trying to improve some things for boats, and it just seemed like kind of a simple improvement. It doesn't seem to fit anywhere else. It's kind of an odd thing. You would have to attach it to some other snapper grouper amendment or something to accomplish it, but it just seemed like maybe we could consider it, if it's possible.

DR. DUVAL: How about we put it on the list and we check on it and see where the most appropriate place is for it.

MR. BELL: Yes, that's what I meant, to just throw that out there, and also keep in mind that restriction is commercial and recreational, but the bulk of the interest, of course, is commercial, and so it's 26 and 27 both.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. What's your pleasure, in terms of this action? It's a little bit less well-developed than the others, in terms of actions and alternatives. Would you like to keep it this

general? The driver for some of this was modification of the second season trip limit for vermilion snapper and looking at maybe other ways to address harvest limits.

I just want to make sure if you guys are okay with the way that this is laid out right now. It's not as specific as some of the other actions, and I certainly don't have a problem with that, in terms of a scoping document, but, if we're looking for some informed input, if there's anything that anybody else has to provide Myra with a little bit of guidance, in terms of these modifications of trip limits and trip limit step-downs.

We had heard some comment during visioning with regard to when you reach X percent of an annual catch limit that you should step it down to something really very small, that is truly a bycatch limit, and I think one of the things that I've had some conversations with folks about is use of a commercial ACT. You could set a commercial ACT at 90 percent or 95 percent of the annual catch limit and maintain your whatever it, 800 or 1,000-pound trip limit. Then, when you get to 95 percent of -- When you get to your ACT, you would drop it down to a hundred-pound bycatch limit. I mean, that would allow for a larger trip limit, to meet other peoples' needs. It gets to allowing folks to still sell fish that they happen to encounter incidentally when it's too low of a limit to really be targeted. I just throw that out there.

MR. HARTIG: It's a great idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and why don't we add it in there?

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Well, I will -- I guess I will work with Myra to make sure that that's in there.

MS. BURGESS: I think the way the document is laid out right now can stimulate some really good public feedback and comments, because it's very thought-provoking. A couple of things possibly to add to get some more public comment before the next stage, when the council considers items for public hearing, is, with regard to the deepwater species, setting up these seasons together and such, I noticed that not all of the deepwater complex species were in there. Would we want to have a discussion of including silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tile, just for discussion, so we have that at this stage, versus later? Then perhaps council staff could include a discussion of why red porgy was originally prohibited from January through April, for the public to have that in front of them when they think about their comments.

DR. DUVAL: Those are great suggestions, Erika, definitely.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I looked at the accountability measure for the jacks complex too, and I think you could accommodate a trip limit for one of those species. You would just then monitor it, all the harvest for all the species, just like you do now. When the ACL is reached or projected, you close down, and so I wasn't sure where you ended up on whether you were going to include a commercial trip limit for almaco, but it's definitely within your ability to do so under a framework, and whether you choose to do it under this framework, but I just wasn't sure whether you had included it or not.

MR. CONKLIN: Something else I was wanting to -- Some fishermen had asked me to try and see if we could talk about, during this amendment development process here, the greater amberjack

issue we're having. Several fishermen have been beating on my door since October about the greater amberjack closure. They have asked for a split season on that species as well and a change to the start date of the fishing year back to January 1 and/or split it into a September through March season and a March through August season.

DR. DUVAL: That's a good point. I've gotten a lot of comments about the amberjack season as well, and we just changed the start date of the fishing year. I think last year was when that went into effect. It was previously May 1. Then we switched it to March 1, and so we were trying to be sensitive to those regional differences, but I think inclusion of greater amberjack, to look at a split season, certainly is a great addition to this document.

MR. HARTIG: I think that's a good idea.

MR. CONKLIN: With respect to your question about the jacks complex, I'm still trying to think, and I wish you guys would help me, whether it would be better to have a 300-pound just for the almaco or 300 pounds for each species in the jacks complex or some number of pounds, excuse me, or just have it all put together, but I would -- Even 300 pounds for rudderfish and 300 pounds or some number would still lessen the take and extend the season.

DR. DUVAL: I think you could include that as a public input question. Should there just be a trip limit for the jacks complex as a whole or just for almaco or trip limits for each of the three species within the complex? Then we'll see what kind of comments we get back.

MR. CONKLIN: I think that's a wonderful idea. Thank you, Madam Chair.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Is there anything else on this? I would really kind of like to move on, because we've got other things to do.

MS. BROUWER: Just clarification. Are we then going to retain the topic, I will say, because it's not really an action, but the topic of the day boats and the bandit boats in this amendment, or is that something that you would prefer to entertain at a different time, because it will require a different vehicle to develop?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would say a different amendment.

DR. DUVAL: I don't want to lose the discussion, because it's a very good one and I think we've gotten some really great suggestions from the public, but I also feel like it's not a regulatory amendment type of thing. It's likely going to be a plan amendment.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and it's early on in the process. I could just take out the word "regulatory" out of this, because we are at a scoping point. Then, when it comes back to you in March, then you can decide.

DR. DUVAL: I like that.

MS. BROUWER: Okay.

MR. CONKLIN: Haven't we, in the past, sent stuff out to scoping and went ahead and took care of that part of the deal and then separated it out without having to re-send it out to scoping if we don't add anything into an amendment and it's already done, and so we would be a step ahead of the game if we do send it out and get the feedback now.

DR. DUVAL: We didn't talk much about this, but it's Item Number 3, trip frequency for vessels with golden tilefish longline endorsements. Do you want to leave that in for now or do you want to take it out? We've come around to this. This was one of those Regulatory Amendment 23 things, I think, that was left over.

MR. HARTIG: I think, given the reductions we're facing in golden tilefish, we should keep it in here for something for the fishermen to discuss going forward.

DR. DUVAL: Great. Okay. I think the next action is a shallow-water grouper closure. In the interest of time, I think this is set up exactly the way it is in the recreational visioning amendment, and my recommendation would just be to take the same comments and recommendations from that amendment and put them into this action, because the feedback we got from the advisory panel was, in addition to not changing it, was that it should be the same for both commercial and recreational sectors, and so that would just be my recommendation. I am seeing heads nod around the table. Okay. Then modification of the fishing year.

MS. BROUWER: The last topic is modification to the fishing year for the commercial golden tilefish hook-and-line sector. This is something that came out of AP discussions, and they had recommended that you consider changing that fishing year to open sometime in the spring. I believe they have recommended March 15, or somewhere around there, as an option, and so here is some possible alternatives, sub-alternatives, that we came up with. The Snapper Grouper AP was okay with those options when they discussed it in their fall meeting.

I will point out, and Michelle has already mentioned, there were some comments that were submitted for both the recreational and commercial visioning amendments, and I would encourage you to take a look at those. One of them dealt, in particular, with the switching of the fishing year for golden tile.

DR. DUVAL: Unless there is a desire to add anything to this particular action, my recommendation would be to leave this in here and leave it as is and let's get some input on it as to whether or not we want to move forward. Okay.

MS. BROUWER: The timing is the same as what we just went over for the recreational amendment, and so we would just need a motion to approve this for scoping.

MS. BECKWITH: **I move we approve this document for scoping.**

DR. DUVAL: It's seconded by Jessica. The motion reads to approve Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27 for scoping. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** I am going to give you all a ten-minute break. Be back here at 3:15, and we will move into the other agenda items. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. DUVAL: The next item on our agenda is Red Snapper Landings by County in Florida. I am going to turn things over to Dr. Ponwith to take us through a very short presentation. This is Attachment 9 in your briefing book.

DR. PONWITH: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, the request was red snapper landings by county in Florida, and we bumped into some trouble with the commercial, if you go to Slide Number 2 there. We bumped into some trouble, as you can see, with the commercial landings, in having some difficulties with confidentiality by county, and so we were only able to give you the total landings in pounds and the total whole pounds landing for the commercial.

If you go to the next slide, and ultimately the last slide, what we were able to do is break this down by region. These data are sourced from MRIP. It's a combination of the charter and private first, and the sub-regions in Florida are from Miami-Dade to the Indian River County and, for there, we had zero landings. For the Northeast Florida, Brevard to Nassau Counties, we had a little over a thousand fish, in numbers, and about 6,500 in pounds for landings. Then, for the headboat survey, and, again, this is the headboat survey, from Florida East Coast to Georgia, combined again, due to confidentiality, we had 718 fish, and a little over 3,800 pounds of red snapper.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Bonnie, and so this information is coming to us because, during our last council meeting, we were talking about needing some spatially-explicit data in our discussion of hotspots of discards versus potentially hot spots of abundance, and so that's why you're receiving this information in your briefing book. Any questions for Bonnie? I am not seeing any. It is what it is. Thank you, Bonnie.

Next, we will dive into Agenda Item Number 12, which is Snapper Grouper Amendment 43, and this is Attachment 10b is the presentation and 10a is the options paper, and so I think Chip is going to work from the presentation, which is 10b.

DR. COLLIER: We will start from the presentation. Then, if we need to modify things, we'll go into the document.

DR. DUVAL: I should say that Dr. Collier is going to take us through this.

DR. COLLIER: The purpose and need is the exact same as the last time this was presented to you. It's to revise annual catch limits for red snapper as well as management reference points and management measures, and it's also to revise reporting requirements for snapper grouper species for the recreational sector.

The need for this is to end overfishing and rebuild the red snapper stock, using the best scientific information available, improve data collection for snapper grouper species, and reduce bycatch of red snapper and other snapper grouper species while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

The challenge for this amendment is dead discards are much greater than the ABC and OFL in 2014 and 2015, and I will give you a table of that in the next slide. The most recent assessment, SEDAR 41, was reviewed by the CIE and SSC, and it indicated that the stock was overfished and overfishing was still occurring. Red snapper, in order to end overfishing, the number of dead

discards of red snapper has to be reduced, and we also need to improve estimates of the recreational landings and discards.

Looking at the table, I have two different tables right here. The top table is what was from the SEDAR 25 stock assessment, and that's currently the ABC and ACLs that are in place, and we also have landings from 2012 to 2015. What I have highlighted all the way to the right in yellow is the 205,000 landings in dead discards and also the 276,000 landings and dead discards. If you follow that back to the ABC, total number of fish, in those two years, we are allowed around 100,000 fish, and so we've got to reduce the dead discards and landings from over 200,000 to 100,000, based on the previous amendments.

Going into the most recent SSC recommendations, our total ABC is 50,000, and so we have to drop from 275,000 from 2015 all the way down to 50,000, and that's total number of dead fish, whether it's landings or discards. No matter what, this is going to be a substantial decrease in the overall takes of red snapper.

DR. DUVAL: If you have a question, go ahead and ask it.

DR. CRABTREE: As we discussed earlier with the SSC report, we're going to need to ask for discards-only projections and I guess get the SSC to look at that and all, because, in the situation we're in now, I suspect that will change.

DR. DUVAL: We will be sure to add that to the timing and tasks motion.

DR. COLLIER: Red snapper, by sector and component, the two different sectors are going to be commercial and recreational. Then the components are the different components of the recreational fishery, the headboat fishery, the charter boat fishery, and private boat. I have the 2004 landings and dead discards for each one, or 2014 and 2015. In 2014, the commercial landings were around 10,000 fish, and there was also an open season during that year. The dead discards in 2014 in the commercial fishery was around 14,000.

When it was closed in 2015, there were about 557 fish reported in landings, and dead discards increased slightly to 22,000 dead discards. For the headboat, we had 2,900 fish landed in 2014. The dead discards were 19,000 fish. In 2015, the landings in the headboat was 750 fish, and the dead discards were around 22,000. For the charter boat fishery in 2014, there were 2,700 fish landed with 1,700, or almost 1,800, dead discards. Looking at 2015, the number landed decreased to just over 900 fish, but the dead discards was around 45,000 fish. The private boat, the landings in 2014 were around 26,000 fish. The dead discards were 112,000 fish. The landings in 2015 was 639 for the private recreational fishery and 183,000 dead discards.

The ABC is going to be around 50,000. Right now, the way the current actions are set up, it's going to be similar to that, in all likelihood, and so the management actions that are listed in Amendment 43, the first five deal with MSA requirements to set various catch levels. Action 6 develops a closed area and/or season to reduce bycatch of red snapper, and then Actions 7 through 12 are a suite of management actions designed to allow a short open season while ending overfishing.

Action 7 deals with primarily with commercial actions. Action 8 is primarily recreational management actions. Those management actions deal with some of the more traditional management measures associated with fisheries, such as size limits, bag limits, trip limits, and/or seasons.

Action 9 is a recreational what was originally called a permit. It's being changed over to being called a -- It was originally called a stamp, and it's going to be changed to a permit, and then also recreational reporting for the recreational fishery in Action 10. Then Action 11 deals with accountability measures for the fishery. Then Action 12 is designed to reduce dead discards and mortality of snapper grouper species through some best fishing practices.

A comparison of the suite of options, such as the adaptive management approach, compared to just Action 6, which is the area/seasonal closure, for just a single action, using that large area/seasonal closure, it's easier to document if overfishing is ended. The area/season would protect several species of snapper grouper species, and there is going to be consistent regulations through the season and over time. However, there is going to be a high cost to the fishery. In all likelihood, it's going to be a substantial area closure and potentially cause red snapper to be a choke species for several of the snapper grouper species.

With the adaptive management approach, it's more flexible. It manages the fishery for several species. Private recreational data is improved. However, it's harder to document if overfishing is ended, and regulations and season may change annually with the adaptive approach.

Going into Action 1, this one was changed a little bit, based on some IPT recommendations. We removed some of the other options, based on some discussions at the IPT meeting, and so what this one has now is just Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, where MSY equals the yield produced by FMSY or the FMSY proxy, based on the most recent SSC recommendation.

DR. CRABTREE: When did the council recommend taking Alternatives 3 through 6 out? They were in the document last time we went through it, and I don't recall us recommending taking them out.

DR. COLLIER: You're right. It was my mistake. I shouldn't have taken them out, and I will add them back in. I have them as a list.

DR. CRABTREE: Okay.

DR. COLLIER: This is the full list as it was before, and so I will add that back in. Action 2, we added Alternative 4, based on your recommendations, which is 85 percent SSB MSY. Any questions on that? Action 3 is Revise Annual Catch Limits. We have the current formula that was adopted in Amendment 28, and we also have Alternative 2, which would specify the ACL in landings and dead discards. Traditionally, we have used pounds as a way to do allocation. Is that how we want to do dead discards, if we want to include dead discards in the ACL? There is that traditional formula, the Bowtie Formula, in order to calculate allocation. That has never been considered for discards, and so how would you like to consider dead discards? Would it be the most recent three years?

MR. BOWEN: In my opinion, I think we need to keep it the same way we consider landings, and so that would be number of fish. That's just my opinion.

DR. DUVAL: I think Chip was looking for input on -- Because right now we only apply our sector allocation formulas to landed fish and we don't apply it to discards, and it was based on the SSC recommendation of specifying the ABC as landings plus dead discards, and how do you want to maintain your sector allocations? We may not need to answer that right now, but it's something to think about.

DR. CRABTREE: It seems to me that, until we find a way to have an ACL greater than zero, it's not really an issue, and so I think, as we go through the rest of this, if we find a way to work through that and bring the numbers of discards down so that there are some fish to be harvested, I would say the ACL should be landed fish, but it takes into account the discards somehow, but, until we get to that point, I'm not sure how to get there. I don't know that we want to set up discard allocations and try to get into that sort of thing.

DR. DUVAL: It sounds like a can of worms, to me. Okay.

DR. COLLIER: These are the annual catch limits for the different ABC alternatives. Right now, you can see that the commercial in 2017, under Sub-Alternative a, would be around 5,000 fish. The private recreational would be around 12,000 fish, landed fish. That's not looking at dead discards.

DR. DUVAL: That's not private recreational. That's total recreational.

DR. COLLIER: That's total recreational.

DR. CRABTREE: I think we ought to think about do we want to take this out to the public the way it's set up. This implies there is going to be some level of landings, and we're not there yet. I mean, I think the way the projections are contrived, that they have landings and discards, is a problem and we need to get discard-only set up, but I'm not sure we want to go out with something that seems to indicate we're going to allow 17,000 fish to be landed in 2017 when it's not clear to me how we're going to be able to do that at this point. I am just worried about raising expectations and then we can't pull it off at this stage.

DR. DUVAL: That's probably something that we could include in the text of what we sent out or restructure the tables. I certainly think that that first table that Chip showed us was the most informative. That had the dead discards from the past two seasons compared with what the ABC recommendations are from the SSC, but I agree with you that we don't want to create unrealistic expectations.

DR. CRABTREE: That is my concern, but I'm worried, if we put this out there, that that's what it's going to do.

DR. DUVAL: I am agreeing with you and saying that I think -- I feel like the public is going to want to know what the recommendations were from the SSC, and I think that first table puts those in context.

MR. PHILLIPS: I guess what I'm hearing Roy say is, when they read that first table, they're going to think, wow, it looks bad, but, when they get to this table, they're going to think, well, they've got something figured out and so this is what we're going to be able to do, and that is going to be a problem. We need to make sure they understand that this isn't reality yet.

DR. DUVAL: Right, and so that's why I was suggesting that that first table that Chip showed, like on Slide 4, that showed the previous ABC recommendations and the previous landings and dead discards against the 2016 recommendations is the most helpful if you're going to put a table in there.

DR. CRABTREE: I would just recommend that you not put anything out for ACLs at this point. We don't have any basis to have a clue what the ACL might be, in terms of landed catch. We're going to have to go through the analysis of what these spatial closures would do and how much we think we could reduce discards. Then, if we can reduce these discards, how many more fish would that allow us to harvest, but it seems, to me, there's a lot of work to do before we start getting into discussions about what the ACL would be, and I think, to most people, they're going to equate ACL to what they get to bring in, and I just don't think we have any idea of what that might be at this point.

DR. DUVAL: Duly noted.

DR. COLLIER: When we're doing some of the analyses, it is good to have a target number, in order to develop some management alternatives. If you are -- Even though it could be very short, it could be just a couple of weekends, at best probably, for some of this, but it's nice to have a number to try to get to. Maybe it could be different scenarios.

MR. PHILLIPS: I've been told by some of the commercial guys down in Florida that there's a scenario that they would look for is not a catch at all, but just to be able to fish for what they're doing, and so that would be one scenario, just from the commercial side, is just no catch, but see if there's some way that you can let them do what they've been doing on amberjack and vermilion and everything else, and so that would be one scenario that the commercial side would look for.

MR. BOWEN: I would like to see that same scenario with the for-hire sector as well. I mean, we ain't had them in six years. Hell, we're about used to not having them. The ones that are in business now, that were in business in 2010, yes, it would be nice, but we're still here. We're still fishing, and so I would like to see that scenario as well.

DR. DUVAL: So maybe, just to move us off the dime here in terms of this particular action, we could, since we're going to be requesting additional discards-only projections, we could just say that we're waiting on additional information. The SSC reviewed this, and we had asked for some additional projections, and not put anything out at that time.

MS. BURGESS: Roy, perhaps you can help me understand what you're saying and answer if this fills your concern. Right now, it says "ACL", and people think of landings. If it was termed "total removals", does that give you an idea or more comfort, because I think having some number for the public to look at, to realize how different it is from discards in the past, is important.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, when we get the projections that are discard only, which I don't think we have now, and then we get the SSC to give us the blessing of that, I guess is what we're going to need to be, I guess, at that point, we could say these are the total removals that we can take and here is where we've been, and so the problem, step one, is to address that. Then, after you figure out how to address that, then I guess you can start talking about is there a way to have some landings, but I don't think we even have those numbers yet.

DR. DUVAL: I tend to agree with Erika that the public is going to want to see -- There needs to be some way to put into context, I think, the issue that we're having, which is that we have far more dead discards than we have any type of available ABC for.

DR. CRABTREE: Right, but I would rather go out and say these are the removals that we're being told we can have and here is what the current removals are without any fishery at all open. We could do it that way, but understand I think that when we get the new projections that that number of removals is going to be different than what we're going out with. Now, how different, I don't know, and how much of a problem that is, I don't know.

MR. HARTIG: I think Charlie and Zack make points that that would be a complete failure of this council process, I mean to just disregard red snapper by the recreational and the commercial fisheries. I don't think that's an option.

The other thing is that, even in spite of the gloom-and-doom situations that we're being presented, we have a way forward in this document to have some catch, based on a number of different options, if we can move forward, and so obviously, the way we used to manage, there probably wouldn't be any catch, but, if we go to the new way that we're proposing, you would have some catch, possibly, and so that's what we're trying to get to in this document. I would hate to start out by saying it's a complete failure to start with and we're doomed. I would like to get through the discussions we're going to have about the different options before we completely throw this table out.

MR. BREWER: I hate to say this, but I agree with Zack and Roy. I remember sitting around the table with a bunch of recreational fishermen, probably six or seven years ago, and the issue was do you want to have a very, very short snapper season, with the potential that the rest of the ocean is going to be closed down, or would you rather forget about snapper and have the ability to fish for the other species, and the response was overwhelming, and this is where I agree with Roy.

I think we need to let the folks know what the situation is and let them know where we find ourselves, from the standpoint of the dead discards being over 200 percent of what is allowed to be removed, and then go and -- Do that very, very simply. Maybe not even use a table, but just say this is what we've been experiencing and this is what we've got to fix and then go into the options of what we propose be done to fix the problem. That's just my thought.

MR. PHILLIPS: Ben, I don't think it's a failure of the council, but it's just what has happened. The fish have come back so well, so strong, so many discards, and maybe the science hasn't caught up with what's going on. I don't know the answer to the question, but I don't think we can say it's a failure of the council, but I think it would be fair to the public to at least say this is your options.

This is what you get to do with no catch or no seasons. If you want seasons, these are the other things that we're going to have to give up and adjust. Then we take all of that out to the public, and I agree that we should take everything and let the public tell us where their comfort level is, but I don't see it as a failure, because we're just dealing with where we are, and there are at least commercial guys that think it would be a win if they can figure out a way just to keep doing what they're doing.

A few hundred pounds of red snapper is not going to make their season, but losing a closed area and losing a lot of amberjack or b-liners or something else, they tell me that will significantly hurt them, and so, if we can keep them fishing, keep them on the water, to me, that's a win, until we can fix and find out the right answers to the questions where we can go ahead.

DR. DUVAL: Zack, and then I think we need to move on from this. I am just concerned about getting way too far in the weeds. I mean, this is a document that we're looking for scoping. I think the concerns are valid, in terms of how this action is structured, with regard to not wanting to mislead the public, in terms of where we are with regard to an ABC.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, Chester, it's okay to agree with me and Roy sometimes. Not all the time, but sometimes. On a serious note, Ben, from a for-hire perspective, a failure is being tied to the dock and having to stay tied to the dock. Around my area, as long as we can keep doing what we're doing, we're surviving. We've done it without red snapper, but a failure for the for-hire business would be considered tied to the dock.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Can we go ahead and move on?

DR. COLLIER: Given that we had so much discussion on the ACL, this might be another action that is not recommended, and we'll skip it for right now. Here I've got another table that you guys don't want to talk about.

We can go into optimum yield. We have the different options for optimum yield. We added some more, including Alternatives 4 and 5, based on some IPT recommendations, and those differ from the previous one. Alternative 3 is a little bit different than Alternative 4. One is specifying MSY and the other is looking at fishing mortality at FMSY. Alternative 5 is similar to other amendments, where it has optimum yield set equal to ACL, which can be equal to or less than the ABC. Then Alternative 6 is OY is equal to the long-term average catch, which is designed not to exceed the ACL and will fall between the ABC and the ACT.

Going into Action 6, these are the large closed areas or potentially seasons. In this one, it's similar to the previous version that you guys had seen, except Alternative 5 was added, which is prohibit commercial and recreational fishing for, harvest, and possession of all snapper grouper species during a time period in an area based on seasonal and spatial red snapper abundance. Any questions on that one?

These are some examples of some data or one is an example of the closed area from 17A. You see it's a very large area, extending northward to north of the Georgia/Florida border and all the way south of Cape Canaveral. Then, to the right of that, we have the probability of encounter of spawning condition female red snapper. This is from a paper that Nick Farmer is putting together. You can see there is some high abundance of red snapper there. That's represented in red, and

then, in yellow, it's slightly lower. Then the blue is even lower. In general, there is high abundance of red snapper off of northeast Florida.

MS. BURGESS: I was looking at this figure in the options paper, and it didn't describe what the points for SERFS, the FWC fishery-independent data, and the MARMAP data described. What do they represent in this figure?

DR. COLLIER: The actual data points, I believe represent the sampling locations.

MS. BURGESS: So not catch of red snapper?

DR. COLLIER: The probability of encounter of red snapper is what is represented by the heat map, or the colors. Then the actual locations are represented by those black marks.

MS. BURGESS: It's not males versus females and it's just a red snapper?

DR. COLLIER: It's females.

MS. BURGESS: Females. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Anything else?

MR. HAYMANS: Dr. Collier, I understand this isn't your chart and it's Dr. Farmer's, but can you at least explain why or how it is truncated? I mean, the hot area is a straight line, but yet there is sampling above, and do you know the factors that contribute to that?

DR. COLLIER: In this, they looked at temperature, depth, season, sampling gear, and they applied it into, I believe, a general, linearized model. The outcomes from those modeling indicated that these are the locations. I am not exactly positive why it's a straight line that goes all the way in. There is a depth profile where red snapper are more common. I believe that was -- I am drawing a blank on the depths for red snapper right now, but it's included in the document.

MR. HAYMANS: I bet it's because of reporting grids.

DR. COLLIER: Well, this is based on fishery-independent data.

DR. DUVAL: I am going to suggest we move this along, because we have a lot to get through in this scoping document, and we do have public comment that starts at 4:30. Unless there are any burning questions on this --

DR. COLLIER: The commercial management measures are in Action 7. They're structured a little bit differently than what they were before, where we had two different options on how to structure some of these commercial management measures, and I took them, and we have them all independently separated. There is an alternative for a trip limit, there is an alternative for a minimum size limit, there is an alternative for a maximum size limit, and also, based on Charlie's recommendation at the last meeting, Alternative 2 includes a year-round closure.

Going into Action 8, which are the recreational management measures, we do have an Alternative 2, which potentially has seasons, but it also does have an option to keep the season closed. We have options for modifying the recreational bag limit, and there is also options for a minimum or maximum size limit.

There is an option for an allowable fishing area. In that area, fishing would be allowed year-round for the recreational fishery, and there was a depth range that you guys discussed at the last meeting. Alternative 7 would be establish a fishing season for the areas outside the allowable fishing area, and there is different seasons for that.

Alternative 8 would be prohibit recreational fishing for, harvest, and possession of all snapper grouper species in the fishery management unit in an area based on red snapper discards, and Alternative 9 is similar to that, except it would be based on areas of red snapper abundance, similar to the presentation or that graph from Farmer et al.

Action 9 is establish a recreational snapper grouper permit or tag program. This one is modified slightly from what you saw before. Alternative 3 here came from Action 10 in the last document. It was just moved up to be more consistent and follow the pattern here. We have Alternative 2, which is require a federal recreational permit.

For the different alternatives, one would be to harvest red snapper. Another one would be to harvest snapper grouper species associated with red snapper habitat, and I haven't had a chance to do some species composition analysis, but that will be provided in future documents, and then another is to include all species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit. Alternative 3 would now include conditions to renew or maintain a valid permit. Then Alternative 4 is the harvest tag program that was mentioned at the last meeting.

Here, we have total number of trips intercepted by the MRIP survey. You can see the total number of private red snapper intercepts from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida from 2013 to 2015. The main reason for presenting this is to try to give you guys some perspective on how many intercepts we're getting per year. When we're trying to break down this data to regional areas, it might become very difficult to get some regional management for this and what the benefit of a recreational stamp or tag program would be. We would get, hopefully, more than just ten intercepts or such reporting red snapper.

Action 10 would modify reporting requirements for the private recreational fishermen, and this one changed a little bit, based on some recommendations that you guys had at the last meeting. Alternative 1 and 2 stayed the same. That would be private recreational anglers would report electronic logbooks, and it would be for a subset of them, 20 percent, or slightly more than that for Sub-Alternatives 2b and 2c. Then Sub-Alternative 2d would be all private recreational anglers reporting catch and discards.

Alternative 3 would require private recreational fishermen with a snapper grouper permit to just report using a trip report or the timing of reports. Sorry. It could be either monthly, weekly, or prior to disembarking the vessel or pulling the vessel out of the water. Alternative 4 is an alternative to allow paper reporting.

Then Alternative 5 was brought up at the last meeting, and that was require reporting to NMFS or state agency prior to returning to shore of incidental catch of red snapper, and the fishermen would be required to inform of location and approximate time of returning to port. Alternative 6 was brought up by Mr. Haymans, and this was to require a recreational fisherman to hail-out via phone or electronic device if targeting snapper grouper species. The permit number would be provided to the phone or electronic device.

Action 11, I don't believe there were any alternatives that were changed for this one. It's the adaptive management approach as well as accountability measures. It has a lot of information in there. It's a pretty long one, but this does give the option of decreasing the season the following year or changing the area that is closed the following year if discards exceed the ABC, and so this is where some of the adaptive part is coming in. I am not reading all of this, but I'm giving you guys a chance to go through it. It is a lot of words to be going through on a slide, and it's not all that exciting.

Action 12 is to require best fishing practices when fishing for snapper grouper species. You guys had recommended just requiring the devices to be on the vessel, as opposed to requiring the use of the devices, and we also separated them out for the recreational and commercial sectors, and so we have two sub-alternatives for descending devices or venting. We also have Alternative 3, which is to require the use of only single-hook rigs when fishing for snapper grouper species. Then Alternative 4 is for different sub-alternatives for circle hooks. Those are all the actions in Snapper Grouper Amendment 43.

DR. DUVAL: We are supposed to approve this document for scoping hearings that would be held in-person in January. This is a lot of stuff in here, and I'm a little concerned about sort of how to present this to the public and get some useful input. I mean, I tend to feel like the first several actions, which are the ABC and ACL and MSST and all of those types of things, that's not where we're going to -- We should maybe the focus the type of input that we're looking for.

I don't know how other folks feel, but it's kind of like, if we're able to allow for some red snapper harvest or try to turn some of these dead discards into landed catch, what's the manner in which the public feels like this could actually be done, and that's really what we're looking for input on, is sort of halfway through this document. I am seeing some heads nod around the table.

MR. HARTIG: I think that's a good way to go forward, but I think you really need to explain the problem. Even though we don't give them all the numbers, we need to focus them on the numbers that are causing the problem and why we can't reopen at this time or why we're considering different management options, is what I should say.

While I have the mic, I didn't mean the council process, Charlie and Zack. I did not mean -- I meant to say the management process, and, if I said the council process, I apologize. The management process, which we are part of, but, I mean, the science and NMFS and NOAA, all the way through how we got to this spot in the first place with MSA. That's the management process I was referring to, and I didn't mean directly the council.

MR. PHILLIPS: I understand. It's the total process, and I am not saying the science is at fault, but they're playing catch-up. I'm getting texts from a diver telling me what depth he is and his lat/long numbers, at the table, telling me that he just saw fifty red snapper and so many of them

were over ten pounds and lots of greater amberjack. I can get stuff like right now, and it takes time to get science, and it's just the way it works. We're playing catch-up, and we don't have a choice, and we're in a bad place, and everybody here knows it, and we're doing the best we can, and I think we're doing a pretty good job with what we've got to work with, but we've got some great people working on it.

DR. DUVAL: That's why I'm thinking, like when we go out to the public, I think a good explanation of Slide 1, what is the problem, and the problem is that we have too many dead discards. It exceeds the allowable catch, and so what are some options for trying to solve this problem, and that's what the back half of this document tries to focus on.

There may be some additional things that we haven't considered that we're looking for input from the public on as well. I think about some of the things that have been tried in other areas, like move along types of rules, you know voluntary reporting of encountering species for which there is a bycatch cap and a call-in type of system. I mean, there are other examples out there that we might want to think about.

DR. CRABTREE: I am kind of concerned about it. This is a lot of actions and a lot of alternatives with really no analysis of what any of it would do, and I think the reaction we're going to get from people is they're going to really be unhappy, and some of these things, like the recreational permit and reporting, probably will take years to develop and bring online in a usable form, but I think the expectation is going to be that it's just going to happen like that, and I am just a little bit concerned that this isn't fleshed out enough for them really to give us very meaningful input on some of these things.

I mean, it's not really a scoping document, because it's much more specific than scoping documents normally are, but it's not a point where you can really look at these alternatives and come up with any reasonable idea as to what it might actually do to know whether that's -- That's my worry about it, that, generally, the reaction you're going to get is just a lot of unhappy people raising Cain, and I'm not sure how helpful that's going to be to us.

DR. DUVAL: Anybody else?

DR. COLLIER: If this options paper is too much for a scoping document, then it can be pared backwards, which is nice. If there are certain things that you want taken out, some of the wording taken out, to get more input from the public, we can definitely do that.

DR. DUVAL: I mean, I am thinking that it could probably be streamlined a little bit and we can reference those first several actions that deal with setting of ABC and ACL and ACT and minimum stock size threshold and those things that we have to do after we get an assessment back, but we're still in the middle of getting information. We're going to request some additional projections from the Science Center, and so I do think really where we want to focus the input is reducing dead discards and how to -- If we are able to allow for some limited level of harvest, how best to go about doing that while minimizing those discards, and those are just my thoughts.

MR. HAYMANS: Several of the items in the middle of the document are designed to reduce the dead discards. The Action 12 or whatever it is, the descending device -- Let me back up. Closed areas and no fishing, stopping fishing reduces dead discards, right, or improving the survivability.

I have spoken in favor, in the past, of seasonal/area closures, but I think, in the current conditions, that would kind of give us a black eye, but, with regards to reducing the mortality of the discards, I heard Bonnie say earlier that we can't necessarily accept the couple of papers that we've got out there right now, because they are species-specific and limited in sample size.

I mean, that's a couple of the things that I would really want to hear from the public. Would they accept a descending device as a mandatory gear and could we then have a number that we could apply to that which would reduce the dead discards, but the first reaction from Bonnie is no, and I guess I would ask a little more from the Science Center about how we could accept some information coming from the literature.

DR. PONWITH: I don't want to be misinterpreted here, and that is, right now, we've used a compilation of studies from within the region and from other regions to try and pull together our best understanding of what the mortality rates are when fish are released. The more studies we get in this region with our species in our temperature profiles, the more we can refine those.

What I was trying to say is, if putting a regulation in to make it mandatory to have descender devices is done, then, of course, one of the desirable outcomes of that is fewer fish die, but another desirable outcome from that is that you actually get a credit for the fact that fewer fish die. Fewer fish dying is a reward unto itself, but the real thing that would make a big difference is that plus getting a credit. In other words, when you account for how many fish died in your total removals, that's a smaller number, because you used descender devices.

If you're going to assign a number to that, you want that to be reasonably defensible, and so that's all I'm saying, is that this study tells me that this is promising technology, but I wouldn't cut a regulation and say I'm going to cut the mortality rate from 100 percent to 66 percent based on five fish that got tagged. I think that's overstepping the information that you have, but it gives you a whole new way to put emphasis on research priorities and get a number that is quantitative enough that you can use to try and credit the industry for new learnings.

MR. BELL: I just wanted to make sure that I understood something. I know you've got off of that presentation, but you gave us a slide earlier that was red snapper landings by sector and component. It was broken down by the different components, and there are numbers there for 2014 and 2015 for dead discards. There is a total dead discard for 2014 and 2015, and those are the actual numbers we're saying that occurred for 2014 and 2015?

DR. COLLIER: Those came from the reports that you get in June.

MR. BELL: Okay. For 2014, it's 163,000-plus. In 2015, it's 273,000-plus, but we're saying that, moving forward, we could tolerate maybe 50,000, or a little over that, fish from the total coming out. Okay. That seems -- How do you get around that? That's tough. You're basically saying, okay, we can take 50,000, but, based on the past couple of years, here's what we've been seeing. The concept of even offering the hope of a directed fishery seems like something we really shouldn't even -- It's about managing discards now.

That's why, going to Action 12, that's something useful, or any of the actions that have anything to do with reducing or surviving in a world of trying to reduce dead discards. That should be the focus. Then it kind of goes back to what some folks have said. How do we just keep fishing,

regardless of red snapper, but I just wanted to make sure that I understood that that really is -- That's why the numbers are scary.

MR. HARTIG: To Bonnie's point, I think what the public and the council looks at is -- I don't think double-standard is a strong enough terminology to talk about what she just said. You have a discard, a way that we calculate discards, that is self-reported. We don't know the depths. We don't know the effort. We don't know how many fishermen are going offshore, yet that number is accepted as gospel and we shut the fishery down.

Now, on the other side of that, the science says, in order to have any of that changed, we have to have a mathematical number from the Science Center that tells me that we can't change that except if we have a study that's done specifically to show me that. That's totally unacceptable. That's ridiculous, to have that kind of standard set between the two different ways that you manage this fishery.

You're going to tell me that you're going to count discards the way we do and then you're going to say, oh, we have to have a scientific study before we can do this? That's not the way it was done, I don't believe, when we did the circle hook analysis. We actually asked the fishermen. We talked to them around the table about what they thought about the number of people who were using those circle hooks, and that number was done in that manner. To tell me that we have to have that science to do that is ludicrous.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, you're right, Ben, that we have used circle hooks in the past, and we have come up with an argument for some amount of reduction to come out of that. I know at least we did that in the Gulf, and I think maybe we did that over here, but I think, if we go with the descending devices, we are going to have to have some argument we can make as to what we expect they will do and how much we think they may reduce the discards.

Now, that's not to say we have to wait until we have definitive studies and all the rest of it, but we'll have to have some sort of argument that we can make that has logic to it that we could give them something, and, I mean, we don't have that yet, but that doesn't mean that we can't come up with it, but we're going to need to do it, but I don't think we're saying that we're going to have to wait years until we have studies and all to get there.

MR. HAYMANS: I think then this should be priority one for the Science Center and not waiting around until we can find money from somewhere else, but redirect some funds from somewhere to be able to apply a reasonable release mortality rate to red snapper using descending devices.

DR. PONWITH: We can certainly put that as a priority, but, before I do that, I need to make sure that the council's intention then is that they're going to make descending devices mandatory. If you make descending devices mandatory, then it puts a premium on this being a high priority. If you make descending devices a strong suggestion, then, in addition to understanding what that delta, what that differential, is, so that we can actually credit the industry, we also have to have some way to figure out how many people actually use them, because then you have to take your whole population and reduce it by those who did versus who didn't and then apply the differential only to the people that did. It's reasonably simple math, but implementing it has some nuances.

MR. HAYMANS: At least my one of thirteen votes says that if descending devices were to reduce mortality by a significant amount, then, yes, I'm in favor of making it mandatory, but what you just gave me was sort of a chicken-and-egg argument, in that we've got to tell you it's mandatory before you go do the science, or at least that's what I heard you say. If what you were to find from the science says that it will reduce mortality, I think we'll all say let's make them mandatory.

DR. PONWITH: Let me refine by saying if this council has an interest in using descending devices as a management tool, then it puts a higher premium on this as a priority. The thing is that everything -- I have a very, very long priority list, and so I have to prioritize the priorities to make sure that I'm only sometimes in trouble and not chronically in trouble for not having met those priorities.

DR. CRABTREE: What we're looking at it in the document is requiring descending devices to be onboard the vessel. We're not requiring people to use them. Now, what I heard you say, Doug, is ask the Center to go out and do studies to figure this out. Well, if we're going to wait until a whole bunch of studies are done, we're going to be waiting quite a while, and I don't think that's what we're talking about here.

What I'm saying is what I think we've got to do is take the information that we have now and see if we can craft an argument about what we think this requirement with descending devices might accomplish and where it might get us to, and I don't know how easy or how hard that's going to be, but that's what we're going to have to do, because, if we're going to wait until somebody goes out and studies the impact of descending devices on red snapper, we're going to be a long time, and I think an unacceptably long time, from our perspective, to get to that.

Now, I think clearly, Bonnie, the council is very interested in descending devices, and we would like you to do those studies, but I think, in terms of this document, we're going to have to come up with arguments based on the information we have in hand and do the best we can with it.

DR. DUVAL: It's twenty minutes after four, and I'm not trying to shut down the conversation. We do still have an hour on the agenda tomorrow morning to continue discussion. I think we've had some good conversation here about the goal of this document and what the goal needs to be, in terms of reducing discards and what are practices that we can put out there and get some public input on to do so, what is the existing information that would bolster the argument to potentially require that descending devices be onboard.

I think any other actions in this document or practices, best practices, that we may not have thought of that would address this issue, as well as I think some of the other types of approaches that I've mentioned, in regards to move-along-type of approaches, and I think the other thing that I will throw out there, so that when we continue our conversation tomorrow that people can be thinking about that, is that, if we don't feel like we are ready to take this out to scoping yet, we don't have to.

I mean, we can request the additional projections. We can wait until those come back. We can have more conversation about how we would want this structured and how we would want to present it to the public before moving forward. I mean, it is very specific right now, and that specificity can always be moved into an amendment and we can scale back what's included for a scoping presentation. I will just ask everybody to maybe think about that overnight.

We do have public comment scheduled to begin at 4:30. It's 4:22 on my computer right now, and I just wanted to have a few minutes for folks to take a quick break and get us set up so that we can go ahead and accept public comment. My sense is that we're kind of done with the conversation for today and we need a little bit of a break. Thank you, all, for your hard work. I appreciate it.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 7, 2016.)

- - -

DECEMBER 8, 2016

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

- - -

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, Thursday morning, December 8, 2016, and was called to order by Chairman Michelle Duval.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, everyone. I would like to go ahead and reconvene the Snapper Grouper Committee. Yesterday, prior to public comment, we had made it through Chip's presentation on the options paper for Snapper Grouper Amendment 43, and we were having a conversation about whether or not we felt that this document was ready for scoping, and I would like to return to that conversation.

I think we had made some suggestions and expressed some concerns about how to present this to the public, should we decide to move forward with scoping. I believe Dr. Crabtree brought up wanting to get some additional projections with regard to discard-only projections, and so I just want to get the sense of the committee of do you want to revisit any pieces of the presentation that Chip gave yesterday, with regard to I guess what I would call the substantive items that we're looking for public input on?

We talked about how really most of the first three or four or five actions are those items that we might get to further down the road, with regard to development of a full amendment, and that really what we would be looking for public input on are those other, more substantive actions that would be aimed at reducing discards or -- I am just trying to introduce some creativity into how we could turn some of our dead discards into some form of landed catch and having a statement of what is the problem as being sort of the main driver in presenting this to the public and in trying to solicit the input that we're looking for.

I just want to bring us back to that point, because I think we really need a decision from the committee as to whether or not you feel that this is ready to move forward for scoping at this time, and, if so, how would you like to see it structured?

MR. HARTIG: Before we get there, I have something to say about that outburst that I made yesterday. This council has a long history of spirited discussions and passion at the table, but I crossed the line yesterday, and I want to say that on the record, and I want to apologize to Dr.

Ponwith for crossing that line, and I also want to apologize to the council, because there is plenty of room for frustration and things of that nature, but, to cross that line, I did that yesterday, and I apologize.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Ben, and I apologize for -- I know you had asked to have the opportunity, and I completely ran over it, and certainly not intentionally. I think we all get frustrated by the process sometimes and the information, or lack thereof, that we have to make some pretty hefty decisions, and so thank you for the apology, and we certainly understand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: On the red snapper item, I liked what you said yesterday about maybe restructuring how the document would be presented to the public. In other words, a statement of the problem upfront and then maybe those first few actions -- Maybe they go to the back instead of at the front of the document, because I don't want to lose the public that's coming to the meeting that we're trying to get this input from. I like the thought of maybe restructuring this a little bit for how it's going to be presented to them.

I understand Roy's concerns, but I would still like to see this go forward now, because, otherwise, we're looking at a webinar to scope it or we're waiting until August, and so I don't want to wait that long. I would rather go ahead and go out to the meetings that are already scheduled for January and February, and I like the idea of having the scoping in person.

DR. CRABTREE: I think my advice to you would be to put more emphasis on the general problem and to downplay the specific numbers, because we know those are going to change. If we go out and put numbers in front of them and then we go out later and they're all different, that's going to be a problem.

I think, if we made it a little bit higher-level concept of we've got too many discards in this fishery and it's preventing us from being able to have a harvest right now and we may even be still overfishing, we need to find ways to bring those discards down, and, if we can bring them down enough, we might be able to have a fishery of some landed catch at some time. Here are ways we're looking at of trying to do that, and give us your input and do you have any other ideas?

I think, if we keep it like that, I think you're fine to go out with it, but I would downplay specific numbers, maybe put them in the back somewhere, if people ask for them or something like that, and make it clear to them that these aren't final and there are a lot of things in play right now and we're probably not going to have finalized numbers for some time.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Roy. Are there others?

MR. HAYMANS: If indeed we can word it that way, but the document, as it sits, that's a lot for anybody to digest without any specifics, and so maybe if it could -- If we boil it all the way back down to -- I won't call it the options paper, but something that's a lot more brief and has the concepts. If you knew that having a fishing season would reduce discards, would you be willing to accept a fishing season, in that manner, rather than what we've got.

DR. CRABTREE: Scoping is generally a higher-level type of a hearing, to make sure we're looking at the right kinds of things and to frame the general problem. It's later, when we get into public hearings and things, that you're getting into the nuts-and-bolts of here is the numbers and

here is the specific things, and so I think we're okay for now to ask the general question of would you rather not have a fishery for red snapper or would you be willing to accept some of these other kinds of things and that sort of stuff, but I think, generally speaking, scoping is kind of a higher-level look at the problem.

MR. BREWER: I agree with Roy. See, there was no but in there or that I would hate to, but I agree, because what would be most beneficial to me is we've got a whole suite of options that are there that I've talked with people about informally, and I would -- It would be helpful, to me, to see what the public's reaction is to those different potential remedies that we have there and which ones they favor and which ones they don't and maybe be able to throw some ideas in. That would be the most helpful, to me.

DR. DUVAL: Really, we're looking for input from the public on what are the tradeoffs that they're willing to accept amongst different options like this.

MR. BELL: What we're really focusing on is the dead discard issue, and so there is different ways that you can deal with it, through area or timing or method of gears or methodologies of fishing. Get their input on that, but that's the real core of the problem, is getting the dead discards under control, and their input on that would be valuable.

MR. HAYMANS: In essence, Actions 6 through 12, excluding 11?

DR. COLLIER: Do we even need the commercial actions, because that's size limits and bag limits and trip limits.

MR. HAYMANS: That's Action 7?

DR. COLLIER: Yes.

MR. HAYMANS: I think the public is going to want to know that we're looking at commercial actions as well, and so I would include it.

DR. DUVAL: I guess I want to get a sense from the committee of -- The wording of these actions is very detailed right now, and I don't -- I would like to get some input from the committee of, if we're moving forward for scoping, would you like to see these remaining actions stay in their current format or would you -- I'm thinking we dial it back to would you prefer to see -- What would you be willing to accept if you knew that you could have a red snapper season down the road? Would you be willing to accept a small closed area or closed depth, in order to reduce discards? I am not doing a very good job of saying it, but what I'm asking for is would the committee prefer to see these actions translated more into questions to solicit input from the public?

MR. HAYMANS: That would my preference, but a word you said caught my attention, and I think I would avoid adjectives like "small". In other words, would you be willing to accept a closed area or a season, because "small" is a relative word.

DR. DUVAL: If I said "small", I apologize.

MR. HAYMANS: That immediately caught my attention, but, yes, very general questions would be my preference.

DR. CRABTREE: I would kind of make it a two-tiered kind of process. The first process is we've got to bring the discards down, and, unless we can do that, we can't get to the next part of the process, which is a fishery and how we go about doing that with trip limits and things, and I would keep that front and center on the first part of this. I think it's okay to have some of the second part there, but we've got to solve the first problem or the second problem is not even going to matter. Then I think staff has just to figure out how to repackage this thing, because I don't think we're capable of doing that.

DR. DUVAL: That's Roy's nice way of saying don't get in the weeds right now.

MR. BOWEN: You kind of gave us some instructions yesterday to be thinking and coming up with some things overnight. Regardless of my statement yesterday about me continuing to own and operate a charter boat business without red snapper and still fishing, and I don't know if this is appropriate, and I'm looking for guidance from everybody here at the table, but one way that we could reduce some of those landings is, and I would be willing to make a motion if this is an appropriate request, but one way that we could reduce some landings is to ask the State of Florida to mimic our red snapper regulations.

I just have a little heartburn when we're sitting here without red snapper for so many years and then knowing that the Florida state waters of red snapper are still open and that they are showing some landings. It bothers me, and so I don't know if it's appropriate for us or if it's the right thing to do for us to write a letter to Florida. I don't know. Maybe Jessica can enlighten me, but I just have some heartburn when I see landings out of the State of Florida state waters.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It was a past commission decision to keep the state waters open. You can write a letter if you want, but, just because you write a letter, it doesn't mean that that is going to change the commission's mind.

MR. BOWEN: With that being said, is it appropriate now to make a motion to ask for that letter or would you prefer me to wait, Madam Chair?

DR. DUVAL: Let me get Doug first and then we will come back to that.

MR. HAYMANS: I would simply say that we're in the same position that Florida is, and, at the moment, it's not our intention to close state waters.

MR. BOWEN: But Georgia doesn't have any landings. I am concerned about the --

MR. HAYMANS: But the regulation is the same. We're still open.

MR. BOWEN: I am just trying to come up with solutions to get our number of landings down within our ABC, and Georgia doesn't have any landings on snapper, and Florida does.

DR. CRABTREE: We've got all the state directors sitting here at the table, and I think we all understand what the issue is, and I guess what I would ask of all of you guys is to, when you go

home, to think about this and see if there isn't a way for us to all get on the same page with some of these closures. I mean, you can write a letter if you want, but we're sort of -- We've got the people that are going to get the letter and write the response back to the letter sitting here right now, and so I don't really know if we need to do that or not, but we have a number of species where we have inconsistencies in the rules, for various reasons, and it does create problems.

I understand there are reasons why we have these differences and there are disagreements and all those kinds of things, but it would be good, at least with red snapper, as we go through this, if we could work through that and kind of all get on the same page and present a unified front, because, Lord, I can tell you we don't want to end up where the Gulf is going on all of this.

DR. DUVAL: We're closed here in North Carolina, as you heard last night. Zack, it sounds like perhaps a letter is not necessarily going to have the intended effect. I think your concerns are well founded and certainly well taken, and perhaps if they can be -- The folks who are here around the table can take those back to their respective commissions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I can certainly take these concerns back to the commission, but I think, before the commission determines what their action is going to be, they're going to want to know what is happening in federal waters, and so I think that they're going to want this to be further along in the process and know the overall game plan. That's my sense, based on the discussions that they've had at past commission meetings about this topic, and so I think they're going to want to have more information.

MR. HARTIG: To that point, Jessica has encouraged me a number of times to come to the commission meetings to help her make arguments for what the council is trying to do. I can only go to so many meetings a year and still make a living on the water, but it is important, I think, especially for this one to follow through, and I will try and do that, but you've done a good job.

DR. DUVAL: Zack, does that help you out some, in terms of conveying your concerns?

MR. BOWEN: Yes, ma'am. Again, I am just -- I probably think about red snapper more than most people realize I do, and that was just something that I saw that there was a potential to decrease not only landings, but dead discards.

DR. DUVAL: I think everybody shares those concerns as well, but, given what Roy has pointed out, we're all here around the table. I think I certainly try to bring back concerns expressed here to our state marine fisheries commission as well, and so I think we'll rely on our state folks to do that. Thank you though for raising the concern. I appreciate it.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Where are we? It sounds like folks are still interested in going out for scoping in January and February. We're still interested in having those scoping meetings be in-person. We're going to dial back what we would be presenting to the public and go forward front and center with what is the problem that we're trying to solve, primarily how to reduce dead discards. If we're able to reduce discards to a point where we could have a limited fishery, what are the tradeoffs people are willing to make in order to have that opportunity? Does that sound

like where we're going? Okay. Now I'm looking at Chip and Myra. Do you all have what you need or think you need in order to make this work?

MS. BROUWER: I would say that, yes, the guidance has been pretty clear. I think we're clear on how we're going to modify the document and present it to the public, but I would still want a motion to approve this for scoping as discussed or some kind of verbiage that lets us know that there are specific criteria that you want.

MR. HAYMANS: **Madam Chair, I would move that we take Amendment 43, as we have discussed its changes, to public scoping.**

DR. DUVAL: Second by Jessica. Let's get a motion up on the board. Did you want to speak to your motion at all?

MR. HAYMANS: No, and I was going to, after Chip is finished and we vote, speak to something that Chip volunteered to do yesterday, just to put that in as a direction to staff. That is to take the Amendment 43 options paper, as changed or as discussed, to public scoping. I don't know the right -- As modified. How about that?

DR. DUVAL: Okay. **The motion reads to approve the Amendment 43 options paper, as modified, for scoping in January 2017.** Is there any other discussion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** Thank you. That was a good conversation.

MR. HAYMANS: I don't know what Dr. Collier's workload is like, but, yesterday, he had mentioned trying to do a literature search on descending devices and get us up to date on that. If that's possible for the March meeting, I think that would be very beneficial.

DR. COLLIER: There has been some work done out of the Harte Research Institute on some recreational information, and so I can look into that a little bit more.

DR. DUVAL: Doug, are you looking for a list of references or are you looking for a summary of what those studies have found?

MR. HAYMANS: I don't expect to have a complete summary of what those have found. It would be nice if it was, but at least a list of references that I can then get to, and I guess I could do the same thing, but --

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Thanks.

MR. BELL: I think though, associated with that, if Chip could do just kind of a brief summary of sort of what we've got. I mean, we heard yesterday about one specific study done, and we sort of know some numbers associated with that, but it's just kind of -- They can be as good as this or they can be as ineffective as this, and just sort of the range of what you find in whatever you come up with, and that would be helpful.

DR. DUVAL: We will just note that as direction to staff for the March meeting.

MR. HAYMANS: I am going to send around a paper that was sent to me yesterday from Drumhiller in the Gulf, *Venting and Rapid Recompression Increase Survival and Improve Recovery of Red Snapper and Barotrauma*. I will send that around right now.

MR. CONKLIN: Once we get that information, would we make the determination? Would it be up to ask the SSC to look at that information and then they would recommend to us that we would mandate those and then we move it up the priority list? Is that what I understand?

DR. DUVAL: We could certainly ask the SSC to review information that's been compiled on descending devices and their utility and solicit their opinion as to the benefits of -- I wouldn't say mandating their use, but mandating that they be onboard vessels.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and I'm just wondering at what point in time do we decide there's enough information to make a decision on what to do with these things, and I know there's been a ton of work done, and we've talked about it, all over the country, and so just because it's not in our region, it doesn't mean that -- A recompression is a recompression.

DR. DUVAL: I think there's a couple of different -- I think we're sort of talking about a couple of different things. I mean, it's one thing to ask that folks have these onboard and provide outreach and training on their proper use and when they should be used, and then it's another thing to be able to quantify what type of reduction in discard mortality you would get from those, and so I think those are two different things. I think the first piece is much easier.

MR. BELL: From our perspective, if we go down this road, that's all we could really do, is require them to have the gear, from an enforceability standpoint. Either you have it or you don't, but then the actual application of it would come through maybe better outreach and education and how you should use them and why.

DR. DUVAL: Wilson, I'm going to let you have the last word on this, because we have another agenda item.

DR. LANEY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'm not on your committee, and I apologize if you all discussed this yesterday afternoon, but is there any sort of a certification program for descending devices? I am thinking like the TED program that NMFS runs. I didn't know whether there is any entity out there that certifies them or not and whether or not there is any sort of thoughts that the council might have about any sort of minimum criterion for a reduction of mortality that might occur from using a particular device.

DR. DUVAL: I would look to others around the table.

DR. PONWITH: We have hosted barotrauma workshops, and what I can do is take a look at -- I can say that, in our region, there is no certification that essentially endorses one type of device over another. We have held barotrauma workshops with the industry and with the scientists to talk about where we in this technology, and I can go back and review the results of those, to see sort of what the state of play was at the most recent of these, but, again, I think that's exactly the point that our Chair has brought up, is we have two parts of this.

One is it's almost a decision tree. Are they effective, yes or no? If yes, then what is the best way to encourage people to use them? If it's education and outreach and having a regulation that they're on the vessel, that's part of the decision tree. Then the second part of that is, if that is the management measure, how do you figure out how to credit for that, because it's a combination of physiology and biology, and it's a combination coupled with human behavior.

We would have to figure out how you get enough information for the physiology part and how do you get enough information on the human behavior part. If people have them on their vessel, are they using them or are they not? What percentages are we looking at? Then we can use that together to figure out how to credit the industry for that regulation being in place, and so I can look at what the report is from the last barotrauma workshop and get back to you at the next meeting on sort of the state of play, nationally and in our region.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Bonnie.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I will check with my counterparts too on the west coast, because I think the presenter said there are some in use already or required in FMPs, and so we can get that information and see how the FMP structured the requirement and what they said about that as well.

DR. CRABTREE: That was the first thing, because, if we're going to require it, we're going to have to define what it is, and so we can work on that. Now, to figure out what ballpark reduction we might expect to get, I suspect it will require that we make a number of assumptions, because I don't think there is a way to necessarily estimate compliance and what it's going to be, and I suspect compliance could be reasonably expected to improve over time with outreach.

I think what I would ask Jack to do is look at the literature that's available on how effective these are and then look at what might be a reasonable range of assumptions about compliance and other things and see if we can come up with some sort of a range of what we think this might achieve, and maybe we can get something, working with your staff on that, that we can look at the next council meeting.

DR. DUVAL: Chester, and then we're wrapping this up.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Number one is the issue of whether or not descending devices work, and the answer to that is yes. I've been to a number of demonstrations of the things, and they work, and they're relatively simple and they're relatively inexpensive. With regard to buy-in, mostly what we're talking about right now is the recreational dead discards. In the recreational community, the way that you really enforce something is peer pressure.

If you get buy-in from the, quote, leadership or whatever you want to call it of the recreational community, then you have peer pressure. Whether you've got somebody that's out there inspecting every boat or not -- I mean that's never going to happen. I use as an example that right now you can keep a sailfish. It's not illegal to keep a sailfish, but if you show up at the marina with a dead sailfish onboard, they are probably not going to sell you gas and ice. They're probably going to run you out of there, because of peer pressure. You don't kill a sailfish. Peer pressure can be very effective, and, if we can get buy-in from of the groups, buy-in through education, I think you can hit on this thing pretty good. That's just my impression.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Chester. I suspect we'll have a lot more conversation about this over the next couple of meetings. With that said, we've got our direction to staff, and I would like to move on to the next agenda item, if you all feel that you have what you need. Okay.

The next agenda item is Golden Tilefish, and this does not have any attachment in your briefing book. I would just encourage folks to look at the overview, the Snapper Grouper Committee Overview. The last couple of pages of the overview lays out the tasks that we provided to the SSC and what we asked them to discuss with regards to the update assessment for golden tilefish, and, Myra, are you going to review that or is someone else going to do that?

MS. BROUWER: I can certainly just introduce and walk you through what we have in the overview, and I believe Marcel is around to help answer any questions that you might have that are of a more technical nature regarding the assessment, but, basically, as Michelle mentioned, this is Item 13 in your overview, and we included a couple of tables to kind of sort of set the stage for the discussion that needs to happen this morning.

The first table shows you the results of the update assessment. You've got your OFL, and this is presented compared to -- It's in gutted weights. They're both gutted weight. SEDAR 25 is on the left. The SEDAR 25 update is on the right, and then you've got your ABC. For 2017, you're looking at quite a substantial reduction there on the projected ABC.

Then I included the direction that you provided, the questions that you asked of your SSC, and that's all included in here, and the SSC, as Marcel told you yesterday, discussed all of these things when they met back in October. There is a table that shows you average landings for commercial and recreational in both gutted weight and whole weight. Then we included several options for you to consider of ways you might want to proceed with golden tilefish and things that you need to be aware of as far as timing for each of these options.

Option 1 is to request that the agency take emergency action to implement the recommended changes to fishing levels that came out of the update assessment. If you go that route -- Nothing that you choose really can affect the 2017 season for the longline sector anyway, and so, if the emergency action route is chosen, the changes would be in effect prior to the start of the January 2018 fishing year. The changes might be in place to affect the hook-and-line portion of that fishery in 2017.

You could also choose to utilize the expedited framework procedure. This is one that you implemented through Amendment 27. It's basically a much faster way to make adjustments to your ABCs and ACLs. You couldn't change any management measures this way, but it would be another avenue. Again, if this was approved in March or in June of 2017, regulations would only affect the hook-and-line sector in 2017. You would have something in place to affect the longline sector at the start of 2018.

We could also initiate development of a regulatory amendment to implement those recommended changes, and, here, you would have the option of making changes to management measures, trip limits or what have you. Again, this would take about a year to complete, as you know, and so this would be in place at the start of January of 2018.

Then, as you've discussed a little bit up until now, there is another option to initiate development of a plan amendment that would include changes to the ABC control rule. If you go this route, you could, as we talked yesterday, look at the phased-in approach. There could be changes to allow you to take a different risk as well, and, of course, a plan amendment would take about a year to develop, and the revisions to the ABC control rule would have to be done in conjunction with the SSC, and so the timing, we feel, would take a good bit longer, and so you're looking at regulations being in place for the start of 2019. Of course, we would need to look at the timing and reprioritize other snapper grouper items, and so that's what we have for you to consider at this point.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Myra.

MR. HARTIG: I have a motion, but I don't know if there's any questions for Myra.

MR. PHILLIPS: Myra, just to be clear, if we go to Option 4 for a control rule, would the control rule just be for golden tile, or can it be a generic control rule that we can use for other species, just to be clear?

MS. BROUWER: It's whatever you would like to do. If you do an amendment that would amend the control rule and that would be applicable to other species, you could go that route and also include actions in that same amendment that would pertain only to golden tilefish. Maybe Monica or somebody can offer some extra details on that, but that's my understanding.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: No, I think that's right. I think you have a couple of ways to go on that, but I agree with what Myra said.

DR. DUVAL: I think one of the other things that was brought up was, and this would also require a modification to the ABC control rule is my understanding, is if the council decided to select a different risk of overfishing. We would need to request additional projections right now. The P* is 30 percent, but we could request those, but, in order to use those, we would need to modify the ABC control rule.

DR. CRABTREE: I think you could request all of that and start working on a plan amendment and then, at the June or perhaps even the September meeting, we could see where we are on implementation. Then, if you wanted to talk about an emergency rule or something, but it seems to me that we can't get anything done prior to probably closure of the longline fishery under any circumstance, and I'm not sure it would be fair to put the whole burden on the hook-and-line guys.

I think it's reasonable for our goal to be to have something in place by January 1 of 2018. If we really move quickly, maybe we can get a plan amendment done by then, but, if it's looking like we won't make it, we could come back to the issue of an emergency rule. Really, it would be an interim rule at that point, and we could talk about that maybe at the June meeting or September. That seems reasonable, and that would give you time to explore all of these options and make your decisions.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Were there any other questions for Myra? Ben, you said you had a motion.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, Madam Chairman. **I would move Option 4.**

DR. DUVAL: **There is a motion by Ben to select Option 4, which was to initiate development of a plan amendment that would modify the ABC control rule to implement a phased-in approach to end overfishing of golden tilefish, as presented in revisions to the NS 1 Guidelines.** Is there a second to that? Second by Chris. Is there discussion?

DR. CRABTREE: I assume, although it's not in the motion, you would also look at the risk issue as a part of this as well.

MR. HARTIG: That was going to be another motion.

DR. CRABTREE: Okay.

DR. DUVAL: Ben has got a plan. I am just giving Myra a chance to get this here on the screen for us. **The motion is to select Option 4 in the Snapper Grouper Overview to implement changes to golden tilefish.** Any other discussion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MR. HARTIG: **The next motion would be to ask the Center to give us projections on P* of 40 and 45 percent.**

DR. DUVAL: **Motion by Ben to request the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to provide projections for golden tilefish at P* of 0.4 and 0.45.** It's seconded by Chris. Is there discussion?

MR. HARTIG: There is some additional information that has come out recently about the Foundation Longline Survey. We had a presentation by Frank in June, a progress report on that, and, subsequent to that, it's been finished, and we have some information from that study which is pretty interesting, actually.

The number of samples in this study were done from I guess southern South Carolina all the way through the longline area in Florida, and I think they actually made a set in the hook-and-line zone as well, but, just eyeballing this information, there's a lot of smaller fish in this information, which I have talked to Gregg about to have this information collated in a much better fashion that we could possibly get some inferences from it.

I mean, if we can look at this information in the context of the risk, I think, going forward, we may be able to identify that 2012 year class that showed up in the assessment in the hook-and-line fishery but did not carry through in the cohort analysis. It does seem to possibly carry forward in Frank's sampling, and the other thing I would say about that is I had the conversation with Genny, who did the stock assessment on golden tilefish, Dr. Nessler, I think, and we had the conversation about that year class.

She had some information that wasn't presented in the assessment that showed that it showed up in the hook-and-line fishery, but it did not carry forward, and I had the same observations where I fished. I did not see it carry forward.

However, after this hurricane, it's there, and so, wherever these fish were between the time of 2013 and 2014 and 2015 and 2016, I don't know where they were, but the hurricane moved fish around.

There is no doubt about that, and that three to five or possibly six-pound fish is very apparent back in the fishery again that was not there before. This information possibly could shed light on that missing year class and give us a little bit of information on recruitment that may guide us to allow for possibly more risk in our estimation of the catch levels.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Ben. Is there any other discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

Okay. I am so proud of you guys. It's ten minutes to ten, and so is there any other business, at this time, to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? Okay. Seeing none, we will go ahead and take a break. Thank you very much, again, for your hard work and thoughtful conversation. I appreciate it.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 8, 2016.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Amanda Thomas
December 23, 2016

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2016 - 2017 COMMITTEES (continued)

SNAPPER GROUPE

- ✓ Michelle Duval, Chair
- ✓ Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
- ✓ Anna Beckwith
- ✓ Mel Bell
- ✓ Zack Bowen
- ✓ Chester Brewer
- ✓ Mark Brown
- ✓ Chris Conklin
- ✓ Roy Crabtree
- ✓ Tim Griner
- ✓ Ben Hartig
- ✓ Doug Haymans
- ✓ Charlie Phillips ✓
- ✓ Mid-Atlantic Liaison, Tony DiLernia/Dewey ✓
- Hemilright
- ✓ Staff contact: Myra Brouwer

SOPPs

- Chris Conklin, Chair
- Doug Haymans, Vice-Chair
- Anna Beckwith
- Chester Brewer
- Roy Crabtree
- Michelle Duval
- LT Tara Pray
- Staff contact: Gregg Waugh

SPINY LOBSTER

- Jessica McCawley, Chair
- Ben Hartig, Vice-Chair
- Chris Conklin
- Roy Crabtree
- LT Tara Pray
- Staff contact: Kari MacLauchlin

Erica Burgess
Rick DeVicktor
Dr. Marcel Reichart
Patricia Bennett
Tracy Dunn
Dr. Jack McGovern
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Monica Smit-Brenello
Aym Pios
Dale Diaz
Erik Williams
Erin Schnettler
Jessica Stephens
Kenny Fex

Brendan Runde

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2016 - 2017 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP (continued)

Doug Haymans
Coastal Resources Division
GA Dept. of Natural Resources
One Conservation Way, Suite 300
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687
912/264-7218 (ph); 912/262-2318 (f)
doughaymans@gmail.com

✓ LT Tara Pray
U.S. Coast Guard
909 SE 1st Ave.
Miami, FL 33131
305/415-6765 (ph)
tara.c.pray@uscg.mil

✓ Dr. Wilson Laney
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Atlantic Fisheries Coordinator
P.O. Box 33683
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617
(110 Brooks Ave
237 David Clark Laboratories,
NCSU Campus
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617)
919/515-5019 (ph)
919/515-4415 (f)
Wilson_Laney@fws.gov

Deirdre Warner-Kramer
Office of Marine Conservation
OES/OMC
2201 C Street, N.W.
Department of State, Room 5806
Washington, DC 20520
202/647-3228 (ph); 202/736-7350 (f)
Warner-KramerDM@state.gov

Jessica McCawley
Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
2590 Executive Center Circle E.,
Suite 201
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850/487-0554 (ph); 850/487-4847(f)
jessica.mccawley@myfwc.com

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2016 - 2017 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

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

Tim Griner
4446 Woodlark Lane
Charlotte, NC 28211
980/722-0918 (ph)
timgrinersafmc@gmail.com

Ben Hartig
9277 Sharon Street
Hobe Sound, FL 33455
772/546-1541 (ph)
mackattackben@att.net

(Continued)

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

Public Information Officer

✓ Kim Iverson
kim.iverson@safmc.net

Financial Secretary

Debra Buscher
deb.buscher@safmc.net

Fisheries Social Scientist

✓ Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net

Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator

Cindy Chaya
cindy.chaya@safmc.net

Purchasing & Grants

Julie O'Dell
Julie.Odell@safmc.net

✓ **Fishery Scientist**

✓ Chip Collier
chip.collier@safmc.net

✓ **Senior Fishery Biologist**

✓ Roger Pugliese
roger.pugliese@safmc.net

Administrative Officer

✓ Mike Collins
mike.collins@safmc.net

✓ **Fishery Outreach Specialist**

Amber Von Harten
amber.vonharten@safmc.net

Fishery Biologist

✓ Dr. Mike Errigo
mike.errigo@safmc.net

SEDAR Coordinators

Dr. Julie Neer - julie.neer@safmc.net
Julia Byrd - julia.byrd@safmc.net

✓ **Fishery Economist**

✓ John Hadley
john.hadley@safmc.net



Dec 7, 2016

| Full Name | Email |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Joey Ballenger | ballengerj@dnr.sc.gov |
| Kellie Ralston | kralston@asafishing.org |
| Richen Brame | dbrame55@gmail.com |
| Dean Foster | dfoster@pewtrusts.org |
| Rusty Hudson | DSF2009@aol.com |
| david bush | davidbush@ncfish.org |
| Lora Clarke | lclarke@pewtrusts.org |
| Katie Siegfried | kate.siegfried@noaa.gov |
| Robert Lorenz | rjlorenz@ec.rr.com |
| Walter Bubley | bubleyw@dnr.sc.gov |
| Chris Batsavage | Chris.Batsavage@ncdenr.gov |
| Karen Scholl | bluewaterorganic@gmail.com |
| Jennifer Potts | Jennifer.potts@noaa.gov |
| Andy Ostrowski | Andy.ostrowski@noaa.gov |
| Rich Malinowski | rich.malinowski@noaa.gov |
| Capt Bill Kelly | fkcf1@hotmail.com |
| gary zurn | gzurn@bigrocksports.com |
| Jack Cox, Jr | |
| Sonny Davis | |
| SHAWN ALAN SCHOLL | bluewaterorganic@gmail.com |
| Tom Roller | capttom@waterdogguideservice.com |
| Joey Ballenger | ballengerj@dnr.sc.gov |
| Walter Bubley | bubleyw@dnr.sc.gov |
| Robert Lorenz | rjlorenz@ec.rr.com |
| Lora Clarke | lclarke@pewtrusts.org |
| Richen Brame | dbrame55@gmail.com |
| Leda Dunmire | LDunmire@pewtrusts.org |

Dec 7, 2016 P1

| Last Name | First Name | Email Address |
|--------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Abeels | Holly | habeels@ufl.edu |
| Bailey | Adam | adam.bailey@noaa.gov |
| Baker | Scott | bakers@uncw.edu |
| Ballenger | Joey | ballengerj@dnr.sc.gov |
| Bianchi | Alan | Alan.Bianchi@ncdenr.gov |
| Bowen | Zack | fishzack@comcast.net |
| Brennan | Ken | kenneth.brennan@noaa.gov |
| Byrd | Julia | julia.byrd@safmc.net |
| Clarke | Lora | lclarke@pewtrusts.org |
| Conklin | Chris | conklinsafmc@gmail.com |
| Crosson | Scott | scott.crosson@noaa.gov |
| DeVictor | Rick | rick.devictor@noaa.gov |
| Diaz | Dale | Saltwaterlife@live.com |
| Dunmire | Leda | ldunmire@pewtrusts.org |
| Erwin | Gwen | gwen.erwin@myfwc.com |
| Foster | Dean | dfoster@pewtrusts.org |
| Godwin | Joelle | joelle.godwin@noaa.gov |
| Gore | Karla | karla.gore@noaa.gov |
| Guyas | Martha | martha.guyas@myfwc.com |
| Hadley | John | john.hadley@safmc.net |
| Hartig | Ben | mackattackben@att.net |
| Helies | Frank | frank.helies@noaa.gov |
| Hemilright | Dewey | fvtarbaby@embarqmail.com |
| Hickerson | Emma | emma.hickerson@noaa.gov |
| Hudson | Rusty | DSF2009@aol.com |
| Iverson | Kim | kim.iverson@safmc.net |
| Johnson | Robert | jlfishing@bellsouth.net |
| Klibansky | Nikolai | nikolai.klibansky@noaa.gov |
| Knowlton | Kathy | kathy.knowlton@dnr.ga.gov |
| L | I | captaindrifter@bellsouth.net |
| Lamberte | Tony | tony.lamberte@noaa.gov |
| Larkin | Michael | Michael.Larkin@noaa.gov |
| Levy | Mara | mara.levy@noaa.gov |
| Lloyd | Victor | vic_lloyd@bellsouth.net |
| MacLauchlin | Bill | billmac@adtrends.com |
| MacLauchlin | Kari | kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net |
| Mahood | Bob | rmahood@mindspring.com |
| McPherson | Matthew | matthew.mcpherson@noaa.gov |
| Mehta | Nikhil | nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov |
| Neer | Julie | julie.neer@safmc.net |
| Package-Ward | Christina | christina.package-ward@noaa.gov |

Dec 7, 2016 pv

| | | |
|------------------|---------|---------------------------|
| Player | David | playerd@dnr.sc.gov |
| Pulver | Jeff | Jeff.Pulver@noaa.gov |
| Raine | Karen | karen.raine@noaa.gov |
| Records | David | david.records@noaa.gov |
| Sedberry | George | george.sedberry@noaa.gov |
| Shertzer | Kyle | kyle.shertzer@noaa.gov |
| Shipley | Krista | krista.shipley@myfwc.com |
| Shipman | Susan | susanshipman@att.net |
| Stafford | Pete | spstafford@gmail.com |
| Stephen | Jessica | jessica.stephen@noaa.gov |
| Surrency | Ron | captronacc@gmail.com |
| Takade-Heumacher | Helen | htakade@edf.org |
| Travis | Michael | mike.travis@noaa.gov |
| Von Harten | Amber | amber.vonharten@safmc.net |
| Walia | Matt | matthew.walia@noaa.gov |
| blough | heather | heather.blough@noaa.gov |
| brewer | chester | wcblaw@aol.com |
| burton | michael | michael.burton@noaa.gov |
| holiman | stephen | stephen.holiman@noaa.gov |
| malinowski | rich | rich.malinowski@noaa.gov |
| miller | janet | janet.l.miller@noaa.gov |
| pugliese | roger | roger.pugliese@safmc.net |
| sandorf | scott | scott.sandorf@noaa.gov |
| vara | mary | mary.vara@noaa.gov |

Dec 8, 2016

| Full Name | Email |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Dean Foster | dfoster@pewtrusts.org |
| Rusty Hudson | DSF2009@aol.com |
| david bush | davidbush@ncfish.org |
| Steve Poland | steve.poland@ncdenr.gov |
| Bill Gorham | getbowedup40@gmail.com |
| rich malinowski | rich.malinowski@noaa.gov |

Dec 8, 2016 p1

| Last Name | First Name | Email Address |
|----------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Abeels | Holly | habeels@ufl.edu |
| Bailey | Adam | adam.bailey@noaa.gov |
| Baker | Scott | bakers@uncw.edu |
| Bell | Mel | bellm@dnr.sc.gov |
| Bianchi | Alan | Alan.Bianchi@ncdenr.gov |
| Blow | Wes | wesamy2000@cox.net |
| Bowen | Zack | fishzack@comcast.net |
| Brennan | Ken | kenneth.brennan@noaa.gov |
| Brouwer | Myra | myra.brouwer@safmc.net |
| Brown | Mark | capt.markbrown@comcast.net |
| Bush | David | davidbush@bcfish.org |
| Byrd | Julia | julia.byrd@safmc.net |
| Cheshire | Rob | rob.cheshire@noaa.gov |
| Cimino | Joe | joe.cimino@mrc.virginia.gov |
| Clarke | Lora | lclarke@pewtrusts.org |
| Conklin | Chris | conklinsafmc@gmail.com |
| Crosson | Scott | scott.crosson@noaa.gov |
| DeVictor | Rick | rick.devictor@noaa.gov |
| Diaz | Dale | Saltwaterlife@live.com |
| Dunmire | Leda | ldunmire@pewtrusts.org |
| Dutka-Gianelli | Jynessa | jdgianelli@ufl.edu |
| Errigo | Mike | mike.errigo@safmc.net |
| Erwin | Gwen | gwen.erwin@myfwc.com |
| Estes | Jim | jim.estes@myfwc.com |
| Foster | Dean | dfoster@pewtrusts.org |
| Franco | Dawn | dawn.franco@dnr.ga.gov |
| Geer | Patrick | pat.geer@dnr.state.ga.us |
| Gerhart | Susan | susan.gerhart@noaa.gov |
| Godwin | Joelle | joelle.godwin@noaa.gov |
| Gore | Karla | karla.gore@noaa.gov |
| Guyas | Martha | martha.guyas@myfwc.com |
| Hanson | Chad | chanson@pewtrusts.org |
| Hartig | Ben | mackattackben@att.net |
| Helies | Frank | frank.helies@noaa.gov |
| Hemilright | Dewey | fvtarbaby@embarqmail.com |
| Henninger | Heidi | heidi@olrac.com |
| Hudson | Rusty | DSF2009@aol.com |
| Iverson | Kim | kim.iverson@safmc.net |
| Jiorle | Ryan | ryan.jiorle@mrc.virginia.gov |
| Kalinowsky | Chris | Chris.Kalinowsky@dnr.ga.gov |
| Klibansky | Nikolai | nikolai.klibansky@noaa.gov |

Dec 8, 2016 pr

| | | |
|------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Knowlton | Kathy | kathy.knowlton@dnr.ga.gov |
| Laks | Ira | captaindrifter@bellsouth.net |
| Larkin | Michael | Michael.Larkin@noaa.gov |
| Lupton | Dee | dee.lupton@ncdenr.gov |
| MacLauchlin | Bill | billmac@adttrends.com |
| Mahood | Bob | rmahood@mindspring.com |
| Malinowski | Rich | rich.malinowski@noaa.gov |
| McCoy | Sherri | sherrim@wildoceanmarket.com |
| McPherson | Matthew | matthew.mcpherson@noaa.gov |
| Mehta | Nikhil | nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov |
| Neer | Julie | julie.neer@safmc.net |
| Package-Ward | Christina | christina.package-ward@noaa.gov |
| Player | David | playerd@dnr.sc.gov |
| Pulver | Jeff | Jeff.Pulver@noaa.gov |
| Raine | Karen | karen.raine@noaa.gov |
| Ralston | Kellie | kralston@asafishing.org |
| Records | David | david.records@noaa.gov |
| Schwaab | Alexandra | alexandra.schwaab@accsp.org |
| Sedberry | George | george.sedberry@noaa.gov |
| Shipley | Krista | krista.shipley@myfwc.com |
| Stephen | Jessica | jessica.stephen@noaa.gov |
| Surrency | Ron | captronacc@gmail.com |
| Takade-Heumacher | Helen | htakade@edf.org |
| Walia | Matt | matthew.walia@noaa.gov |
| Waters | James | jwaters8@gmail.com |
| Waugh | Gregg | gregg.waugh@safmc.net |
| White | Holly | holly.white@ncdenr.gov |
| Wyatt | Elizabeth | elizabeth.wyatt@accsp.org |
| brewer | chester | wcblaw@aol.com |
| holiman | stephen | stephen.holiman@noaa.gov |
| pugliese | roger | roger.pugliese@safmc.net |
| sandorf | scott | scott.sandorf@noaa.gov |
| shertzer | kyle | kyle.shertzer@noaa.gov |
| vara | mary | mary.vara@noaa.gov |