

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront
Atlantic Beach, North Carolina**

December 5-7, 2017

SUMMARY MINUTES

Snapper Grouper Committee Members

Dr. Michelle Duval
Mel Bell
Chester Brewer
Chris Conklin
Tim Griner
Charlie Phillips
Dewey Hemilright

Anna Beckwith
Zack Bowen
Mark Brown
Dr. Roy Crabtree
Ben Hartig
Tony DiLernia

Council Members

Robert Beal

Council Staff

Gregg Waugh
Dr. Brian Chevront
Kimberly Cole
Mike Collins
Dr. Mike Errigo
Kim Iverson
Cameron Rhodes
Christina Wiegand

John Carmichael
Myra Brouwer
Dr. Chip Collier
Kelsey Dick
John Hadley
Roger Pugliese
Amber Von Harten
Kathleen Howington

Observers/Participants

Jim Estes
Rick DeVictor
Dr. Marcel Reichert
Dr. Erik Williams
Dr. Jack McGovern
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Dr. Mike Larkin
Shaun Gehan

Lieutenant Commander Trish Bennett
Nik Mehta
Erika Burgess
Monica Smit-Brunello
Dale Diaz
Kathy Knowlton
David Moss
Dr. Nikolai Klibansky

Other observers and participants 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, Tuesday afternoon, December 5, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman Michelle Duval.

DR. DUVAL: It's 1:35 on my clock, and so I would like to go ahead and call the Snapper Grouper Committee to order, if I may. Everybody come on up to the table. The first item of business is Approval of the Agenda. Are there any modifications to the agenda? We do have one item under Other Business that I indicated that we would discuss, and that is there is some concern and desire on the part of the committee to have some conversation about, I think, MRIP estimates and generally how these interact with our accountability measures. We're trying to address some of that in the ABC control rule, but I said we would save some time for that under Other Business on the agenda.

Seeing no other modifications to the agenda, the agenda stands approved, and the next item of business is Approval of the September 2017 Committee Minutes. Are there any modifications to the minutes from our September meeting? Seeing none, the minutes stand approved. The next item of business is the Status of Commercial and Recreational Catches Versus Quotas for Species Under ACLs, and I assume, Rick, that you're going to take us through the commercial harvest. I guess, Rick, maybe, when you go through that, if you wouldn't mind perhaps highlighting why there might be differences in sort of the report that we got at the end of last year for what the 2016 numbers were versus the 2016 numbers that are in this presentation right here, and I think that might be helpful for folks to hear.

MR. DEVICTOR: Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Larkin is going to call in, I think, and give the recreational landings report, and I will go through the commercial, as I normally do. What is on the screen here is landings through November 27. In your briefing materials, under Tab 7, it's Attachment 1a, and those are landings through November 6, and so, as we normally do, we show on the screen updated landings, and we show the 2017 ACL, any proposed ACL that's going to go into place this year or next year, and we show landings through November 27, what percent of the ACL has been reached, and what date it's been closed.

Then, on the columns to the right, you can see, just for comparison purposes, we have the 2016 ACL, and we have landings through the same time period last year, and so that's November 28, and what the final landings were and what percent of the 2016 ACL is. As Michelle alluded to, you can notice that some of the landings that were reported on November 28 actually decreased from the final, and so it's important to note that some of these landings can change as they come in. We get landings on Monday from the Science Center, and dealers have until Tuesday at midnight to report, and so there's a little bit of a lag there, where more landings can come in during the day.

Also, the Science Center does some sort of expansion to account for the last couple of weeks there, due to non-reporting, partial reporting, and late reporting, and so that's also where some of the landings can change between the final and what's reported in this column, which is November 28, 2016.

Just going through and highlighting some of the primary species, for black sea bass, we're currently at 44 percent of the ACL, the 2017 ACL. We ended up at 33 percent last year, and so significantly below the ACL for black sea bass. Blueline tilefish, we ended up at 99 percent, or

that's where we're at as of now, and we closed down on July 18. Last year, we ended up at 112 percent of the ACL for blueline tilefish.

Moving through the golden tilefish hook-and-line sector, again, it's 99 percent, and it closed down on November 22. Golden tilefish longline, it's 99 percent there also, and we closed down on May 9, the longline sector. Last year, we closed a little bit earlier, in March. Moving through gray triggerfish, and, again, this is one of the two species where we have a split season, and so two six-month seasons, where we split the catch limit in half, and the regulations in the amendment specify that we do carry over any unused catch into the second season, and so I will point that out with gray triggerfish and vermilion snapper, how some have been carried over into the second season.

Gray triggerfish, the first season, our ACL is 156,162. 20,278 was not caught from the first season, and so that rolled over into the second, and so we show a revised catch limit, and it's important to note that we use the revised catch limit to project when the season would be closed and, if there's a step-down when 75 percent is reached, we used that revised number to do that, and I think we'll talk at Full Council on how we clarified it on our website, because we talked, the last time we met, and we got a recommendation from the council on how we can clarify to the public that indeed we do roll over some catch and use that to project when it's been met, the catch limits. Gray triggerfish, we bumped up the catch limit from the unused amount, and we closed down on November 8, and so that ended up at 105 percent of the revised ACL.

Hogfish, you can see where we ended up for hogfish. Again, we put in the regulations in August, and we were over one of the stocks. Jacks, we ended up at 97 percent, and we closed down on August 4. Last year, you can see we closed down about the same time, at August 9. Red snapper, this is the first time in a while we've actually had red snapper on here, and so we are at 15 percent, as of November 27, through these limited openings.

Moving down to snowy grouper, it's 101 percent, and we closed that down on June 22. Last year, it was around the same time, again, with June 14. Greater amberjack, it ended up at 103 percent, and it closed down on October 18. Again, you can see that we've been closing down around the same time for a lot of these species. Last year, we closed down on October 4.

Vermilion snapper, this is the second species that you have a split season, and so 20,674 was not caught, and that was added to Season 2, and we ended up at 103 percent of the revised ACL, and we reduced the trip limit, if you recall, on October 2 for vermilion snapper. Finally, yellowtail snapper, you changed the fishing season to begin on August 1, and we're currently at 38 percent. For the last season, it closed down in June of 2017. That concludes my commercial fishing report.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Rick. I just had one question. On blueline tilefish, we had that eight-day reopening that happened in October, and so I know that's not noted on the closure date that is on here right now. It notes the original July 18 closure date, but I'm assuming that that 99 percent is inclusive of all those extra landings?

MR. DEVICTOR: Yes, and that should have been on this. Sorry.

DR. DUVAL? I just want to thank you guys, the Fisheries Service, for your efforts to get that information, working with the Science Center to determine that we could have a reopening of blueline tilefish. I know that the folks here in North Carolina really appreciated that, and so I just

wanted to make sure that I acknowledged that. Thank you. Are there questions for Rick about any of the harvest?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: On your golden tilefish hook-and-line, is that date of the 22nd right, or should it be the 29th?

MR. DEVICTOR: I just got a chat in right now, and so, yes, you are right that that should have been the 29th and not the 22nd.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I have one other thing. I have had conversations with you earlier about this, the dealer reporting and the lapse of time. I understand that you all have many species to look after, but, when blueline tilefish closed in July, it took three months before it could get tallied up to see that it was under the 95th percentile of the harvest, and, a lot of times, fishermen -- I understand that stuff takes time, but how can we speed up the three-month time period and put the onus on the dealers and put some teeth? The same with fishermen. If we don't report, we don't get permits and we don't go fishing, because this three-month lag for blueline, even though it's a small amount, it's crucial to fishermen to be able to fish and harvest, and so how could maybe -- How does it work to speed up the lag time, so that it wouldn't be three months?

DR. DUVAL: I am not sure who from the Fisheries Service would like to take that. Dr. Ponwith, would you like to try to provide some clarification?

DR. PONWITH: I will take a first crack at it. That system is pretty darned fast when the reports are on time. The system is running really, really well, and it gets that information in, and it accounts for cases where there are missing reports. It has a series of algorithms that it uses to generate estimates for the reports that are known to be missing, and that's easy to get to, because you have the no-report report, and, the more on time those reports are, the fewer reports you have to generate estimates for, and so you get a double bonus. There is no lag, and there is no estimation. Basically, what you see is what you have in that situation, and so, if I were going to make the shortest answer to that question, it would be to have 100 percent compliance with the timeliness requirement of the regulation, and that would reduce the lag in being able to report exactly where we are on ACL.

DR. DUVAL: Remind me, Bonnie. Do you all have some built-in reminders into that system for dealers, so that, if they don't report, there is a generation of say an email that reminds them that they are late reporting and then there is some outreach? Perhaps someone has had a family emergency, or there's been hurricanes, like we've had several of those this year.

DR. PONWITH: Yes, there is indeed. There is sort of an automated email that goes out, and, if the report remains late, then there is an in-person -- A telephone call or an in-person visit, depending upon the circumstances, and I apologize that off the top of my head I can't tell you what the timeframe is for those is that triggers those, but, yes, there is outreach on that.

MR. DEVICTOR: If you look at that last column, when we reopened some fisheries, you can see that we have done it within two months or such, and so blueline was a little bit different. I think that we were around the 94 percent threshold for a while on that, and landings were coming in, and so we were watching that, and I think it took some of us by surprise that we were able to open

up for that many days once the Science Center sent in those projections, but I think that's something that we'll watch for more in the future.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, both. I appreciate that. Any other questions for Rick on the commercial harvest? If not, then we're next going to move to Dr. Larkin, who is joining us on the phone, and he will be running through the recreational landings, and this is Tab 7, Attachment 1b, and we have an updated report that is in the Late Materials Folder, and so I would encourage folks to go grab that.

DR. LARKIN: I will go through the recreational landings, and I know Rick just did the commercial. These are summarized using MRIP or MRFSS, which now MRFSS is calibrated from MRIP, depending on how the ACL was calculated.

Landings estimates were updated by NMFS SERO to be consistent with the ACL monitoring. Some of them have what we call post-stratification, and so some of them, for example, will include Monroe County is given to the South Atlantic. We just follow however it's done in the assessment from the SEDARs. This is data up to Wave 4, and so, essentially, for 2017, we have January through August of 2017. All the 2017 landings are preliminary, and all the landings include the MRFSS/MRIP, and they also include the headboat landings.

These, I am going to start with the 2016 landings, and then I will move on to the 2017, the preliminary 2017, landings, and I am just going to focus on the ones that exceeded their ACL. I know many of you have seen these before, but just to show you the landings and the ACL and the percentage that it went over the ACL and if it had a closure.

For 2016, blueline tilefish, we were 97 percent over the ACL. That one actually had a fixed closure of September 1, and so we didn't actually close it. It already had one being implemented. Then, golden tilefish, it was way over the ACL. You can see that there, and it was 331 percent over the ACL. That one closed on August 27, 2016. Then hogfish was 40 percent over the ACL, and it closed on November 30, 2016. Then, for the porgies, you can see they were 31 percent over the ACL. It closed on September 3, 2016. Snowy grouper was 117 percent over the ACL, and that one closed on September 1, 2016. That one, just like golden tilefish, has a fixed closure.

Now moving on to the 2017 landings, the preliminary 2017 landings, blueline tilefish did go way over the ACL, and it also has a fixed closure of September 1. That one closed on September 1, the blueline tilefish.

Then, for hogfish, that one, with Amendment 37, you could say that we kind of changed the goalpost, because we have a new ACL there, and so that one -- For Amendment 37, we split it between North Carolina and Georgia and then also a Florida Keys and East Florida stock, and we changed it from pounds to numbers, and, once Amendment 37 was implemented, we knew we were over the ACL, and so, once that started, we immediately closed the fishery for the Florida Keys and East Florida stock, which was on August 24 of 2017.

These, so far for the preliminary 2017, none of these exceeded the ACL. Greater amberjack and black sea bass, these don't have a calendar year. For example, greater amberjack is from March 1 to February 28, and black sea bass is from April to March. Greater amberjack, and so that would be March 1 of 2015 to February 28 of 2016, that one exceeded the ACL, and we didn't have a

closure, because that one by the time all the landings were compiled, then we realized we were over, and you see it's only 3 percent over, but, because of the delay in the landings -- When we get them all in and we add it up and then we realized we were over the ACL, and so that one exceeded the ACL in 2015/2016.

The same thing happened again the next year with the -- It's going, for greater amberjack, from March 1 of 2016 to the February 28 of 2017, and that one, again, when we added it all up, it was above the ACL, and you see black sea bass and yellowtail snapper. Yellowtail snapper, you can see the change there, and now that one is from August to July 31, but the other two are not over the ACL.

Now, currently, where we are, the March 1 of 2017 to February 28 of 2018, that fishing year for greater amberjack, this one we closed. We had a spike of landings, and we also monitor it closely, since, the previous two years, we went over the ACL. Anyway, you can see that one, and we're currently at 95 percent of the ACL, and we closed it on October 31, 2017. Keep in mind that these are the landings up until August of 2017, and so it wasn't closed until the end of October, and so we're still expecting a good amount of landings in Wave 5, and those September/October landings will come in, and the fishery was still open then, as well as any other landings that come in from the November/December wave and the January/February wave of the following year, and so there is still additional landings to still come in there, but we're currently at 95 percent of the ACL.

These, I know a lot of you have seen this before, but this is just a breakdown of the landings by year or fishing year, broken out by charter, headboat, private, shore, and then the total sums it up. The gray areas are when we had the ACL monitored with MRFSS, and then you can see, like in this, in 2013/2014, the ACL changed to MRIP, and so that's why that gray shading is discontinued. This is just a breakdown of landings by mode for black sea bass.

Then this will look familiar to many of you, but the landings -- The bars are an addition of those landings by mode, and so you can see the total, and then the Y-axis to the left is the landings, and the Y-axis to the right is estimates of angler trips from MRIP and the headboat angler days as well. Then those dashed lines are the ACL, and so you can see, in this case, like for example the 2015/2016 and the 2016/2017, the bars are well below the dash. Therefore, you can see that they're well below the ACL.

This is the gag grouper recreational landings, broken down by mode. This is the landings adding up by year and comparing to the effort as well as the ACL, and so these are all below the ACL. Greater amberjack, this is the greater amberjack landings by mode here broken down. Then you can see the 2015/2016 and the 2016/2017 bumped up above the ACL. Then, in 2017/2018, we have a current closure going into place now, and so that's greater amberjack. Then here's mutton snapper, the landings broken down by mode. Then here's a figure of a bar graph of the landings by year and comparing to the ACL for mutton snapper.

Then here's yellowtail snapper. This one shows all gray in MRFSS, but you can see that it has switched from a calendar year to a fishing year in 2016/2017, but it's still broken down by mode. Then you can see, in this case, they're all below the ACL for yellowtail snapper. Then red porgy is another one, and the landings are broken down by mode. Then you can see, in this case, they are below the ACL, when we had an ACL, and they're all below the little dash marks.

Then vermilion, and, again, landings broken down by mode, and 2017 is still preliminary, but then, again, you can see the landings compared to their ACL. It looks like they're all below the ACL there. Then snowy grouper, and this one is actually in numbers of fish, and that's how the ACL is monitored, but you see it broken down by mode there. You can see the 2016, and also keep in mind that this one has a relatively low ACL, in numbers. You're looking at 4,000 fish.

Then, again, golden tilefish, this is another one in numbers, and this also has a relatively low ACL in numbers, but you can see the landings broken down by mode there, and then also the peak in 2016, but I think it's like about 3,000-fish ACL, and so this is another stock that has a very low ACL.

Scamp, I think this is the last species, and so scamp is broken down by mode, the landings broken down by mode, and then there it is, and you can see they are below the ACL there. I think that's the last one, and so I would be happy to take any questions.

DR. DUVAL: Mike, I had one request. I was going to ask if you could add blueline tilefish to the list of the species for the graphs, so that we can see the harvest broken down by mode.

DR. LARKIN: Sure.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you. Then, if I am remembering correctly, just the harvest, the recreational harvest of blueline tilefish this year, that overage is due to a couple of intercepts off of Florida, and was it like --

DR. LARKIN: In Wave 2, yes, that March/April wave. There was really a big spike there of like 150,000 landings in that Wave 2, and so very high.

DR. DUVAL: Just a quick question for our Florida folks. Have you complemented the season in state waters? I am seeing heads shaking no. Okay. Thanks. Any other questions for Mike?

MR. PHILLIPS: Mike, thanks. I went looking through here, and it looks like MRIP angler trip days and headboat angler days, and I looked at the graphs, and I see it looks like identical graphs say for headboat angler days, for golden tilefish, and snowy grouper and vermilion snapper and red porgy and yellowtail and mutton, yet they're different from greater amberjack and say black sea bass, and so I'm trying to wrap my head around why the headboat effort for golden tile is the same as vermilion.

DR. LARKIN: That's just because of how we sum it up. Black sea bass, north of Cape Hatteras, we exclude them. Greater amberjack and yellowtail, we include Monroe County, and so any headboat angler days from Monroe County, and so trying to keep it consistent in how the ACL is monitored. Some of them, we include Monroe County, and some of them we don't, and so does that answer your question?

MR. PHILLIPS: No.

DR. LARKIN: What are the two that are the oddballs that are sticking in your mind? Can you remind me of the ones that --

MR. PHILLIPS: Golden tilefish, I mean, really, we've got over 250,000 angler days on golden tilefish on headboats?

DR. LARKIN: That is a general -- Meaning the headboat, they don't go out and they don't say we're a headboat targeting golden tilefish. That's just a summary for the whole area, and so meaning that's not headboat angler days just for golden tilefish. Headboats don't target a species. I mean, they may a little bit, but, anyway, those are just angler days by region, and so those are not only headboats that went out and targeted golden tilefish.

DR. DUVAL: I think I'm going to let Bonnie jump in here and address this more clearly. It's just effort is measured differently through MRIP than it is through the headboat program.

DR. PONWITH: The way the estimates are done is that you get an understanding of what the effort is, and then you get an understanding of the catch per unit effort for individual species. Then you multiply that by the total effort, and that gives you the expanded catch for that species. It's not like every trip that goes out they assign to a particular species of this is a golden tile trip and this is a red snapper trip or this is a yellowtail trip, because that's not how they fish. It's how many trips, how many angler trips, are made and then understanding what was caught in total by those angler trips.

DR. DUVAL: For the headboats, it is an angler day. That is the unit of effort, and they can have half-days versus full-days, and, for MRIP, it's a little bit different, in that you can parse out what a target species might be within the effort data, but it's just measured differently for the headboats, and so it's an angler day that is not based on targeting any one species for the headboat data, which is a little bit different than MRIP.

MR. PHILLIPS: I understand that, but, if that's the way it's done, then, to me, the graph should show all of the landings of snapper grouper in total and then effort in total, and then -- Because, if I pull this graph out on its own, I can misread it very easily.

DR. PONWITH: If that's helpful for you, we can do that, but I would actually advise against it, because understanding what the total effort is relatively to the catch of these different species I still find valuable, but we can maybe, in addition to that, show what the total effort was and what the total catch of those species together would be, but effort is still really important, even if it isn't particularly specifically assigned to one species or another.

MR. BOWEN: Mike, if you can go back to the scamp graph, the number of pounds landed, in 2014, in the charter boat mode, 2014 and 2015 and 2016, I am not sitting here saying it's right or wrong, but it's in line with what I'm seeing offshore, but, when I get to 2017, my catch for scamp didn't increase that much like it is showing here on the graph, and can you tell me where that amount of landings came from or what made that rise so drastically in 2017, because what I'm seeing offshore is still a steady decline in scamps off of Georgia.

DR. LARKIN: I can start digging into that. If you guys get into the discussion, I can do that, but I can't, off the top of my head, Zack, answer that, but I can look into it and certainly get back to you. I will do that right now.

MR. BOWEN: Okay. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Are there any other questions for Mike about any of the recreational harvest estimates? Okay. If not, Mike, then we can maybe -- Maybe you can email something to Myra, and she can make sure that Zack gets that answer on scamp, if that would be okay with you.

DR. LARKIN: Could I ask you a quick question, Michelle?

DR. DUVAL: Sure.

DR. LARKIN: You want me to add blueline tilefish, but is there any I can remove? Do you see any that you don't need on there, or do you want me to keep all of them and then just add blueline?

DR. DUVAL: Does anybody see any species that they think could be removed from this list? Sadly, Mike, I think the answer is, no, that we don't see any that we want to remove.

DR. LARKIN: All right. I had to ask. I will look into that thing for Zack then.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Mike. Okay. That completes the status of commercial and recreational catches, and the next item on our agenda is Status of Amendments Under Formal Review, and I believe Rick is going to take us through this item as well. Thanks, Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: Sure thing. Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I will go through three amendments, or actually two amendments and one rule, and so the Amendment 41 for mutton snapper, the golden tilefish interim rule, and then Amendment 43 for red snapper. Amendment 41, if you recall, it updates biological benchmarks and allowable fishing levels for mutton snapper based on the stock assessment, and the notice of availability published on September 26, and comments were due on the NOA on November 27. The proposed rule published on October 24, and comments were due on November 24, a month later, and so we're working on the final rule now for Amendment 41 for mutton snapper.

The golden tilefish interim rule, we received a letter from the council requesting this, and that letter was dated June 27. You requested a reduction in the catch limit for golden tilefish to the projected yield at 75 percent of FMSY. That equals 323,000 pounds gutted weight, and so we published a temporary rule that would take the ACL to that level, and that proposed temporary rule published on October 30, and comments were due on November 14, and we are working on a final temporary rule now for golden tilefish.

Finally, Amendment 43, that is red snapper, and that would specify ACLs for red snapper beginning in 2018, and it would allow limited commercial and recreational harvest of red snapper, again beginning in 2018, and the total ACL would be 42,510 fish. Just to remind you that that fishing season would start in July. The commercial would start the second Monday in July, and the recreational will start the second Friday in July, beginning in 2018. The council submitted Amendment 43 to NMFS on November 20, and so we are working on a proposed rule now and the NOA, and that concludes my status report.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Rick.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I just wanted to bring to your attention, with golden tilefish, that Rick is right that there was a proposed interim rule published on October 30, and then we discovered yesterday that there has been a lawsuit filed on the proposed interim rule, and that was filed by the Southeastern Fisheries Association East Coast Fisheries Section, and that group sued the Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross, and it was filed, the lawsuit, on November 29th in the D.C. District Court. I have a copy of the complaint now, and I will send it to Mike and send it around. We have not yet -- The Fisheries Service has not yet published a final interim rule, and so it's a little different, but, at any rate, I will make sure that you all get a copy of the complaint.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Monica, and Shaun Gehan is here, and Shaun is the attorney for the Southeastern Fisheries Association who filed the complaint, and he's not going to be here tomorrow, and so he asked for just a couple of minutes on the agenda to address this item, and so, Shaun, if you don't mind just stating who you are for the record.

MR. GEHAN: My name is Shaun Gehan, and I'm serving as counsel for the Southeastern Fisheries Association, East Coast Fisheries Section. Monica gave the introduction, and so I will say that the lawsuit was filed. It has not been served on the parties. In fact, the summonses just came out today. They won't be served. There will be an amended complaint once the rule goes final, but with a short period of comment time, and there was a little lack of clarity as to whether or not the rule was a final rule with comment, as an interim rule done under the emergency and interim rules provision and the short thirty-day deadline, we, in an abundance of caution, had filed the initial suit, but I will say that certainly the members, my clients, the members of this golden tilefish fishery, have certainly appreciated the diligence of this committee in trying to find a way to get a better -- Get a better assessment and science on this.

I think one of the main issues in this current complaint, and assuming what happens with the final rule, assuming it stays the same, I think one of the big issues will just be a procedural question about updates versus standards versus benchmark assessments, but our hope certainly is this is the kind of thing that could be settled with some further scientific review.

I don't think anybody thinks the 40 percent cut in golden tilefish that's been proposed for next year is really warranted by the status. Whether or not the current ACL is appropriate is certainly up for discussion, but we just hope to work with you all, and I just wanted to let you all know that we're out there and hoping to work with people and to express our appreciation for this year's update, which unfortunately didn't work out, and for moving forward with a more detailed assessment in the near term. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Shaun. It's very much appreciated. Are there any questions for Rick on the status of amendments? Okay. Seeing none, the next item on our agenda is the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Report, and so we would like to go ahead and welcome David Moss up here. David is our new Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Chair.

November was his first meeting as Chair, and he did an excellent job, if I could say so myself, and so the advisory panel report is Attachments 2a through 2e, I believe, in your briefing book. David is here at the meeting, and I think he is going to hit the highlights of the summary report, and, if folks have any questions for him, they are certainly welcome to ask, and he will just do his best to try to answer whatever comes up, and so, David, I will just turn it over to you.

MR. MOSS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Again, I'm David Moss. As the Chair discussed, I'm just going to kind of hit the highlights, some of the things that we went over. We spent a good portion of time going over the fishery performance reports, but, in addition to that, we also discussed Regulatory Amendment 26, a lot of the stuff that you guys will be discussing later on today, I believe, and the AP decided that the alternatives that were in there all seemed good enough for everybody to consider, and so we had no additions to that one.

The one motion was recommended to add African pompano to the Snapper Grouper Unit, and that was due to seeing kind of a regularity of this animal, more up in the North Carolina region. One of the AP members up there had seen kind of waves of them coming in, and so he wanted to see if we could somehow get a grip on that management process.

Then there was Regulatory Amendment 27, and the main aim there was extending the season for both blueline tile and snowy grouper, as they tend to see them in conjunction with each other. There was also some discussion on amberjack and the resource, again, kind of being influenced more in the North Carolina area and that you don't see as many of those fish as we do down south.

We had also discussed vermilion snapper and that it's a very important commercial species, and one of the main discussions, again, especially on the commercial side, was to try to keep the commercial season open for as long as you can to keep fish constantly coming to the dock and also to try to keep a more consistent price, because I guess there were some issues with price fluctuations when the market gets flooded and so on and so forth.

There was discussion on trip limit reductions for the other jacks complex, but we decided that that wouldn't be necessary, and then we went down to Action 3, which was, again, a split season for commercial amberjack. I won't go into the details of that. If you guys have questions, I can go into that, but we did have a suggestion for Sub-Alternative 2c there. Then we also, again, for red porgy, the same thing. There's a commercial split season for that, here again 2c.

Then Action 5 was trip limits for vermilion snapper, and we actually had put forth a few motions for the council to look at research and how various trip limits would affect the season, and, again, the goal there is to try to keep both seasons open for as long as possible, to keep the fish constantly coming across the docks. Then we went over, as I stated earlier, the fishery performance reports for both black sea bass and vermilion snapper, and that, I think, you will be hearing more about next year, as they are finalized.

The final couple of things that we went over were best fishing practices for red snapper, again with the -- Well, at the time, upcoming seasons, and now another upcoming season, and some things to look out for, I guess, such as high-grading. Everybody wants to keep the trophy fish, and so you're kind of removing those animals from the stock and putting a size limit on there was, again, one of the discussions, and, again, this is going to come up more and more, and that's the use of descending devices, in particular with red snapper, so that we can keep the dead discards to a minimum as we hopefully have open seasons moving forward.

One of the other things that we had discussed or that was asked to be discussed was the use of circle hooks and how useful they are throughout some species more than others, and it was kind of decided, amongst the AP, that they tend to be more useful on the larger fish, larger groupers and larger snappers, and you tend to actually see a reverse effect on some of the smaller fish, triggerfish

and yellowtails, because, when those fish do get gut-hooked, it's virtually mortal to them, and so there's no coming back from that.

I think that was just about all of it. Then the last motion was, again, and you're going to see this more and more, was recommending that all vessels carry descending devices, and I'm sure, again, you will hear more about that in the coming months and years and days, and so if anybody has any questions.

DR. DUVAL: Are there any questions for David?

MR. HARTIG: Thanks, David. I appreciate that report. Do you get a sense of the AP and the fishery performance reports that they have embraced that as something that's important to do at an AP meeting?

MR. MOSS: Yes, absolutely, and there was very good participation throughout. We had some good discussion, and, again, I think that the purpose of the AP was everybody to bring kind of, for lack of a better term, their two-cents from their given areas, and I think we had a lot of that. I think it was definitely beneficial.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you, because, the first time we did this, several years ago, it didn't work that well, but, since that time, what I've seen from the minutes of things, is that people are engaged in that, and I just wanted to get your sense, and thank you.

DR. DUVAL: I am going to let Myra address that.

MS. BROUWER: Just to give you an update of where we are with those fishery performance reports, the drafts were put together by staff, and the AP Chair and Vice Chair have had the opportunity to provide edits and make sure that they're complete, and so we're working on them, and they're going to be finalized probably in the next month or so.

One of the things we want to do, and we would like your feedback at any point, is how to make these available to the public. The Mid-Atlantic Council has the information document, which is the information that is presented to the AP, that they then use for their discussions, and so that is on their website as well as the fishery performance reports, and so we're going to be kind of working on that and trying to figure out what's the best way to make these available, but it worked very well, and I think you'll be pleased with the results.

MR. HARTIG: Myra, when we get these and we have an assessment coming up for a species, can we send those to the assessment group for their review that may answer any questions for the fishery?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, absolutely, and, in fact, Julia Byrd, who is our SEDAR Coordinator, requested that the reports be available for the upcoming webinars for black sea bass and vermilion that will be taking place in January.

MR. BOWEN: David, can you maybe give us the gist of what the AP's thinking was in terms of the fishery performance report in terms of the sea bass? I have read, in the briefing book, the questions that you all were asked, but I have yet to read the minutes of your meeting, and so maybe

you could just give me the gist of what they thought about the sea bass and some of the questions that are listed in our briefing book that you all answered.

MR. MOSS: I will try. Sea bass is north of me, but, from what I can recall, one of the things I know that had come out was they're seeing more and more animals and larger animals. Now, a lot of this was post-hurricane, if you will, but the abundance apparently has -- Whether it has pushed them in or whatever the case may be, but apparently they're seeing more and more of them in the shallower water.

I know that there were some issues there, because of the right whale closures and where they could fish and so on and so forth and how that had changed things, but the, I guess, fifty-thousand-foot view was, again, as of late, they're seeing more and more larger animals. Again, this is more the north Florida region. There's still tons and tons of the smaller fish further north, North Carolina and South Carolina and that area. Hopefully that answers your question, to a point.

MR. CONKLIN: I just wanted to -- You guys still unanimously support the moratorium on the for-hire permits, and is that correct?

MR. MOSS: We didn't discuss that at this AP meeting, I don't believe.

MR. CONKLIN: I see where it says that AP members reiterated support for a moratorium on the issuance of charter/headboat permits in the snapper grouper fishery. I wasn't able to make the meeting, but I'm glad that it was --

MR. MOSS: Okay. Then I revise that. It was discussed. A motion wasn't made. It was kind of tabled, but I don't recall that going to a vote.

MS. BROUWER: I can follow-up, if that's okay. The AP received an update of where we are in that amendment. It's early on, and so it's still in the options paper stage, and there is no clear guidance where the council is moving, and so we felt that -- The AP just didn't have a lot to go on, but they did receive the update from council staff, and they did reiterate, as it says in the report, their support for a moratorium.

MR. CONKLIN: I know that, with a lot of members changing and stuff, it's still good to see that the general train of thought is still heading in that direction and there is some common-ground between the AP and the council and people see the writing on the wall.

DR. DUVAL: Any other questions for David? If not, thank you very much, David, for your report and for being here, and so I think, if there are any other questions as we go through Regulatory Amendments 26 and 27, we may ping you for a little bit of a response. Thank you.

MR. MOSS: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so the next item on our agenda is Amendment 46, and this is Attachment 3 in your briefing book. What I would like to do is ask Dr. Marcel Reichert, our SSC Chair, if he would come up here, and so, before we get into the meat of this options paper, Marcel had indicated that he had updated the SERFS index for red snapper, and I thought that it might be informative to

our discussions for the committee to see that prior to jumping into the options paper. Marcel just had a couple of slides that we will bring up.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of slides, and the council asked if there was an update available, and I have to acknowledge staff at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and my staff to collect the data and do the QA/QC and update the fishery-independent index. Just a brief reminder that this includes the information from the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, which includes MARMAP, SEAMAP, and SEFIS, as I have indicated in my previous presentation.

This is the chevron trap data only, and so it does not include the video information. The CPUE is in catch per trap, and, in previous presentations, I showed you the Delta GLM Standardization Method, and we moved to the Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial Method, and that is a method that fits the statistical assumptions a little better than the GLM, and it's now widely used and considered the best available scientific information, and so, in my update in June, you will see that we have adjusted all of our indices using this new method. The patterns are the same, but it just provides better uncertainty estimates.

These are the usual caveats. Please realize that this is not a stock status update, and these are the same caveats that I mentioned in my previous presentations. This is the graph, just to remind you, of the Delta GLM pattern that I showed you in June, and this is the updated chevron trap index. The left block is the last year, and this is an 18 percent increase in the CPUE since the 2016 data, and the other block is a reminder that those were the years that were used in the most recent stock assessment, and the index that was used in the recent stock assessment was the combined video trap index.

This concludes my brief update, and, again, I have to acknowledge staff both at the Science Center and in the MARMAP and SEAMAP projects to be able to get this update to you basically within two months after the completion of the season.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for that, Marcel. It's much appreciated. Are there any questions for Marcel about this? It's pretty straightforward, I think, and so thank you very much for doing that, and we'll look forward to hearing more from you later.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: We will then jump into our discussion on Amendment 46, and so, if you recall, back in June, we took the actions that were originally in Amendment 43 and we decided to move them into a different amendment, Amendment 46, so that we could focus on Amendment 43 on simply setting an ACL for red snapper, which we dispensed with at our September meeting.

I think, before Chip dives into this, I will just note that what you see in this options paper is everything, and so, when I was going through it, and I made mention of this to Chip, some of this options paper actually includes actions that we had removed from Amendment 43 previously, and so you will see Action 6 in there, which references year-round closed areas, and so that was removed in March. We discussed it again in June, that those were removed, and then, again, Action 8, there were motions from June where we removed alternatives that would prohibit recreational fishing year-round in an area based on discards or abundance, and so those were all motions from our June council meeting.

In talking to Chip, everything was put back into this options paper because it's a new amendment, and we wanted folks to have the opportunity to reconsider those, and so I think we'll need new sets of motions if there are actions that folks want to remove, and so I just wanted to set the stage.

MR. BOWEN: As the importance of this Amendment 46 is on everybody's mind, and I've read it a couple of times, and, before Chip starts his presentation, in regard to time and the fact that we do not have an ABC or an ACL, I am prepared to make a motion right now that we go ahead and drop Actions 1 through 5 out of this amendment.

DR. DUVAL: I am thinking that might be a little bit premature. I think, right now, the SSC's plan -- They have formed a sub-group to work on development of an ABC for red snapper, and my understanding is that that sub-group has met. Marcel, we might need to --

DR. REICHERT: They've had one webinar.

DR. DUVAL: They have had one webinar, and I believe there is another webinar that is going to be scheduled for those folks to meet, and so their plan is to have something for the SSC to review by their April meeting, if I am reading things correctly, and Marcel is nodding his head, and so I think, given that this is December and we'll see this again in March, and possibly again in June -- I guess what I'm trying to say is that I believe there may be some information with regard to those Actions 1 through 5 that might get added down the road.

MR. BOWEN: Yes, ma'am.

DR. DUVAL: I would like to go ahead and let Chip walk through his presentation, and then, maybe after that, Zack, if there is additional concern about those actions, then the committee could consider a motion.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so Amendment 46. It is looking at several management measures for red snapper and defining catch levels as well as recreational permitting and reporting and then, finally, powerhead restrictions. Where this came from, as Michelle had mentioned, or, actually, going back further than that, is SEDAR 41 was developed and assessed red snapper, and it indicated that, based on data through 2014, the stock was overfished and overfishing was occurring. Since then, an ABC is being developed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee, because there were several uncertainties identified in SEDAR 41 and some of the catch level recommendations.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 46, the way it's set up right now, it's many of the actions included in Amendment 43, as of June of 2017, and you guys had indicated that's what you want included. We also added an action to address powerhead restrictions. South Carolina is the only state that - - The EEZ off of South Carolina is the only area that has a restriction on powerheads, and so one of the South Carolina representatives asked that that be considered.

The development of an ABC, as Michelle mentioned, the SSC has formed a sub-group to discuss developing an ABC for red snapper. The sub-group is going to review many different methods to develop an ABC, including an index-based approach, and so it's not going to be one idea that they're exploring, but they're going to explore several different ideas, and hopefully we're going

to get an ABC for that. That is expected to be presented for review in April of 2018 by the full SSC.

Through the terms of reference, there is some pieces of information that are not necessarily included, and so I'm going to go through the actions in a second, but Action 1 and Action 2 in Amendment 46, the way it's written right now, include actions for OFL and MSST, and so it's not clear if they're going to make recommendations on those. It was not included in the terms of reference, and so I don't think we should expect them to come.

Going into the actions for Amendment 46, essentially Actions 1 through 5 deal with catch level recommendations. Then Action 12 is accountability measures. Area closures are discussed in Action 6 and Action 8. For the area closures in Action 6, that's for both the recreational and commercial fisheries, and, for just the recreational fishery, that is Action 8, Alternatives 6 through 9.

Commercial and recreational management measures are discussed in Actions 7 and 8 as well as those area closures that I mentioned just previously. There are recreational reporting measures and permitting measures in Actions 9 and 10, and then best fishing practices is Action 11, and then powerhead restrictions is Action 13. It looks like I missed Action 12, but that's actually up there in one of the first ones that I had mentioned.

Overfishing limit and minimum stock size threshold, typically, the OFL and the MSST are adopted from the most recent stock assessment. There was significant uncertainty in the catch level recommendations resulting from SEDAR 41. Also, the MRIP revision estimates are projected to be completed in late October. Given these concerns, the staff recommends removing Action 1 and Action 2 until an update assessment is completed, and, once again, I do want to state that that's a staff recommendation. We haven't formed an IPT for this, and so we haven't really discussed it with National Marine Fisheries Service. Both of these catch level recommendations have been specified in previous amendments, and so those values from the previous amendments would stay in place until they're modified.

At this meeting, what we're thinking about doing is develop a timeline for Amendment 46, and I have two proposed timelines included in that, and I am going to go over those in just a second. We need to review and discuss the purpose and need for the amendment and then review and discuss actions to include in Amendment 46.

Timeline 1, if we include all thirteen actions in this, you can see that we would start scoping potentially in January. At this point, we would not have catch level recommendations. Then, in March, we would be reviewing comments and revising actions. In June, we would review the effects analysis and approve for public hearings. At this point, this is when you would be getting your ABC recommendations from the SSC. The effects analysis might not be able to be completed at that time.

If we were to continue on the normal schedule, in August, we would go to public hearings. Then, in September, you guys would review public hearing comments and approve all actions and alternatives, and that would be in September, and, at this point, we would have data from the recreational reporting program, MyFishCount. That would become available after the mini-season. Then, on the normal timeline, we would be reviewing for final action in December.

I did the same thing with the ABC and the ACL removed, and you go through this, and you can see that, the scoping, we would go through that. We would review it in March. In June, we would have an incomplete effects analysis, and then public hearings would be in August. Once again, the MyFishCount data would be becoming available, and we would not be able to do effects analysis based on that new data. Those are just some things to consider as we're developing Amendment 46. Obviously, we could extend the timeline to be able to incorporate some of this into the fishery management plan.

DR. DUVAL: Can you go back up to Timeline 1? This includes all actions, 1 through 12?

DR. COLLIER: 1 through 13, yes.

DR. DUVAL: 1 through 13. Excuse me, because Action 1 and Action 2 are just MSY and MSST. Okay.

DR. COLLIER: So Timeline 2 would pretty much be getting at what Zack actually brought up, was removing the ABC and the ACL from that.

MR. HARTIG: Just a comment. I mean, given the state of the stock and that we can only rebuild the age structure one year at a time, I don't know how big of an ABC we're going to get in the near future. I don't think it's going to be very large. I don't think we're going to be looking at a huge fishery, and maybe I'm wrong, but I don't see the timing that critical, and I would like to use all the information we can to move forward with what we have. You have a compressed timeline in the second one, and you have a longer timeline in the first one, which is able to take into account a number of different things.

DR. DUVAL: Can you go back up to Timeline 1?

DR. COLLIER: It's the same timeline, but it's just showing that some of the actions were removed.

MR. HARTIG: Okay. My bad. I thought it was extended. I thought we incorporated more information in one of those timelines than we did the other.

DR. COLLIER: We could definitely do it the other way, just take Timeline 1 and then go into next year, but I just wanted to make everybody well aware that, if we do that, that's going to delay everything, and so I just wanted to make sure that everybody was aware of the potential timeline that this could take. Recreational reporting, it's going to take some time to develop that one thoroughly.

MR. HARTIG: I am thinking maybe, as we go through this thing, if we see something in particular that's going to really hold us up, the recreational reporting in particular, that we might move that out and put it on some timeframe. I mean, we've done that in the past, especially with things that are going to take us longer to implement, and so we may just keep that in mind as we go through this.

MR. ESTES: This is probably going to be really ignorant, but I will ask it anyway. So, we would not have our catch level recommendations before we go and look at all of this stuff, and there is a couple of things, one specifically, that I think that we would need to know what that is before we go through the different actions, and that is the closed areas, and so we won't know what our catch level recommendations are, and then we're not going to know what those closed areas are going to do, and then we're going to go ahead and go forward, or am I just getting it wrong here?

DR. CRABTREE: That's similar to my point. We don't really know what we need to do at this point. We have just submitted catch levels to the Fisheries Service for review in Amendment 43, and while Chip is correct that the last assessment indicated that we were overfishing, our position in Amendment 43, and the position of the Fisheries Service in the emergency rule, is that we believe the overfishing has ended, and so a number of these actions in here read like we think overfishing is occurring and we need to do something, but that's not consistent with our position at the moment that we developed in Amendment 43.

It's not clear to me what, if any of the things in this amendment, we need to do at this point until we see what comes next from the SSC, and that's going to determine what we need to do, whether we need closed areas, where we set the ACLs, and all of these other things in the amendment. Now, I think working on descending devices is fine and powerheads. Those are kind of separate issues. If you want to work on recreational reporting and all, that's fine too, but that's really a broader issue than just red snapper, but it seems to me that an awful lot, as I look at this, at least up through Action Number 7, I have no way of knowing what, if any, of this we really need to do, and I don't think we will know until we get a catch level recommendation from the SSC based on some analysis that's yet to be done.

MR. BREWER: What he said.

DR. DUVAL: I just want to make sure that -- I mean, I understand, and it certainly makes sense that we are unlikely to get -- We're not going to get MSY, and we're not going to get MSST, and we may not get OFL, but the SSC is actively working on ABC, and they are supposed to have something available for review in April, which means that the council would receive it in June. I am just a little bit concerned about removing an action at this point to set an ABC when we know that we're going to be getting some information back in June.

It's up to you all. I mean, if the committee would like to remove those actions, that's fine, but it just seems a little bit premature, when the SSC is diligently working on an ABC, to then go and completely remove that action at this point.

DR. CRABTREE: We have an MSST. In fact, it hasn't been in place all that long. It's 75 percent of BMSY. Maybe something will come along that will indicate that we need to change it, but I see nothing right now that would lead me to believe that. I am sure that we'll get some estimate of stock productivity, and so probably an MSY and things. We deal with these kind of things all the time, and we do a framework amendment and put them in place, and we'll put in place an adjusted ACL based on what they give us, and I don't know how to make any progress on these big closed areas, because I have no way of knowing if they're necessary.

I look at what we just looked at with the abundance indices, and that tells me no closed areas are needed in this fishery, and it's improving and growing remarkably well, and so I don't see any

indications that any of these types of things really have to be done now. Now, I agree that we're going to come in and we're going to need to reset the catch levels, and I don't know when we'll get there or where that will lead us, but I would think that we would do that through a framework action. That's kind of our normal process of doing that.

MR. CONKLIN: So what are the cons of putting this off until we get an ABC? How are we going to be moving along the path of this Amendment 46?

DR. DUVAL: I think you could probably add a good six months to the timeline if we just set it aside until after we receive ABC advice from the SSC. I do think that we've heard that the public would like us to continue to pursue best practices, such as descending devices and recreational reporting measures, things like that. That's something to consider.

MR. CONKLIN: I think it's our intent, and we share the same intent as the Fisheries Service, and so I would highly recommend putting it off and just pursuing the best practices.

MR. BREWER: Going back, sort of if I remember the history of this correctly, it started out when we couldn't be -- There was no ABC that could be given to us with any great confidence, and we had a phone call, and I remember that we started talking at that point about, if we don't have an ABC, what do we do on setting an ACL, and we had that discussion. As a result of that discussion, we started this Amendment 43, which dealt with how we were going to try to set some sort of small season in 2018.

After we started working on 43, and we took the kitchen sink and threw it into 43, and we realized that, if we did that, that we would then be very hard-pressed to have everything in place to have a season in 2018, and so Roy suggested that, listen, why don't you split these out, and we're only going to do the stuff related to the season in 2018, in 43, and we'll start a new amendment and have it be 46 and we can put this other stuff in there, so we can get this done for 2018.

In the course of throwing essentially the kitchen sink at the problem that we thought existed at the time, I have to agree. I mean, it does not make sense to be talking about closed areas and seasons and bag limits or anything else when we don't yet have the recommendation from the scientists as to where we need to set this thing.

I do think, and I agree, there's been a lot of support out there for discussing descending devices and reporting, and I guess it's just South Carolina that has talked about the powerhead restriction, but it would be my opinion that, at least at this point, we defer, and I don't know whether we have to remove it from the amendment procedure, but that we defer on everything except Action 9, 10, 11, and 13.

MS. BECKWITH: In terms of Actions 7 and 8, I think we could probably have some worthwhile discussions moving forward with those. In terms of Action 7 for the commercial measures, I know I've gotten some phone calls, particularly from folks in South Carolina, oddly enough, that are concerned that the seventy-five-pound trip limit is a bit inequitable between Florida and South Carolina, because, of course, the guys in South Carolina do multi-day trips, and the guys in Florida can maybe run more than one trip a day, and so they were looking for consideration of a seventy-five-pound trip limit, or per day limit, whichever was a more restrictive sort of thing, to be considered. On that action, we could probably have some discussion. Is that what it is now?

DR. COLLIER: They're only allowed seventy-five pounds. They're allowed to sell seventy-five pounds per day.

MS. BECKWITH: Okay. Anyway, whatever is happening in Florida, it's not my business. Okay. Anyway, then, for Action 8, I think we could probably have some discussions, because, of course, there is that concern of next year it would open in July, and we keep having these discussions back and forth of that is within sort of the peak time for their spawning season, but, yet, what we choose with that may impact how we move forward with the deepwater season, and so we have sort of a number of things that this council is considering that have the potential to play off of each other.

I am not sure that I'm ready to walk away from this amendment yet. I certainly think the discussion on circle hooks are of value and descending devices are of value and some of the other odds and ends, but I think that we can make the most productive use in sort of Action 7 and on.

DR. DUVAL: Anybody else? Okay. So, we have heard support for ignoring everything except Actions 9 through 13, and we've heard ignoring everything except Actions 7 through 13, and I certainly would suspect that, regardless of any ABC advice that we receive from the SSC, that Actions 6 and 8, which we had removed before, are things that we would want to not consider again. I mean, there's just not a lot of public support for that, and so definitely I appreciate wanting to maybe reconsider that, to make sure that that's where the committee is heading, in the interest of us having moved all of these actions into a different amendment, but I suspect, regardless of what the ABC advice says, we would probably not reconsider those anyway. I just think they're really publicly unpopular.

MR. PHILLIPS: Madam Chair, I agree. I can't imagine any catch level recommendation that the public is still going to want area closures. I just don't see the council and staff spending time and effort on area closures right now.

MR. BOWEN: I am prepared to make a motion. Is that okay at this time, Madam Chair?

DR. DUVAL: Yes, it is. I do think we have benefitted from having discussion, rather than a motion right out of the gate, but go right ahead.

MR. BOWEN: **In the essence of time, I would make a motion that we remove Actions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12, actually to table those actions until June. To take them out. Yes, to take them out.**

DR. DUVAL: I think you want to take them out, rather than tabling them.

MR. BOWEN: Yes.

MR. BREWER: Madam Chair, if that motion is to take them out, period, and not just to table them until June, which I think is what he corrected it to be, I will second it.

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Zack, and a second by Chester, and I will just let Chip get it on the screen. **The motion is to remove Actions 1 through 8 and 12 from Amendment 46.** Is

there any further discussion on this? **Is there any opposition? Seeing none, the motion is approved.**

DR. CRABTREE: One of these, I think it was Action 7, and I think Anna brought it up a minute ago, had to do with trip limits, and I have gotten a number of comments from commercial fishing folks, mostly in the Florida, Canaveral, area, about the trip limit, and I just wanted to have a little discussion about that.

They were complaining that they're not likely to catch their quota this year and the seventy-five-pound limit is too low, and I wanted, at some point, Michelle, to hear how the council feels about that and if there is any interest in changing that. If there was, we could potentially do a framework action and change it before the fishery opens in July, or do you still feel like the seventy-five-pound level is appropriate, and I just bring it up now because it was relative to one of the actions that we took out, and I would like to discuss that, whenever you think it would be appropriate.

DR. DUVAL: So, the discussion is about a seventy-five-pound commercial trip limit.

MR. BROWN: Wasn't there somewhere that I saw there was only like a small percentage of the red snapper harvested so far for this season?

DR. DUVAL: It was 15 percent, I believe.

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, but remember that it started awfully late, and we have still got a little more time, but, yes, I think it's quite likely that they're not going to catch the quota this year, but I think that's more because of Irma and delays and those kinds of things. I think the real question is, if we start in July, as Amendment 43 sets it up, is seventy-five pounds appropriate for that amount of time they would have? That's six months, almost, of fishing, and, that, I don't have any strong basis to know whether they will catch their quota or not.

MR. BOWEN: I am kind of in the opposition of adjusting that trip limit, due to the fact that it will open in July of 2018, and that trip limit was intended solely for a bycatch.

MR. HARTIG: I heard the same concerns, and, I mean, I heard those early on, when we were talking about reopening the fishery for this year, and I came to that meeting fully prepared to make a motion for a higher trip limit, but, after I listened to the discussion from staff and from NMFS that anything you do to change this may put in jeopardy the season that you will get, or possibly get, I pulled that back, because I knew that the fishery wasn't going to reach its level, that the commercial fishery wasn't going to be caught at seventy-five pounds for the short time and the weather that we have during that time of the year, but, post-that, I agree with Zack.

The seventy-five pounds was put in as a bycatch measure, primarily, to save some of that mortality when you're catching other species and really not to be a directed fishery, but there are people directing on them as they can, but, for most people to go offshore in the areas farther up the coast, with nothing closed, they're not going to be able to participate in this fishery very much, because you can't make it on seventy-five pounds of red snapper, but I -- I can't remember how long it was open under seventy-five in that one year or two years, but it was open, when we had the highest catch level we had or however it was, but I know we caught it. It was closed, and, under anything

approaching that level, it will be caught in subsequent years into the future, and so I really don't have a pressing need to change the trip limit.

Now, they did want to do a trip limit this year, but we don't have the time to do anything with that, and, in 43, we're going to open, as Zack said, in July, and so we will have time to catch that allocation.

DR. DUVAL: Just a reminder. When the fishery was last opened in 2014, under a seventy-five-pound trip limit, the commercial sector did achieve that harvest level and actually went beyond what its allocation was at that point.

MS. BECKWITH: I was just going to agree. I think I would like to leave the seventy-five in place and see how it goes for a season that opens in July. I am curious if, at some point, someone can pull up the codified text for that commercial trip limit for me, because you said it's a maximum of seventy-five sold per day, but that would -- I just need to read it for myself, because I know the trip limit, if they've got a multi-day trip, they're still only permitted seventy-five pounds, and, if they're doing two trips in a day, as some folks are able to in Florida, it should only still be seventy-five pounds for the day, but is that clarified in the codified text that it is a per trip, because you can run more than one trip in a day, and so is it per trip or per day, and I think that's the gray area that I'm not sure, and I would like to have that clarified in the codified text.

DR. DUVAL: We will look to our partners at that end of the table to investigate that and provide some clarification, but my understanding is it's seventy-five pounds per trip, and it does not matter if you're out for five days or one day, and that it's no more than seventy-five pounds in a day. Technically, you could not go and run two trips in a day, and so we'll let Monica and Rick and folks answer that.

MR. DEVICTOR: This wasn't to that point, but I was going to point out that, in 2014, it was open for fifty-seven days, and so it opened on July 14 and closed on September 9.

MR. HARTIG: I don't know where the rumor mill is about Florida and catching a lot of red snappers with multiple trips in a day. I haven't seen it, and I'm in an area where it would occur. You get much farther north than us, you're going considerably farther offshore, and, if you get much farther south than us, there are no red snapper in quantity to catch two trips, and so I don't know exactly why that's coming about. It's perception, maybe, but it is not reality.

DR. DUVAL: I guess I would say, in terms of considering a change to the commercial trip limit, since the committee has removed Actions 1 through 8 and 12 from the amendment, and it seems like, to be consistent with that approach, you would want to wait for what the ABC advice is before you would go messing around with the trip limit, rather than trying to consider it here and now. We're trying to do something different for 2018, because we don't know what 2018 is going to look like. Quite frankly, we don't know if that's going to be approved, and so I think we're counting our chickens before they are hatched.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just to Anna's point, Anna, if it helps, the regulations state that commercial trip limits are limits are the amount of the species that may be possessed onboard or landed, purchased, or sold from a vessel per day, and so it's a daily trip limit.

DR. DUVAL: Any more questions on the trip limit?

MR. GRINER: So it's seventy-five pounds per day?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Commercial trip limits are limits that may be possessed onboard or landed, purchased, or sold from a vessel per day.

DR. CRABTREE: If you go for two days, you can't possess but seventy-five pounds onboard the vessel, and so you don't get to stack them up.

DR. COLLIER: Projected is the full trip limit regulation. You can see where it's highlighted. That's what Monica read.

DR. DUVAL: Has everybody had a chance to see that? Okay. So, given the action that the committee has taken, do you want to go through and discuss some of these other actions that you have left in Amendment 46? Action 9 would be to establish a private recreational snapper grouper permit or tag program for recreational fishermen to fish for, harvest, or possess red snapper in the South Atlantic region, and we've heard a lot of information today about different efforts in other states to try to track harvest of red snapper, and so I think this action and Action 10, which would be to modify the reporting requirements, are linked, and so we need to consider them together.

MR. BOWEN: In my opinion, I think it's worth discussion. I thought you were asking if we wanted to discuss it, and, yes, I do.

DR. DUVAL: Do people support maintaining this action in this amendment for requiring a permit or a tag program?

MR. HARTIG: We've gone down that tag program, that rabbit-hole, before. I don't know that I'm ready to go down the tag program rabbit-hole again. I mean, I see value in it, but, every time we get into the discussion, there is the equity concerns, and the for-hire people come out of the wall, and I just don't know a fair way to allocate tags, and so I would like to see that part, at least, removed.

DR. DUVAL: I think the IPT had a lot of questions about this particular action, particularly in consideration in the development of a permit. I agree with you, Ben, that we've been down the rabbit-hole of harvest tags before, and I suspect that we would go right down that rabbit-hole again, and so I would expect that the committee's discussion would be more focused on a permit.

MR. BOWEN: I was just going to echo what Ben said. I am a for-hire guy, and I would start climbing the walls if we started talking about tags.

MR. BREWER: Within the recreational community, I think you've got a lot of support for identifying the universe of people who are in fact going out and getting in deep water and bottom fishing. The talks that we had this morning from the different state folks, one of the first things they did was to identify their universe, and I think that's very important that we do that.

Fishing for HMS species, you already are required to have a permit. They use that to identify the universe, and it might be -- Well, I don't know that we can kind of glom ourselves onto HMS, but

they have already got a program going where you get these -- I don't think these permits cost very much, if anything. You are required to have them, and I think that it would be a very good thing for the recreational folks that are bottom fishing in deep water to have these permits.

With regard to tags, you're going to find that you are stirring up an absolutely hornet's nest with that stuff, and I don't think that it's worth the council's time to try to go down that road when, at the end of the day, it's going to be something that we're just not going to do, and it's certainly not going to be supported in the recreational community.

MR. BELL: We have looked at that before, and there's no sense in beating our heads against the wall on the tag aspect right now, but, related to some sort of permit or endorsement or something, from the presentations we had this morning, I could see great value in us being able to better define a survey-able universe of -- Pick a number of species, and red snapper could be one of them, but kind of like the program was set up, where you had a menu of species that you wanted to focus on, but I could see great value in eventually moving towards something like that, but I would rather it not be specifically just focused on red snapper, because, as big of a deal as that is in Florida, if, you move up our way, other things become, perhaps, a little more important, in terms of the fishery, but I really enjoyed the presentations this morning, and I would like to see us maybe consider somehow developing a permit or endorsement system to better define the universe of folks that we want to sample from, but I wouldn't make it just focused on red snapper. Thanks.

MS. BURGESS: As Beverly Sauls pointed out in her presentation earlier today, our commission has discussed the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and there has been some interest in exploring expanding it to the Atlantic coast and through the Keys in our state, and so we are interested in exploring this idea of a permit for snapper grouper fishing, but we would like to make sure that what the council considers and discusses moving forward leaves an opening for a possible state permit instead of a federal permit for snapper grouper species in the Atlantic.

As Beverly mentioned, having one sampling program for the whole state, for all of our anglers, regardless of where they're fishing, might be more ideal than having two different programs, and we would like to second the statements about a tag and having no interest in that at this time.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so I've seen both Zack and Chester with their hands up again, and I guess it would be my recommendation that I would be looking for a motion to remove Alternative 4, because I think we've pretty much beat that to death, and so, if one of you gentlemen has your hand raised to make a motion, I am happy to recognize you.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's exactly what I was going to do. **I was going to make a motion to remove Alternative 4, Action 9 out of Amendment 46 to the Considered but Rejected Appendix.**

DR. DUVAL: It's seconded by Jim Estes. I feel like we've had enough discussion on this, and so I'm really not willing to let much more discussion go forward. I will just wait for Chip to get this on the screen. **The motion reads to remove Alternative 4 of Action 9 from Amendment 46. Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

I think what I would draw the committee's attention to is there are some draft alternatives here with regard to whether you would want a permit just for red snapper, snapper grouper species

associated with red snapper habitat, all species, species in the deepwater complex, and I think we just heard Mel express support for expanding this beyond just red snapper, but I think perhaps including other species in the complex.

I did want to draw people's attention to -- There is, below all the discussion, there are questions from the IPT to consider in development of a permit and what kind of data, if any, would be collected. Do you want to collect information for every vessel? What type of data would be reported by the permit holder? Is this just you have to get the permit? Hopefully we can use the presentations from earlier today to inform this discussion.

DR. CRABTREE: I think the main reason -- Chester brought up identifying the participants. Well, identifying the participants is only useful if you're going to then survey them about something, and what we would presumably do here is refine the effort portion of the MRIP survey and get more precise effort estimates for snapper grouper.

I tend to agree with Mel that, if we're going to put the money in and do this, it ought to be a snapper grouper permit, but I think what we're going to have to do is bring in some of the MRIP staff and state folks, and they're going to have to go through and address some of these questions about what would you need in order to do it, and then the other question, and maybe we can talk to Cisco later this week, is we're going to need estimates of what is it going to cost, so that we can figure out if we have the resources to do it.

Now, I tend to believe that these types of permits work better if they are state-required permits, because one of the problems we'll have if it's a federal permit is, if you don't fish in federal waters, you don't have to have it, and I think we'll have a lot of non-compliance with it, whereas the state can require it and then anyone landing has to have one, and you can enforce it at the dock. If it's a federal permit, if they say that they caught it in state waters, then it's difficult to enforce at the dock.

I think the way to come at this is what's the survey we're going to set up and then what do we need to make it work and then what type of permit is necessary to support that and come at it from that perspective, and I think this week would be a good opportunity to get this on Cisco's radar screen and get the MRIP and the state folks who actually do the MRIP surveys to start thinking about what the best way to set it up would be.

MR. BREWER: I am beginning to sound like a broken record, but I agree with Roy. This is best going to be administered through the states, and we do need to give some thought as to exactly -- Number one, the first thing that we get, and we get it without any survey whatsoever, is we define how many people are going offshore to bottom fish, potentially, and they're easier to identify, and they're easier to contact.

I wanted to give the example of what you do in the State of Florida on the Gulf side, when we're going out to bottom fish, and, obviously, you have already got your saltwater license. You go to the Fish and Wildlife Commission's website, and, in literally one click, you get an endorsement on that license that says that you're out bottom fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, and I can't remember if they charge you a dollar or something for it, but I think it's free, isn't it?

It literally takes fifteen or twenty seconds and you are registered, and so I see great promise in doing exactly what the State of Florida has done. Right now, every one of our states requires that people go out or that people have a saltwater fishing license, and I am pretty sure in most of the states that you can buy those online, and you're registered online, and so getting the endorsement would actually be pretty easy, with very little cost, and then you've got your universe and you can begin talking about what surveys or information do you want to obtain from those people, and that's going to be a little more costly, but I think it works better.

DR. DUVAL: I have a number of people stacked up here, and then I'm going to recommend that we focus on what kind of alternatives we might want to see in this action for a permit, so that we can move forward to discuss some of the other things that we need to discuss in this amendment.

MS. BECKWITH: For Alternative 2, Alternative 2b doesn't make a lot of sense to me, and I'm not sure that we would go down that road, snapper grouper species associated with red snapper habitat. I think, if we're going to move down this road, we're probably going to look at it more than specific to red snapper, and so I would like to remove that one, but I also would like to consider a vessel permit. These are all individual permits, and I will further sort of discuss my desire to consider reporting via the vessel as an additional option to sort of individual reporting, and I think, to facilitate that, we would need the option for a vessel permit.

It is similar to what HMS does. I don't think they do individuals. I think the permit is to the vessel, but, rather than get into that protracted discussion, I would like to see -- **I don't know if you need that in the form of a motion, but I guess my first motion would be to remove Sub-Alternative 2b under Alternative 2 of Action 9.**

DR. DUVAL: **Motion by Anna and second by Ben to remove Sub-Alternative 2b under Action 9.** I think Anna has provided some discussion as to the rationale for that. Any other discussion? 2b is the one that deals with having a permit for species that are associated with red snapper habitat. Okay. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion is approved.**

MS. BECKWITH: **I would also move to add an alternative for consideration of a vessel permit.**

DR. DUVAL: **The next motion is to add an alternative in Action 9 for a vessel permit.** Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Zack and Ben. Anna, you've got your second, and so if you would like to add a little bit of discussion as to why.

MS. BECKWITH: Sure, and I would sort of organize it in the same way as the rest of Alternative 2, either for red snapper, all species, or the deepwater complex. It would just give an additional option for consideration when we start getting into the dynamics of what is the best way of getting recreational folks to report, if it really is at the individual level or if it is at the vessel level, and I don't think that discussion needs to happen now, but I just want the option in there.

DR. DUVAL: Is there other discussion?

MR. HARTIG: Anna mentioned the deepwater complex, and, eventually, I think some way to get an endorsement for the deepwater complex is critical, so we know how many people are in that

fishery. We'll know how many people fish for reef fish, but the deep water, since our ACLs are so low, that's going to be critical to know that in the future, and I don't know how exactly we get there, but I would just like to get there sometime.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so I would like to -- Roy, was this more discussion on this motion?

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, because I think we're getting ahead of ourselves with this level of detail on it. The question, the bigger question, is, is the purpose of this permit to set up an effort survey, or is the purpose of this permit to get to anglers reporting? I think you're going to go different directions depending on what you're trying to do there, and so it seems to me that's really the first -- I come back to what I said. It's what are we going to use this permit for? Until we figure that out, I think it's going to be hard to get into these kinds of more detailed questions.

MR. BELL: Roy is absolutely right. It's what you're going to do, in terms of a survey, and who do you want to survey and what is that you're wanting to get, and that kind of determines if you're going to go down the vessel route or the individual route or that sort of thing, and so maybe we are getting -- I mean, vessel is certainly an option, but then that takes you down a particular road to how you get data and the type of data you get, and so I see what he's getting at there, and, to Ben's point about the deepwater complex, we kind of think of deepwater or shallow-water already.

Perhaps you have different kind of endorsements, you have a deepwater endorsement or a shallow-water endorsement or something, but that, again -- Then you structure that once you determine the data you're trying to get and who you're trying to get it from. Then you can decide if that's for a vessel or if that's for individuals or something, but I agree with Roy. With the end in mind, what is it that we need to do to get there, and we're not really kind of sure where we're going yet.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. I had other folks in the queue. Bonnie, you were next, and then Zack, and then I would like to bring this to a vote and move on.

DR. PONWITH: It's actually really to that very point, that how you set this up is completely driven by how you intend to use it, and it's not clear to me what that is. I will say, if it is to conduct any sort of survey, the more refined your sampling frame is, the more efficient your survey is, but I don't want to overemphasize that, because, if I remember, and this is just going from memory from this morning's workshop, but it seems to me that one of the Florida points was that, of all of the people who got whatever it was, a stamp or a permit or endorsement or whatever you call it for the offshore, less than 50 percent of them actually submitted a report.

There is such a thing as having it be too simple to sign up for. It's like, oh, let's sign up for this, because, maybe if I don't, it will leave me out of something going into the future, and then you don't actually refine that frame, and, so, again, I just think it's going to be really important to have a crystal-clear idea and make this thing purpose-built, so that it achieves that desired outcome.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Bonnie. Zack, last word.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Roy, you said we had to figure out whether we were wanting effort surveys or reporting requirements. If that's what you said, I think the intent, or at least from my perspective, is we want both, but what my original statement was going to be before Roy commented, it was, if the states -- That sounds like the people that are around the table are in

agreement, or at least the majority, about the states handling this, and I would advocate for a -- I don't know the amount of money when I say equals substantial, but I think there needs to be a substantial cost associated with this state, quote, unquote, permit to cover the cost of setting this permit up.

DR. DUVAL: I think, unless there are any other comments that are actually specific to the motion at hand, I really would like to just bring this to a vote, and then I would like to back the conversation up a little bit and get to what Roy said. What is the goal? If you want to establish a permit, what is your goal? Is it to refine your estimates of effort, so that you can increase your accuracy and precision of your harvest estimates? Then let's have that conversation, because I suspect that the hands going up around the table are more to that point, as opposed to this motion. So, no more comments. **Is there any opposition to this motion, one opposed; those in favor, nine in favor. The motion carries.**

Let's back up a little bit and think about what we heard today, and so most of the presentations that we received were focused on individual reporting for a single species just for red snapper, and so is our goal, if we want to set something up, to refine estimates of effort for more than just red snapper? I mean, I think that's what I have heard from Mel, and that's what I've heard from Roy, and I am seeing heads nod around the table that I think people would like to expand this to just beyond red snapper.

MS. KNOWLTON: I think that this should absolutely include more than just red snapper, and, to some of what Roy and Bonnie said earlier, and we were reminded of that during the Florida presentation this morning, is that we have a team of statisticians, something like five, that are on retainer at all times that are helping with both the certification process and, if this wasn't something that you all wanted to pursue through the certification process, we can still ask to have them review anything that we come up with, in terms of are there glaring issues that we would be facing in terms of risk of introducing bias or not weighted properly and some of those activities.

I think pursuing the idea of taking what we currently have with the new FES, which becomes the method, in all likelihood. We're heading into our third year of the benchmarking, and it is set up to become our new effort estimate in 2018, and so, to build on that, and to do it from a collaborative point of view between the states and the feds makes a lot of sense to me, because, unless some of the other states have a checkbook that I don't know about, Georgia can't write a check for a separate effort survey, necessarily, right now.

Also, things like people signing up -- Let's say if the permit is free or if there's a low cost, getting at the opposite of what Zack was just saying, and not a high cost, you can handle some of that through the eligibility requirements when you actually put out the survey product, and that's how we're handling a lot of the people that are getting either a saltwater permit through Georgia or already have a saltwater license through the other states. It's an eligibility requirement to provide the information, and so they have to have participated in saltwater fishing recently. Then you take those data and you weight them appropriately, and, in the case of the FES, of something that's pulled from a non-licensed person, and so there are ways to weight this so that it's appropriate that we should be asking for help for, in my opinion. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Are there other thoughts around the table about the goal of what is it that we're trying to accomplish here?

DR. CRABTREE: I think what you heard this morning was kind of a lot of different approaches. One problem I see with what's happened in the Gulf is we've got all five states going off in different ways, and so LA Creel and the Florida survey are similar, in a lot of respects. They are both survey-based designs, similar to the MRIP approach, and then Alabama Snapper Check is a little more people reporting, and Mississippi is more reporting.

I don't know of anyone right now who is using self-reported private angler catches for anything to estimate catches. I am just not aware of anywhere in any of the states or agencies, and I am probably wrong, and there are some examples out on the west coast with salmon and things, but, at least down here, we are a long way from getting to that, and I suspect, if it's anglers reporting on their telephone or however they're going to do it, there are going to be large numbers of potential biases in that data related to angler avidity and all sorts of things that would have to be sorted out.

The technology is definitely there to do that, but you've got to understand all the biases and expansion factors that are going to go along with it, and I think that takes time. Now, on the survey side of things, what I hope we could do in the South Atlantic is come up with one consistent approach to how we're going to do this, rather than everybody going off on their own path, but I think it's much better worked out to try and do an enhanced effort survey focusing on snapper grouper or whatever to get more precise effort estimates, and that, I think, is really a matter of money, for one thing.

Then you need to set up the permit to identify the people you're going to survey, but it seems to me that is something that, if the money could be found, we could get to more quickly and get certified by MRIP more quickly, so that we could actually use it, and so I see that as something that could happen and is more straightforward to get to than the whole thing of anglers self-reporting. I think that's going to take quite a bit of time and a lot of tricky issues to tease through, and so that's my general thought of the two ways of getting at it.

MR. ESTES: I agree with Roy that I believe that this needs to be focused towards improving our effort, and I don't know that it needs to be just the FES, because I don't know what our intercepts might be in some areas for the CPUE either, and so it might need to be a little bit more than that, but I also agree with Roy that it would be better for us to be, rather than be prescriptive here, that we get the experts in the room, once we can decide the general guidelines, and have them design something, and whether it needs to be completely consistent or if there are certain areas that are north of us, north of Florida, that might be able to do this a little bit differently, I think I would like to get the experts together and figure that out before we get down the road too far.

DR. DUVAL: Because we have been so successful in getting the attention of the experts to date. Sorry. That was a little bit catty, but I don't disagree, but I think we can probably build on what Florida and what Louisiana have done with their surveys and rely a bit on that. I know the MRIP staff are strapped, and so I think having some expectation of a lot of attention being shifted our way is maybe a little bit overly optimistic. I would be anxious to see what Cisco says about that.

MS. BECKWITH: From the presentations we listened to this morning, certainly the Gulf Reef Survey for Florida rang truest to our needs, which they're interested in more than red snapper, and they had the large coastline with dispersed access points and different species and large numbers

of participants, and so I think they sort of went into that with a lot of the needs that we are facing, and so that strategy certainly seems to make the most sense, moving forward.

For me, it's more -- If I had to choose, I would certainly say that my interest is in defining the universe and getting more refined effort, more so than having sort of an individual reporting requirement on the private angler that I think is going to be extraordinarily challenging and difficult, but that's my first take at it.

MR. BELL: Actually, I agree with Anna and Roy. I think, from what I heard this morning, the best bang for our buck in moving forward would be to try to develop some sort of multi-state, where we're all on the same exact page effort, to kind of have something in existence like the Gulf Coast Reef Fish Survey, so it's a survey-based thing, and it doesn't have to be everything in the snapper grouper complex. We could start small or something, but I think the survey method like that is the way we need to go. Then, of course, it needs to -- You've got the ability then to kind of pass the MRIP sniff test, and it's all onboard there with MRIP certification, and I think that's the best approach to take for us, but, whatever we do, we need to do it collectively together, all four of us, the same way. Thanks.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Mel. Kathy, and then we're going to wrap this up.

MS. KNOWLTON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree with your comment that the MRIP staff are stretched very thin right now. I think that's with respect to primarily the issues of the three different levels of the calibrations that we're facing from the changes to the APAIS and the precision estimates and now the FES.

However, with FES now in its third year of the benchmark survey, doing the coastal household side-by-side with the FES and moving into the FES as the only effort estimate from 2018 on, we may be able to put our name in the queue for some time with the MRIP folks that are spending the majority of their time on the effort survey portion. It's not the same staff that are working on the calibrations.

Also, I would encourage -- I am hearing lots of wonderful words about coordination between states and what we need in the South Atlantic, and I would encourage this body to apply for ACCSP funds to develop that, and maybe you could convene a workshop or convene in partnership with NOAA, utilizing their team of statisticians. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Kathy. I am thinking that, really, we need to probably provide some direction to staff to revise this action, and so I think it's going to be establish a private recreational snapper grouper permit, without the rest of the verbiage, and that some of these alternatives probably need to be reworked to -- I am not sure that Sub-Alternative 2a necessarily works in there either, but we could probably keep it in for these purposes, but the goal here -- I think that needs to be captured within the action, is that the goal is to refine estimates of effort.

I am not sure Alternative 3, with conditions to renew or maintain a valid permit, is -- That seems like a little bit in the weeds for where we're headed right now, but I guess I would prefer to provide that direction to you all to take back to the IPT that the goal of establishing a private recreational snapper grouper permit, whether it's for the whole complex or a subset of the complex, is to refine estimates of effort.

That might be something -- It's probably going to require a little bit of conversation with regard to perhaps how PSEs play into this. It's probably going to take a look at what the effort estimates are for some of our snapper grouper species to determine if you're going to have a sub-alternative that would apply to only a subset of the complex.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so you guys are focusing a lot on effort. ACL management, is that a consideration for this new reporting system, because ACLs are also important. I mean, the numbers coming out of the effort, the expansion, those too are important, and that seems to be what issue you guys are having. It's greater amberjack, and it's managing to that ACL. It's a closure because of some of these numbers.

DR. DUVAL: I think that's clearly the intent. We want to focus this permit on improving our knowledge of the universe of anglers, and therefore our estimates of effort, which impact estimates of catch, which we use to monitor our ACLs, and so I think that's all part of the rationale. Do you guys need a motion of some sort?

DR. COLLIER: No, I think direction is fine.

DR. DUVAL: I guess we would provide direction to staff to modify Action 9 to refocus this on development of a permit, a snapper grouper permit, that could be applied to all or a subset of the snapper grouper complex, with the goal of identifying a universe of anglers to better refine effort estimates, so that we can have better estimates of catch to use in monitoring our ACLs. Is everyone okay with that? All right.

Then I think we would move on to Action 10, and that is recreational reporting, and so modifying reporting requirements, and I am thinking about some of the information that we got earlier today, again mostly from the State of Florida, as well as LA Creel, with regard to how their surveys were set up and the stratification, and there is not -- I guess, in regards to reporting requirements, I am thinking really more about any surveys, similar to those that Florida sends out for the Gulf reef fish permit, that would help us to refine what those effort estimates are. I am not sure that -- I don't know if we're at a point where we can do anything with the alternatives that are here right now that identify some proportion, subset, of anglers to do that. I don't think our discussion is going to be very productive by focusing on that.

DR. COLLIER: This action is not focused -- It actually doesn't apply if you go with a survey-based approach.

DR. DUVAL: All right. Then I guess we get to skip it.

MR. BREWER: Was that Action 10 that that was under?

DR. DUVAL: Yes, sir.

MR. BREWER: **Madam Chair, I make a motion that we remove Action 10 from Amendment 46.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Chester and seconded by Jim. Any further discussion on this motion? **I am not seeing any, and is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

Now we get into best fishing practices, Action 11. There are a number of alternatives and sub-alternatives here with regard to requiring descending devices or venting tools to be onboard vessels possessing snapper grouper, and different sub-alternatives pertain to recreational versus commercial vessels. We've got alternatives for single-hook rigs and modifying the use of circle hooks, and so a lot to chew on here. The advisory panel had a pretty robust discussion about the use of circle hooks and impacts on different species, depending on size, and so I'm just looking for some discussion here as to keeping this in or any modifications that you would want to see.

MR. BREWER: I should have asked the guy that was the Chairman of the AP what kind of circle hooks he was talking about, because he kept making reference to gut-hooking fish with circle hooks, and that doesn't happen unless you've got an offset on the barb of the circle hook. If you have a non-offset, the chances of you gut-hooking a fish are really very small, because of the way the barb curves back to the shank of the hook, and so I think that, if we do require the use of circle hooks, obviously they need to be hooks that will rust out, in other words non-stainless, and the use of non-offset circle hooks.

DR. DUVAL: I was just going to ask David if you would mind coming to the microphone here at the end and just clarifying the comments and discussion of the AP about offset versus non-offset.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Madam Chair. He is absolutely right. It was in reference to offset versus non-offset, and it was actually two points. It was offset versus non-offset, and then the other was really hook size. We didn't define, necessarily, hook size. Just randomly, you could say above a 1/0, but it had to do with, like I said, yellowtail and triggerfish and some of those smaller fish.

I think, again, that's probably more in relation to the fishing style. Florida yellowtail, and you're a Florida guy, and so I'm sure you know, but it was more in reference to the offset versus non-offset and, again, hook size. The smaller hooks, you tend to have more of an issue, more difficulty and so on and so forth.

MR. BREWER: I would imagine it was the yellowtail fishermen out of the Keys that were saying that they do better and have less, quote, mortality if they use a regular j-hook as opposed to a circle hook.

MR. MOSS: Yes, I/we are saying that. It actually wasn't just -- It was also the triggerfish fishermen further north as well. Obviously, I don't participate in that fishery, but those guys were saying almost exactly the same thing.

MR. BREWER: I think we could entertain an exception with regard to those fisheries, but, overall, you're going to have a lot less mortality with a non-offset circle hook.

MR. PHILLIPS: I guess I need some clarification. I am looking at Alternative 4, and 4b talks about using non-offset circle hooks north of 28 degrees and it's unlawful to possess snapper grouper without the circle hooks. 4c sets it at a depth greater than X, and I'm just going to put seventy feet in there, and then it says it's unlawful to possess snapper grouper species without the

non-offset circle hooks, and so, if you're fishing in -- If X happens to be seventy feet, and you're fishing in fifty feet for black sea bass, then you're still going to have to have circle hooks, and I don't understand how 4c works. Maybe somebody can explain that, but, if you have a snapper grouper species onboard, you've got to have circle hooks, and I don't understand how that one works.

DR. DUVAL: I find that one a little bit confusing as well. I mean, I think I understand the intent is that you are more likely, in those deeper depths, to incur hooking mortality or barotrauma, and I think applying a depth was meant to try to address that, and I just don't think it's very enforceable.

MR. PHILLIPS: **I think I will make a motion to add an alternative, because it goes down -- 4e is to remove the requirement for the use of circle hooks for fishing for snapper grouper species with hook-and-line, and, considering what the AP talked about and how the commercial fishermen were fishing circle hooks versus b-liners versus big fish, I would like to add alternatives of removing them for the commercial fishery or removing them for the recreational fishery, because I felt like I heard that the recreational fishery didn't really mind them, because they're not trying to turn meat, turn pounds, like the commercial guys were, and so it would help them, and so I would like to add the alternatives for recreational or for commercial to 4e.**

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Charlie. Is there a second to that motion? This would add an alternative to remove the requirement for the use of circle hooks solely from the commercial fishery, correct, that you could --

MR. PHILLIPS: You could split it up.

DR. DUVAL: So adding sub-alternatives for commercial and recreational. It's seconded by Jim. Is there discussion?

MR. BOWEN: Charlie, would you consider modifying your motion to put in there the for-hire sector as well?

DR. DUVAL: That is recreational. Oh, I see what you're saying.

MR. BOWEN: I am aware of that, but I was just seeing if we could maybe put the for-hire in there as being separated a little bit from the recreational sector, but I don't guess that's going to happen.

MR. PHILLIPS: I don't have a problem putting it in there, but I don't know if we can practically put it in there.

DR. DUVAL: I think the cleanest thing might be to dispense with this motion. Then, if there is a desire on the part of the committee to add another alternative that would just consider the for-hire sector, we could do that.

MS. BECKWITH: It wasn't specific to this motion, but it will work as well. Listening to the discussions and using sort of our red drum fishery in North Carolina as an example, I kept thinking why, if the smaller hooks, the circle hooks, are causing potential problems, and certainly a 4/0 and a 6/0 are more easily going to be swallowed by a red snapper, and there is still some benefit from

the larger hook size, instead of banning them one way or the other, North Carolina, for red drum, does not allow hook sizes of 4/0 or 6/0, and, if you're going to fish at night, you have to use a circle hook that is larger than a 4/0 or a 6/0, and I can't remember what it is.

I think we could do something similar and actually achieve both benefits of keeping the circle hook for the larger fish, and so maybe, if you're going to use a hook size greater than 8/0, it needs to be a circle hook, and then that exempts the smaller hook sizes, and so it would cover black sea bass and triggerfish and vermilion that might use the smaller j-hooks. It's just an idea. It's a little bit different from what we've done, but --

MR. BROWN: I've got a question for Chip. Is there still a benefit from using circle hooks in the stock assessment? Do you get a benefit from using them as it is right now?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, there's an associated discard mortality with the use of circle hooks and other things that went in place, such as dehooking devices and different things like that. It apparently increases survivorship of released red snapper.

MR. BROWN: Do you remember what the percentage was?

DR. COLLIER: It's about 10 percent for both sectors.

MR. BREWER: I don't have any problem with discussing this, but I think some consideration needs to go into it, and some thought, because it just -- Chip just said it, and it's the truth. If you use j-hooks, your mortality, bycatch mortality, goes up. If you've got one sector that you're saying, okay, you guys over here, you commercial guys, you don't have to use the circle hooks, but, recreational guys, you do, what does that do then to the bycatch mortality for those two sectors?

I will tell you that, originally, there was a great deal of resistance to the use of circle hooks, particularly in the longline industry, and we had arguments back and forth, and what they finally learned is, if they modified the way that they were using the circle hooks, particularly how they were baiting the hooks, that their catch rate went up. Their catch percentage went up with circle hooks, because they work so well, and I throw that out there, because I don't know that the commercial sector really wants to get away from circle hooks in live or natural bait. It's completely different if it's artificial.

DR. DUVAL: Zack and then Charlie, and then we're going to wrap this up.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. To Anna's point, and I will touch base with Chester as well, but I would err on the side of caution when we get into discussions about sizes of hooks, because different manufacturers have different sizes, diameter-wise, and a 1/0 or a 2/0 may be different with a Mustad versus someone else, and so I would err on the side of caution for this council to try to implement anything on strictly a hook size. To Chester's point, I would let -- It is of my opinion that I would let the commercial guys decide if they want to use circle hooks, but I am of the opinion that it should not be mandated. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MR. PHILLIPS: To Chester's point and Mark about the discard mortality credit that they get, if the recreational people are interacting with most of the red snapper, and they are still using circle hooks, and they're out there for trip satisfaction, then it probably -- It may not matter whether

they're using circle hooks or j-hooks. If the commercial guys need to use the straight hooks for b-liners, and, if they're out there trying to catch grouper, they are going to use circle hooks anyway. I don't know that it's really going to change the discard mortality very much, if at all, but I would like to see it go out to public hearing and just see what we hear and get some interaction on it, and I will leave it at that.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. I think we've had a lot of discussion. **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion to add an alternative to Action 11, Alternative 4, to remove the circle hook requirement from: a)commercial or b)recreational fisheries? Those in favor, please raise your hand, eight in favor; those opposed, three opposed; any abstentions, one abstention. The motion carries.**

MR. BOWEN: **I would like to make a motion to add an Alternative 4f to Action 11 that would remove the requirement for circle hooks for federally-permitted vessels in the South Atlantic.**

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Zack to add an alternative --

MR. BOWEN: **Add a Sub-Alternative 4f to Alternative 4 for Action 11 to remove the requirement for circles for federally-permitted vessels in the South Atlantic.**

DR. DUVAL: The motion is to add a Sub-Alternative 4f to Action 11 to remove the requirement for circle hooks for federally-permitted vessels in the South Atlantic.

MR. BOWEN: Correct. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: So, this would cover for-hire and commercial fishermen.

MR. BOWEN: The legal for-hire and commercial fishermen in the South Atlantic.

DR. DUVAL: Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Chris. Is there discussion? Zack, would you like to provide a little bit of rationale for your motion?

MR. BOWEN: I have spent years using them, and I have spent years not using them, and, from my experience, we gut-hook -- On my for-hire permitted vessel, we gut-hook and discard more fish dead because of the use of circle hooks and the people not knowing how to use them properly than we ever did with j-hooks.

MR. ESTES: If I am on a for-hire vessel or I'm in my own personal boat, I don't really understand what the difference is as far as me knowing how to use a circle hook, exactly, and I'm not certain why we are separating those things.

DR. DUVAL: Go ahead, Zack. I can see you want to speak to that, and then I'm going to get to Dewey.

MR. BOWEN: Well, Brother Jim, if you were on my vessel, I could instruct you how to properly hook fish, whether you had a j-hook or whether you had a circle hook. The problem is I don't have enough time, and you don't pay me enough money, to stay out there for weeks and years to show you how to properly hook a fish with circle hooks.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: If this motion was to pass, that would mean that the council dolphin boats that longline would not have to use circle hooks, and is that correct, the council boats that different members refer to that we're hoping in the future is going to get addressed, and they wouldn't have to use it, since they're permitted under the council and they're mahi fishing?

DR. DUVAL: They don't have to use circle hooks right now, Dewey, and I think that's the issue that a lot of folks have HMS permits. HMS permittees have to use the circle hooks, but those with just the dolphin wahoo permit do not.

MR. BREWER: Following up on what Jim said, this gives me tremendous heartburn, because you're going to be treating recreational fishermen differently than if they're fishing from their friend's boat or if they've chartered a boat, and I don't think that you need to walk down the road of that separation right now. I mean, that's a fight that we may have in the future, but, effectively, with that motion, that's what you're doing. Also, it does not take hours to teach somebody how to use a circle hook. All you've got to teach them how to do is sit there and wait for the line to come tight and then reel, and I can do it in seconds.

MS. BECKWITH: I have two points, one to Zack, which is, if you're there teaching your guys how to fish, then you shouldn't be having that many discards off your boat using circle hooks or j-hooks, because you're there teaching your guys how to fish, and so you sort of counter-pointed yourself.

To Dewey's point, I actually agree with what he was trying to get to. We have discussed around this table, numerous times, that we need to put our longliners on a level playing field with HMS-permitted longlines, which means eventually getting to use of circle hooks on those mahi longline boats that are council-permitted, and so moving towards this would eliminate that future action from us, or we would have to make an additional exception, and so I knew where Dewey was going with that, but I wasn't sure that he made the point clearly.

DR. DUVAL: Right, and, again, I think we're only talking about snapper grouper, and so that doesn't preclude the council for doing something different for dolphin. I guess my assumption is that this motion, because this is a snapper grouper amendment, only applies to federally-permitted snapper grouper boats. Okay. Last word, and then we are voting on this, Zack.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you. Anna, I'm not sitting here trying to get a motion where we're mandating j-hooks, but I'm just sitting here trying to get a motion where the people can decide for themselves what they want to use. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. We've had robust discussion. **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion, one; those opposed, six opposed; abstentions, four abstentions. The motion fails.**

I think this action, Action 11, is pretty well fleshed out, in terms of the alternatives with regard to application of requiring venting tools or descending devices onboard both commercial and recreational vessels. There is an alternative for single-hook rigs, and the one we've just beat to death is for the use of circle hooks, and the alternatives in there apply both north of 28 degrees as well as alternatives to apply only in the EEZ, and we have added a couple of alternatives, and so,

Chip, would you be needing this draft motion in here that you have to approve inclusion of Action 11 in Amendment 46 and the alternatives as modified?

DR. COLLIER: No, I think just direction is fine.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. I think our motions have clarified what we want. The next action in here is to revise -- We moved this one. That's right. Action 12 is one of the ones that we removed, and so powerheads. I hope this is an easy discussion. We had moved this action from the Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendments, and I think Mel was interested in finding a home for this action. South Carolina is the only state off of which the use of powerheads in the EEZ is prohibited.

We have two alternatives here addressing the use of powerheads throughout the South Atlantic region as well as just in the EEZ off of South Carolina, and I know that Chester had expressed interest at the last meeting to include an alternative to disallow the use of powerheads throughout the EEZ, and so that's why you see Alternative 3 in there. Is there any desire to -- Mel, go ahead.

MR. BELL: I will be glad to clarify or explain the rationale or whatever, but you are correct that we were looking for a conveyance of opportunity, and that's how it ended up in this particular amendment, but this was something that was brought to me even before the visioning and during the visioning, but we were just looking for something to tie it to, and that's why it's here.

DR. DUVAL: I don't think there's anything that we need to do to modify this. I think it's pretty straightforward, and so, unless there is some great desire by the committee to do anything, we're going to leave this the way it is, and, Chip, you guys are okay with the direction to staff that we want to maintain this action in this amendment? Okay.

That takes us to the end of Amendment 46, and I need a quick break. It's 4:06. Let's go ahead and take a ten-minute break. Then we're going to come back up here, and we will pick up with Regulatory Amendment 26.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. DUVAL: Okay, everybody. I would like to go ahead and saddle up. We're going to start discussion on Vision Blueprint Recreational Regulatory Amendment 26. This is under Tab 7. Attachment 4a is the decision document, but Myra is going to orient us to this amendment with a presentation first, and I just want to put folks on notice.

We only have an hour left to do some business, because what's going to happen at 5:15 is that the Fisheries Service will present an overview of the EFP requests that are included in Tab 13, and they wanted to make sure to do this so that an overview was provided prior to the council discussing these on Friday at Full Council and prior to the public comment period that we're having tomorrow, and so that's why we're going to sort of halt about fifteen minutes early, to give Rick an opportunity to go through those, and so I am turning things over to Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Michelle. What I have for you is a presentation that is not in your briefing books, and so this is intended to sort of orient you and remind you of what you did at the last meeting and put things out there that you need to consider as we move through discussion on this amendment. Once I'm done with this presentation, John Hadley is going to come up here and

give you another presentation that is also intended to sort of help you get a broad overview of the recreational snapper grouper fishery, to help you along in the discussions once we get into the decision document.

In September, you approved -- Recall that we presented you with a different structure for this amendment based on three different groupings for the recreational aggregates, and you provided some guidance on the purpose and need. You talked about wording, specific wording, and language that you wanted to see included in that purpose and need statement. You added an action to remove sand tilefish from the deepwater complex, and you removed the action from the amendment that was going to adjust the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass, and you removed the action, as we just discussed, to modify the powerhead prohibition off of South Carolina. You did some revisions to actions and alternatives, and you provided guidance on a modified timeline that would have you approving this amendment for final review in September of 2018.

Here is this modified timeline. In March, we would have for you the analyses for you to consider and to allow you to possibly select preferred alternatives for these actions in this amendment. We would have the public hearings sometime before the June 2018 meeting, and you would review that public comment and finalize and approve all the actions. Then, in September, you would take final action on this amendment, and so this is the timeline that you approved.

In order for us to meet that timeline, what we need to do at this meeting is to finalize the purpose and need and to review the IPT's proposed modifications and consider removing actions that you don't think you could support and finalize what we need to analyze to bring back to you in March.

Per the guidance that we received from you in September, this is the actions that are currently included in this amendment, and so Action 1 would be to remove sand tilefish from the deepwater complex and revise the annual catch limits, the optimum yield, and the recreational annual catch target. Action 2 would modify the composition of the recreational aggregates. Action 3 would specify the recreational management measures for the proposed deepwater species aggregate. Under that action, we have sub-actions that would address a season, an aggregate bag limit, minimum size limits, and gear requirements for that aggregate.

Then we have Action 4 that would specify the management measures for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate, again with sub-actions that would allow you to specify a season and an aggregate bag limit for that group. Action 5 would specify management measures for the proposed other shallow-water species aggregate, again with options to look at specific bag limits and to modify the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish just off of east Florida.

Then we added another action, Action 6, that would specify the aggregate bag limit for a proposed snapper grouper species aggregate, which is recall that you approved a motion to look at an aggregate that would include all the snapper grouper species with the existing bag limits in place, but then cap that overall limit to twenty fish. Because you approved a different structure for the amendment, and you also wanted to look at that option, we added another action that would specify the bag limit just for that, and so I will walk you through all of these in detail once we get to the decision document.

One of the first things that I wanted to remind you of is to keep in mind the difference between aggregates and complexes. The aggregates were implemented for snapper grouper species early on, beginning in 1992, and I went back to those amendments to try to find some rationale for how these aggregates came to be, and so some of them -- The majority were intended to address overfishing for certain species and to spread out the recreational harvest, and so there wasn't a whole lot of discussion as to how these came to be specifically, in terms of the biology of the species or were they being caught together, or there was really not a whole lot to go on, in terms of background.

The complexes that we currently have were implemented through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and that was to address the mandate in the reauthorized Magnuson Act to track the federally-managed species, to track the ACLs, and so the difference is the aggregates are not used to track ACLs, but the complexes are, and so we need to make sure that we keep that distinction in mind as we discuss this some more. Again, this amendment right now, we're only talking about modifying these aggregates.

Here is a table that we talked about in September, and so what you see there is the current deepwater complex, which contains blackfin snapper, queen snapper, misty grouper, silk snapper, yellowedge grouper, and sand tilefish. You see the corresponding ACL for each of those and then the commercial and the recreational ACL. Then, below that, we have blueline tilefish, snowy grouper, golden tilefish, and wreckfish, which are not included in a complex.

What this amendment proposes, based on the guidance you have given us, is to put all these species together and call that a deepwater species aggregate, and so we're not going to make any changes to how the ACLs are tracked. We are simply going to create this grouping here in the purple outline, and that's what the deepwater species aggregate would be composed of.

Then what we did in September also, when we discussed this restructuring of this amendment, and so we talked about the available yield for each of these groupings, and that was sort of just to give you an idea of the amount of fish we're talking about for each of these proposed groupings. Here, I have highlighted how, if we continue to consider Action 1 in this amendment, then sand tilefish would be removed from this grouping.

For the shallow-water groupers, this is a shallow-water grouper complex that we currently have, and so it does not include scamp, gag, black grouper, or red grouper, because those are assessed species, and they have their own ACLs, and so their ACLs are tracked individually. What we're proposing for the aggregate is to put all those species together and modify bag limit and season and what have you. Again, over here is an approximation of the total amount that we're talking about for this grouping of species, in terms of yield.

Then, for the other shallow-water species, we have several complexes that are included in there, and so I didn't spread it out, because it wasn't going to fit in my slide, but we have the jacks complex, the snappers complex, the grunts, the porgies, and then a whole bunch of other species that are not included in the complex, and so what we're talking about in this amendment is to aggregate all of these and create aggregates for this other shallow-water species. Then, over here in the corner, in red, you have an approximation of the amount of yield that we're talking about.

Some of the things that we're going to talk about when we get to the decision document is, under Action 1, just to remind you that this action doesn't meet the purpose and need that we currently have drafted or the stated objectives in the vision blueprint, and, to remind you, this is an amendment that you embarked on to address some of those objectives in the vision blueprint that were short-term objectives that could be attained in a simple type of an amendment.

If we keep this action in this amendment, we also would need to make it a plan amendment as opposed to a regulatory amendment, because that is not a type of action that can be addressed in a regulatory amendment, and we would also need to add an action to the commercial amendment, because, if you are adjusting an ACL, that is going to affect both sectors.

Another thing that we recommend is, if we retain the action, let's not add sand tilefish to another complex. If you want to remove it from the deepwater complex, you can do that, but we would recommend that you don't go and add it somewhere else, because then that's going to require that we adjust the ACL for this other grouping that then sand tilefish would go into, and it's going to create more stuff.

Other considerations under Action 2 are to remind you that we developed those alternatives based on an approved approach that we talked about in September, and so we followed this tiering type of system, and so the actions that follow Action 2 are sort of assumed that you are going to select an alternative that would make those actions relevant, and so this tiering approach. Actions 3 through 5 are based on you selecting Alternative 3 under Action 2 as your preferred, in order to adhere to the proposed restructuring for this amendment. Action 6, as I mentioned earlier, would only be applicable if you selected the corresponding alternative under Action 2.

Under Actions 3 through 5, we're going to need you to clarify your intent to include or exclude tomtate and red snapper in these proposed aggregates, in particular red snapper. I think tomtate is not an issue. It's included in an aggregate, but it just simply does not have a bag limit, but we just need to make sure that that's clear to us, and also remind you that we need to be consistent in how we specify open versus closed seasons. Some of the actions we're talking about are recreational seasons, and that specifies during which months of the year anglers can fish. Then, in other actions, like the shallow-water grouper closure, we're talking about modifying a season during which people cannot fish, and so we need to be consistent and refer to these seasons -- Pick one or the other. Are they open, or are they closed?

Then the last one is we need some clarification on the wording on allowing fishing or allowing possession and/or harvest, because it's pretty important that we clarify that for regulatory purposes, and the intent of that action is important that you clarify. That is what I have for you, in terms of background, to sort of prime you for the discussions, and then, if you have any clarifying questions, we can do those now, but, if not, John Hadley has another presentation for you.

DR. DUVAL: I guess my recommendation would be let's let John give his presentation, and I think they go hand-in-hand. If there are any questions after that, we can take those.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. What I will be going over is Attachment 4b under Snapper Grouper in your briefing book. What we've put together is an information document that focuses on some of the actions in Snapper Grouper Amendment 26, to provide background, specifically focusing on potential recreational seasons, and so in Actions 3 and 4.

Overall, we looked at the seasonality of recreational landings by species groupings, and what we did was looked at MRIP landings and averaged them from 2014 through 2016. All landings are reported in numbers of fish, and how they were grouped -- We looked at the deepwater species together, and so these are your tilefish, deepwater groupers, and deepwater snappers. The shallow-water species are together and grunts and porgies are together, and kind of a catch-all other snapper grouper species. In the future, if the committee would like to see certain species or different groupings, we can certainly pursue that, but that was kind of a catch-all for the other snapper grouper species.

Then, also, we have included the mackerel cobia and dolphin wahoo species, and the idea here is to try to get kind of a high-level picture. If you're looking at seasons, what other recreational fisheries might be taking place at that time?

To start off, what we did was we looked at landings by state and then also kind of the aggregate all together, and so you can see, in the top-left here, we have deepwater species landings in Florida, and then South Carolina and Georgia together, North Carolina, and then the South Atlantic Region as a whole, and you will see this -- It's very apparent in deepwater species, but it's interesting looking at it on a state-by-state basis versus a regional basis. You kind of get two different pictures there in how the fisheries operate across the region.

Also, one more thing that I wanted to point out is each of the Y-axes -- The landings are in numbers of fish, but they're also the same across each graph, and so you can kind of see the different magnitudes. You can compare between states and also compare states to the region in general. For the deepwater species, Florida basically has landings year-round, but they kind of increase through the spring, peak in the summertime, and work their way back down.

This is actually -- It's not showing any landings. The landings were very, very low, and that's a little bit of a technical glitch there, but in the single digits of fish for deepwater species, according to MRIP, in South Carolina and Georgia. North Carolina, you can see that the landings peak there in May and June and July and August, those two waves, largely driven by blueline tilefish and snowy grouper, and then the South Atlantic Region as a whole.

Next up, we have the shallow-water groupers. Here again, it's kind of interesting to see the different dynamics between the states. In Florida -- Well, in all states really, you have the summertime fishery for the shallow-water groupers, but, in Florida, you tend to have this kind of spike in November and December that you don't really see in the other states so much. You can see, when looking at it regionally, those Florida landings are largely driving the shallow-water groupers.

Here again, grunts and porgies combined, and, again, Florida certainly accounts for the largest recreational landings for these species. There again, you have that large kind of winter component on the Florida side in November and December and January and February. You don't necessarily see that so much in North Carolina and South Carolina and Georgia. It's more of a summertime fishery.

Then, finally, kind of this catch-all, where you have this kind of laundry-list of species down here, but, as you can see in the top-left, Florida, there again, has the majority of these landings, not

surprisingly, especially considering you have mutton snapper thrown in there and yellowtail snapper, but the trends are pretty similar across the states. If you look at it, the seasonality of these landings are very similar. We have kind of a build into the summer and then kind of a backing off of recreational landings.

Then, finally, and I will go over these very quickly, but this is the mackerel cobia landings for Florida versus the states north, and, there again, you have that larger winter fishery that isn't necessarily occurring, just due to the migration of the species, but in the Carolinas or in Georgia. Then, looking at it regionally, it's a very different picture, and so it's a little all over the place there. Then dolphin and wahoo, and, here again, you have that large summertime fishery across the states, and then a more prolonged season in Florida, but you see that summertime spike throughout the South Atlantic region.

There again, this is just being put out there to just show what other fisheries are taking place seasonally, and then, finally, we have the last figure, or set of graphs, that kind of puts it all together. I will start at the top-left here, and you have Florida recreational landings, and, on a numbers basis. Remember that these are numbers of fish and not pounds, and so, not surprisingly, when you have some of the other catchall category, you have the fish that may not weigh much, but you might have many of them being landed, and so, on the Florida side, that's kind of the largest component, but it's interesting.

When you get down to North Carolina, you have, comparatively, a pretty good jump there for mackerel and cobia and dolphin and wahoo, and so that accounts for many of the landings, and then, finally, you can see the whole kind of big-picture seasonality across the region there, in the bottom-right. As I mentioned, we'll kind of have these on deck to bring back up for the discussion on seasonality, or seasons, but, otherwise, I will be happy to answer any questions.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, John. Are there any questions for either Myra or John with regard to the overview or this particular attachment?

MR. BROWN: I've got a question about sand tilefish. Is there some fishery that I am unaware of that targets that, commercial or recreational, because that's a very rarely-encountered fish, for me anyway?

DR. DUVAL: I would say probably not. I mean, we get one every once in a while up in North Carolina. They're not common, and I don't know if that experience is different in Florida or Georgia.

MR. HARTIG: In south Florida, they are relatively frequently encountered. It's a bycatch of the normal snapper grouper fishery, the small-mouth fishery that fishes for yellowtail and mutton.

MR. BROWN: Do they keep them or throw them back or what?

MR. HARTIG: They are edible. I don't know how many people keep them. I use them for bait, but --

DR. DUVAL: There you go. If somebody from south Florida won't eat them -- It's late in the day.

LCDR BENNETT: Did you get any data for the range of dolphin wahoo, like north of North Carolina, and the same with coastal migratory pelagics, since they're going all the way up there now?

MR. HADLEY: Right, and that's a good question, and I appreciate you bringing that up. I failed to mention it, but this was just focusing on the South Atlantic Region, and so any landings -- It just focused on the South Atlantic states, and so, even though the jurisdiction extends for the coastal migratory pelagics and dolphin wahoo, in this case, we just focused on the South Atlantic Region.

DR. DUVAL: We know that, seasonally, dolphin particularly, varies as you go all the way up to the coast to New England. We have received multiple public comments in that regard. Any other questions for either Myra or John right now? Okay. If not, I think we're going to go ahead and jump into the decision document, and, again, this is Attachment 4a under Tab 7.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Michelle. Your decision document is structured the same way we're doing all of our decision documents, trying to be consistent in how we walk you through these. The background is the same. Why we're doing this, it's to address objectives in the vision blueprint for the recreational sector. The actions that are currently in this amendment, again, reflecting your guidance from September, are listed on your screen, and I just went over them in my introductory presentation.

As I mentioned earlier, the objectives for this meeting are to consider suggested changes to the purpose and need and finalize those as well as changes to actions and alternatives and making any necessary modifications, so that we have our final set of actions and alternatives that we can then dig into and analyze and bring back to you in March.

The expected timing of the amendment, again, I've already covered this, and so, here on your screen, we have the motion that you approved at the September meeting where you asked us to include certain language in the purpose and need statement, or to at least give us an idea of where your intent was for that purpose and need. You talked about the need to stabilize recreational access, stability in the fishery, ensuring that access is properly characterized, include mention of wanting to control regulatory discards, include a phrase that indicates that the purpose is to respond to stakeholder concerns. Simplification of regulations was another item that you asked us to include and talk about predictability, and you also suggested that we look at a draft purpose and need from a previous meeting. However, there wasn't one back then.

The IPT took that, and we came up with this draft purpose and need statement for you to consider. We did our best to try to include all of these things in there. However, that was very wordy, and so the purpose for the actions in this amendment would be to address recreational stakeholder input to increase access and predictability for the recreational component of the snapper grouper fishery, minimize regulatory discards, and improve regulatory compliance and consistency.

The need would be to achieve efficient management of the recreational component of the snapper grouper fishery to achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse socioeconomic effects for recreational fishermen in the South Atlantic Region. This is what we suggest, and, by all means, you can modify it as you see fit. I will pause there.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Myra. How do folks feel about the purpose and need statement? We did give the IPT a huge laundry-list of things to consider, and I think it looks pretty good right now. I am not sure if anyone has any specific things that they would like to see added or words changed.

MR. ESTES: Just a question. What do we mean by “efficient management”, if management is efficient? Is that simple?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and that was a question I had as well, and, as you know, this was a collaboration of several individuals, and my concern was that people were going to perceive that the recreational fishery was not being managed efficiently, but then the folks that contributed to this said, well, we’re improving the management, and we’re improving it by making these changes that are going to make it easier for the public to understand, I guess, and this is where the simplification of the regulations are, for that purpose.

DR. DUVAL: I am wondering if maybe we could simply replace “achieve efficient” with “improved management of the recreational component”, and that might reduce any confusion about what we mean by “achieve efficient management”.

MR. BREWER: I was going to say, “to simplify the management”, because that’s what we’re really trying to do. Right now, you’ve got have a scorecard when you go fishing, and I literally have to go and print out a sheet of paper off of the computer when I go fishing, not for pelagics and stuff, but on those rare occasions when I go bottom fishing, and I think that’s what we’re trying to do here, is simplify the thing so that it is a little bit easier for the recreational folks to know what they can and can’t do and what they can keep and what they can’t keep.

DR. DUVAL: I agree with you, and that is certainly what we heard from port meetings during the visioning process. I do think simplification is probably in the eye of the beholder, to some extent, and so I’m a little bit concerned about applying the word “simplify”, but I would like to hear some input from other committee members.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say that I would go simple here with something like “improve”, because what Chester described is an improvement, and I think “improve” is what our goal is. I mean, we know we’re not perfect, but we’re simply trying to improve it, and you could list all the different ways, but then this would get real tedious. Then, in terms of the way it was worded, “achieve”, well, that’s our goal, but I think if we could just keep it simple, like “improve”, like you said, that would work for me.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Thanks.

MR. GRINER: I was just going to kind of say the same thing. I do believe we’re trying to simplify it, but, again, we may not actually be any simpler after we’re done with this, but we definitely will improve.

MR. HARTIG: Ditto.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Chester, I’m sorry, but it sounds like “simplify” is dinged. I think we would then, if everybody is okay with “improve”, then I think we would approve the purpose and need, as modified, would be the motion that I would be looking for.

MR. BROWN: **I would like to make that motion, to accept the purpose and need.**

DR. DUVAL: It's seconded by Chester. Is there any further discussion? **Is there any opposition? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MS. BROUWER: Here is where we start getting into the actions, and, the way it's structured -- Also, let me remind you that we didn't have enough information or time to conduct any preliminary analysis for you, and so, for this amendment, we're going to be talking about actions and alternatives without having a whole lot else to go with. We have little bits of discussion, things that you should consider, or that you should keep in mind, as you move forward.

For Action 1, again, this is an action that you added in September, and your motion was to remove sand tilefish from the deepwater complex and add it to an appropriate shallow-water aggregate. We talked about that making those changes to the composition of a complex cannot be accomplished under the existing regulatory framework. Recall that you said that was fine by you, and so, if we proceed with this action included in the amendment, we would rename it something else, and it wouldn't be a regulatory amendment anymore.

For purposes of just keeping track of what we've done so far, we have Action 1 here as you discussed it in September, and so this is where we were back then. Over here is how things have changed since that meeting. Currently, we have just two alternatives, no action and then removing sand tilefish from the complex. We would revise the ACL, the optimum yield, and the recreational annual catch target to reflect the removal of sand tilefish and specify new revised -- All those catch levels, and so we have in here for you, just to see how things would change, and so the deepwater complex ACL and OY is currently 129,498 pounds whole weight. Then you have a recreational ACL of about 32,000 pounds whole weight.

For sand tilefish, the ACL and OY would be about 8,000 pounds whole weight, with a recreational ACL of about 6,000 pounds whole weight. The ACTs, we just didn't have time to figure them out. Recall that ACTs are not actually included in the codified text, and the council does not tie any management measures to those ACTs, and so we have to go back and calculate them, and remember that they are tied to -- The formula includes estimates of PSEs, and so we would get those numbers for you.

Again, the IPT has some recommendations that I have already covered, and their recommendation is to remove this action from this amendment and consider it in the future, along with other revisions that you may wish to make to the various complexes, ACLs, and allocations, and this is based on discussions that you've had in the past. There has been some interest in possibly reorganizing the jacks complex. There has been a bunch of other things that you've talked about in the past that you want to do eventually, and so you have the option of taking action on all those things at once.

If you retain the action, then we would need guidance, eventually, to include a similar action in the commercial amendment to address the commercial ACL, and then I have already covered it. If we do remove sand tilefish from the deepwater complex, let's keep it separate for the time being.

MR. HARTIG: **Madam Chair, I probably have more history of talking about sand tilefish in the years I've been on the council than anyone, and I never thought it should have been part of the deepwater complex, but, having said that, the problem it causes in our discussions in trying to do this are way above removing it from the deepwater complex, and so I move that we keep sand tilefish within the deepwater complex and remove Action 1, actually.**

DR. DUVAL: That's what I was looking for, is a motion to remove Action 1 from consideration, and I appreciate your recognition of maybe some of the cascading impacts of removing it right now, as opposed to -- Again, none of these aggregates were set up with any -- None of the complexes were set up with any consideration for how the aggregates themselves were formed, and so it doesn't really change business as usual. Jim, is that a second to Ben's motion? Okay. Any discussion on this? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** All the IPT members are breathing a huge sigh of relief who are listening online right now. Nick is raising his hand. Excellent.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to Action 2, this one would modify the composition of the aggregates. In September, you directed staff to develop alternatives to establish an other shallow-water species aggregate that would include species outside the existing aggregate, such as black sea bass, vermilion, and so forth, and include alternatives to retain the bag limits for those species within the aggregate.

Then you also said that we also want to see alternatives that would exclude the species outside those aggregates, and then you also talked about an action that would establish a twenty-fish maximum daily recreational bag limit that would maintain all existing individual and aggregate bag limits with sub-alternatives to include deepwater species and exclude deepwater species.

Action 2, first is what you saw in September, and so it was a little bit different, because it combined not only modifying the composition of the aggregates, but the action also included bag limits, and so we have reorganized everything, and so this is what we have for you to consider. Under no action, you have currently a snapper aggregate bag limit that includes the species you see there on your screen, a grouper aggregate, and then a bag limit aggregate for species without a bag limit.

Then there is a handful of species that are outside of the aggregate, and so what we did, to make things a little bit easier, mainly for us to just keep track of all these different changes, is have these color-coded tables. Here is your no action, and this is where we are right now. Your snappers are in this pink color, and your groupers, or the grouper aggregate, which includes tilefish and sand tilefish, are in this orange. The species without bag limits are in the green, and then everything that is not included in an aggregate is over here in the blue.

First, we come to Alternative 2, and this is one that you saw in September, and I don't recall there being a whole lot of discussion about it, but we didn't get guidance to remove it, and so it's still here, and that would be to remove the recreational snapper grouper aggregate groupings that are in place, and so just take them all out.

Under National Environmental Policy Act guidance, I guess, it would be within the range of alternatives to consider for an action like this one, but here is where we urge you to consider -- If this is not something that the council is interested in ever doing, then let's not spend a bunch of

time analyzing it, and so I'm just putting that out there for you to think about. That is Alternative 2.

Alternative 3 is the one that would rearrange things into the three groupings that you expressed interest in having, and so you would have your deepwater species aggregate, your shallow-water species aggregate, and your other shallow-water species aggregate. Here is the table that shows you how things would be rearranged, and so we would move the deepwater snappers over here, and we would keep the deepwater groupers and the tilefishes together and add wreckfish and call that grouping the deepwater species.

The shallow-water groupers would include everything that is currently in the grouper aggregate, and then the other shallow-water species would have some of the snappers, sand tilefish, and then everything in the green that's in that other aggregate and species that currently are not included in an aggregate. Red snapper is here highlighted in this blue color, because it's the one we need clear guidance from you on what we should do with red snapper.

Then, besides those alternatives, we have other arrangements that you may or may not want to consider, and so Alternative 4 would rearrange things like this, and so you would have fewer deepwater species here. It would just be a different kind of grouping, mainly just to expand the range of alternatives under analysis, but, again, if this is not something that the council is interested in considering, then you may want to send that out the door.

Alternative 5 creates just two aggregates, one for deepwater species and then everything else. They are just in two columns, just because it was easier to format it that way. Then Alternative 6 is the one that captures your guidance to have just one big aggregate and then capping it at twenty fish, and so, again, some guidance on what to do mainly with red snapper, and so this table here basically is all the snapper grouper species combined.

Then just to remind you that, if you were to choose Alternative 3, then we would proceed with the rest of the actions in this amendment, based on the structure that you approved in September. If you were to choose Alternative 6 as a preferred, then we would go down to Action 6, where you would specify -- You would have options to specify the bag limit for that mega-aggregate. I call it the Mark Brown Aggregate, because I recall it was Mark who made the motion, and so, when we were having IPT discussions, we talked about the Mark Brown Aggregate.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. I am going to suggest that we start with something simple, and so I think Alternative 2, which would remove the recreational snapper grouper aggregate groupings that are in place in the South Atlantic Region, is probably not something we want to consider, and so I'm thinking we may want to jettison that. I guess I would be looking for -- Mel.

MR. BELL: **I would move that we remove Alternative 2 to the Considered but Rejected.**

DR. DUVAL: Awesome. Mel makes a motion, and it's seconded by Ben, to remove Alternative 2 to the Considered but Rejected. I think part of the rationale here is that, if we were to remove all of the existing aggregates, we would have to -- We would have to establish bag limits for every single species, and I don't think we're really enthusiastic about doing something like that.

MR. BELL: The staff time associated with trying to work up all that would be a nightmare.

DR. DUVAL: Yes. Is there any further discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MR. HARTIG: Madam Chair, I kind of get lost in this, to a certain degree. I lose my focus of what we are trying to do to begin with, and can you give me a synopsis of what we're trying to do with all these different --

DR. DUVAL: We were trying to -- Our goal here was to try to simplify some regulations. We have aggregate bag limits right now that, I think particularly our existing aggregate grouper bag limit, that it's a three-grouper bag limit, but there's a whole bunch of exceptions to it, and it contains all of the shallow-water groupers, the deepwater groupers, and tilefish.

That's not exactly the way the recreational fishery operates, and so, if you're going out on a deepwater grouper trip, that's a pretty specialized trip, and so we were trying to revise our aggregates to more closely reflect how the recreational fishery operates, in the hopes that we could also remove this litany of exceptions that I think Chester is referring to of having to print out a cheat-sheet so that he can remember what he can have one of at this time and whether it's one per vessel or one per person or what it might be.

There are almost so many exceptions to our existing grouper aggregate bag limit that it's almost pointless to continue having it, and so trying to modify our aggregates to more closely reflect how the fishery operates and provide for fewer exceptions, so that you would have, ideally, for your deepwater species, you would just have a single number, whether it's two fish per person or three fish per person per day of any of these species, and that's a pretty easy thing to remember.

Similarly, for the shallow-water grouper aggregate. The all other species, the committee has expressed some concern that they may not be willing to jettison like the ten-snapper aggregate that we currently have, but the idea was to try to make things simpler, so that people had fewer exceptions that they had to keep track of and to have those aggregates more closely reflect how the fishery operates.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: You're welcome. Okay. We have removed Alternative 2, and Alternative 3, as Myra indicated, sort of most closely reflects what the committee's preference was the last time we talked in September, in terms of what species you would want to include in these different aggregate groupings. Alternative 4 just shifts things around a little bit between those and removes a few from the deepwater species aggregate and creates just a shallow-water species aggregate and then an everything other stuff.

Alternative 5, which was developed at the direction of the committee, was to simply have two aggregates, deepwater species and everything else. Then Alternative 6 is the Mark Brown Aggregate, where recall Mark was suggesting, really simply, a twenty-fish cap on everything, but you wouldn't -- There would be no modification to any of the existing aggregates that we have. It's really placing a limit on things, but I guess, Myra, Alternative 6 is how the IPT thinks that we can get to that particular -- How we can achieve that particular intent, and would that be correct?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and I guess the issue we were having, that we struggled with, was you approved a structure of the amendment that was based on these three different proposed aggregates, and then we had sub-actions that specified management measures for each of those groupings, and there was, at the time, when we proposed this restructuring of the amendment, there was no room for the Mark Brown Aggregate, and so we had to include another action in there that would address that possibility and have options that you guys could choose from, as far as bag limits, and so that's why it ended up a little bit kind of wonky.

MR. BROWN: The only reason I made this suggestion was I was just trying to simplify it. Everything gets stretched out in so many different directions, and it just seems like, if we simplified the process a little bit, it would be a little easier for everybody to understand.

DR. DUVAL: I understand. The sense, I think, that you were trying to address was that, yes, things are a little bit complicated with our existing aggregates, but some folks are used to them, and so perhaps it might be better to just cap the total number of fish that people can have at twenty, and so we understand that, definitely. I mean, I am not suggesting that we get rid of that. I just want to make sure that whatever we include in here for the IPT to analyze is really what we want to include.

We have reduced things to five alternatives right now, and I guess my question for the committee is do you really feel a need to have both Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 in there? Is there a desire to keep both of those in there? Alternative 4 lumps some other species in with the shallow-water species aggregate, and so it's not a shallow-water grouper aggregate anymore.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say, kind of to your point of what does a fishing trip look like, it depends on where you are, but which one of those might more closely reflect what people might encounter or see or their fishing trip ends up looking like, as far as the species they end up catching, and is one more close to reality than the other or not?

DR. DUVAL: Excellent question, Mel.

MR. BOWEN: To exactly Mel's point, looking at it that way, in my opinion, I think Alternative 5 fits what my idea of a targeted fishing trip would look like, as far as where I'm going fishing and what species I am trying to catch. I know that doesn't answer your question about whether we go with 3 or 4, but, looking at it, I am inclined to like Alternative 5.

DR. DUVAL: I am hearing support for maintaining Alternative 5.

MS. BECKWITH: To your original question between Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, I guess my preference would be to keep Alternative 3. It seems like, if the idea is to have an aggregate that contains all the species that are caught in deeper water, those deepwater snapper species would make sense to be maintained with those deepwater grouper species. **Otherwise, if we are going to move towards a deepwater season at some point, then that seems most logical to me, and so I would move to remove Alternative 4.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Anna and second by Zack to remove Alternative 4 to the Considered but Rejected. We will let Myra get that up there. Is there any other discussion of this motion? I think the simpler -- The fewer options that we have under this action for rearranging the aggregates,

the easier it is going to be for the public to see the logic, and I think they can see the logic in like two species groupings, and I think they can see the logic in three species groupings, and that's deepwater groupers and then something else, and I think they could probably see the logic in an overall cap.

MR. BOWEN: I know the rationale that Myra gave, but I would ask, the next time that we see this document, just because the other alternatives have three columns and then three categories, but Alternative 5 has three columns, but only two categories, and I know the page length might be increased, but I would ask just to have two headings with two columns, and I think the public would get a better visual of that as well.

DR. DUVAL: Good input. Okay.

MR. HARTIG: Just to be clear on this, within the complexes, we have regulations for specific species.

DR. DUVAL: Within the aggregates we have --

MR. HARTIG: Within the aggregates, yes. Within the aggregates, we have specific regulations, and they will stay?

DR. DUVAL: Those are the next actions that we will get to, and so, right now, it's trying to arrange the species within the aggregates to more closely reflect how the fishery operates, and I am not at all suggesting -- Since it's 5:12, my suggestion is we will dispense with this motion, and I think try to bring our conversation to a close on this action, and then I would like to go to the Regional Office to talk about the EFP applications, and people can be thinking about the remaining actions for tomorrow, if that's okay. Is there any other discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, this motion stands approved.**

MR. ESTES: Anna just helped us simplify things, and let me offer something that's going to complicate it a little bit more. Sorry. For Alternative 3 and Alternative 5, what if we had sub-alternatives, and I will use the term "Myra's blue species", in the other shallow-water species, to include or to not include those. If that's clear, then you're doing a good job.

DR. DUVAL: Can you say it one more time? Sometimes my head is a little thick.

MR. ESTES: Let me give you an example. For Alternative 3 in other shallow-water species, we have -- Right now, we have included black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, hogfish, red porgy, and red snapper. We have had some input from stakeholders that would like us to remove those, and so I would like to see two sub-alternatives, one to include those and one to exclude those. Then the same for Alternative 5 for those species that are shaded in blue there, if that makes sense.

DR. DUVAL: It does make sense.

MR. ESTES: Alternative 6, also.

DR. DUVAL: I guess the one question I have is because, in I think it's the next -- Is it the next action to specify -- It's not Action 3, but I think it's Action 4, it might be, which is management measures -- No. It might be Action 5. It's to specify management measures for the proposed other shallow-water species aggregate, and I thought that there were alternatives in there to address what those bag limits might be to include versus exclude those species like black sea bass and vermilion snapper and those that already have individual limits. I thought we had specified to include alternatives that both include and exclude those species from that the last time. Did we not?

MS. BURGESS: Yes, the committee did recommend that, and the council did recommend that to staff, and it's included in the discussion on page 7, at the top, for Action 2. It's the second sub-bullet that says to exclude species outside existing aggregates. The way that the -- If you move forward to Action 5, the way it's written, it says that you would retain the individual bag limits for those species, but they would still be part of the twenty-fish, et cetera, bag limit.

The council's direction to staff was to develop aggregates that would include those species in the aggregate, I believe, and have ones that excluded them, and that fell out of this amendment, with the revisions by the IPT. We know that there's a lot of changes and this is complicated, but we want to make sure -- I think FWC's interest is to take the guidance we receive from stakeholders about what they would like to see and make sure we bring that back to them as an alternative.

MS. BECKWITH: I am just curious. I assume that you guys want to exclude those from the aggregates because you feel like that twenty number is too low.

MS. BURGESS: Anna, I don't think that's the case. I think our point in bringing this up here is that we heard directly from stakeholders, and it was in December, this time last year, from North Carolina that they did not want vermilion snapper included with this twenty-fish aggregate bag limit. They wanted to maintain the separate five-fish bag limit for vermilion snapper, and so we're simply asking that, because this is a vision blueprint and this is a stakeholder-driven process, that we include this for consideration moving forward.

MS. BECKWITH: I understand, and I actually -- I think that, if we were going to maintain those individual bag limits on those species, I actually think that the twenty might be too low, as an overall number, and so I was thinking a different way of -- If we wanted to maintain those fish in the overall aggregate, we might also, instead of having alternatives that sort of included or didn't include them, which we can have and it doesn't matter, we could also consider different total numbers, like twenty or twenty-five or thirty, if the concern was that the total number was a little bit low. If we were going to retain those species with the individual bag limits, I would be fine looking at that as well.

DR. DUVAL: I think that's what I was trying to say, is that, in Action 5, which you set the bag limits, I think I was thinking that, after reading the minutes, that there would be alternatives to include those individual species, existing individual species bag limits, as part of that twenty-fish aggregate as well as exclude them from that, where you would maintain those, and so I think there's a couple of different ways that you can get to that.

It is 5:18, and I'm going to suggest that maybe we think about this overnight and come back to it in the morning a little bit clearer as to what the best way is to proceed forward, whether folks want to, as Erika has suggested, have sub-alternatives that would remove those species from that twenty-

fish aggregate and include those and proceed that way, and I think maybe we need to think about how that impacts Action 5, which deals with the bag limits for those as well. I know I need to think overnight, and so is that okay? All right. Can we hold that draft motion until tomorrow? Okay. Great. I would like to turn things over to Rick to review the exempted fishing permits that we have in the briefing book right now.

MR. DEVICTOR: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have three exempted fishing permits, all testing the effectiveness of removing lionfish with modified traps. This is Tab 13, and it's Attachments 6, 7, and 8 in your briefing materials, and what I would like to do is just walk through some of these and hit the high points of these.

Before I start that, I just want to remind you of what we talked about, and I think it was in June, that National Marine Fisheries Service is working on a programmatic environmental assessment, and, just to tell you why, it's because we've gotten a bunch of these exempted fishing permit requests in, and some are in the Gulf, and some are in the Gulf and South Atlantic. A lot of them want to test the same type of gear, and we support this.

It's a win-win that we could remove some of the lionfish and test the traps and perhaps have a commercial fishery on them down the road. However, we have to be very careful as we start approving these, if we do. We want to assess the impacts, such as to bycatch, to ghost fishing, to entanglements, and impacts to corals and such, and so we are working, again, on that programmatic environmental assessment that will be reviewing all the impacts from all the exempted fishing permits that come in.

Just in terms of timing, we want to wrap that up and hopefully make a decision on these exempted fishing permits before the spiny lobster season ends, and so around April 1, and so people that finish spiny lobster fishing can go and possibly test some of these. With that, I will just walk through these, like I said, starting off with the first one, and this is Attachment 6. This is cooperative lionfish containment device testing program in the Southeast United States, and I think you first reviewed and approved this for a recommendation to National Marine Fisheries Service a few years back.

It has been slightly modified, but I will bring it before you again. This one would, as outlined on page 1, develop and field test lionfish containment devices, which they're calling LCDs, designed for lionfish capture and harvest and develop a protocol for using LCDs to slow the lionfish invasion in the Southeast and assess the geographical distribution and relative population densities of invasive lionfish.

In terms of what they want to do, it goes on to page 4. As far as the geographical locations, they want to survey reef sites from four geographical locations. The Gulf of Mexico, off of Tampa, Florida, is one. The Florida Keys is two, and, in the South Atlantic, Ponce Inlet and Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, and so those are the four sites.

Then, below it, you can see they want to do four trap designs for testing. The four are standard wood spiny lobster trap, plastic funnel measuring seven-by-five inches. Second is a wire basket spiny lobster trap that is seven-by-five inches, a rectangular wire trap with modified throat measuring four-by-seven, and the sea bass pot. Pictures of those are in Appendix A in the back of

the document, if you want to see, and they have a more detailed description of the size and the materials.

On page 4, they say that they want to put out twenty-five of each design for each of the four sampling regions, and so the first one, for example, the standard wood spiny lobster trap, there would be twenty-five in the Gulf of Mexico, twenty-five in the Florida Keys, twenty-five in the South Atlantic Ponce Inlet, and twenty-five to the other location in the South Atlantic.

Page 5 outlines who will be doing the testing. It's Gary Nichols of Nichols Seafood Suppliers, Jimmy Hull of Hull Seafood, and Captain Steve Shelley. Then there is more details on page 7, in terms of sampling. Planned sampling, regardless of travel time by region, is twice monthly for all four regions, and soak times are going to vary to several hours per deployment to a maximum of two weeks, and this is on page 7. Every effort will be made to employ observers at-sea, and they also want to put GoPro cameras attached to some LCDs.

They also talk about they want to tag some lionfish, select lionfish, and one of the big questions is what they will do with bycatch, such as bycatch of snapper grouper species, and they say, on page 9, species caught in traps and tagged lionfish will be released back to the bottom using decompression devices. Then there is sections on outreach, marketing, and education. That concludes my summary. Again, Appendix A, on page 20, shows the four different traps that they want to do. Do you want me to keep going to the second and third one?

DR. DUVAL: Go ahead. That would be great.

MR. DEVICTOR: Okay. Moving on, this is Tab 13, Attachment 7, and this was submitted by Richard Stiglitz, and he used the Atlantic HMS exempted fishing permit application, and so this one has less details than the first one. He wants to also use a modified spiny lobster trap that includes a biodegradable panel. He said he has pictures attached, but, if you look, on page 3 of 10, he lists the dimensions of what he wants to test. It's a spiny lobster trap with a modified funnel.

As I understand it, they want to use a smaller funnel to keep the spiny lobster out for a lot of these, and so the standard lobster funnel is five-inches-by-six-inches, and the modified funnel dimension that he wants to use is three-inches-by-six-inches. If you recall, in the last one, they want to use a five-by-seven, and so, again, these are similar in what they're testing, these three, and that's why we're moving forward with that programmatic environmental assessment. On page 2 of 10, he outlines the location, the latitude and longitudes, of where he wants to test in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, and fishing would occur between 150 feet and 300 feet.

We sent him an email asking for more information, and this is on the very last page. If you want to go there, you can see how many traps they will put out, how are they going to bait them, the timing, and traps per trawl line. I think these two, they want to put them on a trawl and then have one line and one buoy going to the surface for each trawl. That is number two.

Then the last one that I'm going to go through is Attachment 8, and this is an application for an exempted fishing permit that we received from Joe Glass, and he is with Reef Savers. This is different, in that he wants to test purse lionfish traps. We may have seen this before, where this is something that goes to the bottom, and there's a frame and a net, and you pull it up, and that frame

closes up and captures the lionfish, and there is a FAD in the middle, because, as we know, the lionfish are attracted to those.

Some details on the first page, and they want to test from North Carolina to Texas. He actually wants to put out 25,000 traps within the first year and a total of 50,000 traps by the end of five years, and, again, this programmatic environmental assessment, we're going to look at what types of traps we'll allow, the number that can be supported out there, how are they going to be baited, for example, and so we're going to work with these people, if these are approved and go forward, and it may not be 25,000 traps in the end.

There is pictures of these in Figures 1 and 2 in the back, and you can see that it's a domed trap with a FAD in the middle. This one has less details than the rest of them. Traps will be hauled every fifteen to thirty days, with an average soak time of fifteen to thirty days, and it's year-round research, and his depths are kind of similar to the second one, where it's ninety-foot to 500-foot. Then he has some more details later on about bycatch. They will document bycatch and document lost traps and identify optimal depths, seasons, and times of day, and so, again, his is mainly written on that they will test these things, and it doesn't necessarily have the details of where it's going to be and how long and such.

As he says later on, specific locations, timing, and details of sampling strategies will be discussed during the planning meeting and will be approved by the research team, and so, again, not a lot of details in that, and so we'll have to work with this Joe Glass to get some more of the details before we approve this, if we do, and so that concludes my quick summary of the three exempted fishing permit requests that we have received, and we'll be looking for a recommendation from the council or any comments you may have.

DR. DUVAL: I think, at this time, just unless there are any clarifying questions, I would be inclined to -- First, are there any clarifying questions? I think we will have discussion on this at Full Council, when we get to that component, and I would just ask that people be ready to have discussion, but, if there a few quick clarifying questions, we can take those before I turn things back over to the Chairman. I see people unplugging their computers, and so I am taking that as there are no clarifying questions, and, Mr. Chairman, I yield the floor back to you.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 5, 2017.)

- - -

December 6, 2017

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, Wednesday morning, December 6, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman Michelle Duval.

DR. DUVAL: We will reconvene the Snapper Grouper Committee. When we left off yesterday, we were discussing the direction that we had provided at our September meeting to develop alternatives in terms of rearranging these species aggregates that would establish an other shallow-water species aggregate that both includes as well as excludes the species outside of our existing aggregate, and so, in other words, an alternative that would include black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, those species for which we do have existing bag limits within that other shallow-water aggregate and then an alternative that would exclude those species from within that other shallow-water aggregate.

In talking with Myra, I think maybe the cleanest way to do this is, if we look at Alternative 3, which currently includes all of those species within the other shallow-water aggregate, but rather than creating sub-alternatives, which I think is what Jim was suggesting yesterday, simply just create a new alternative that excludes those species, and I think that might be cleanest. We already removed Alternative 4 yesterday, and so I think just simply creating a new alternative and noting that those five or six species would be excluded from that other shallow-water species. I am just going to let Myra catch up here with where we're trying to go.

I think then, once we get this up where folks can see it, we would be looking for a motion from the committee to include an alternative under Action 2 that excludes the following species from the other shallow-water species aggregate: black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, hogfish.

MR. ESTES: **So moved.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Jim. Is there a second? Second by Ben. Is there discussion? I think everybody understands where this is coming from. If you look at the bullets that were above the beginning of Action 2, which included our direction, based on our last meeting, under Bullet Number 2, the second sub-bullet, it says to exclude species outside the existing aggregates, and we don't currently have an alternative to address that, and so that's what this motion would do, is put that in there.

This would create a new alternative that looks almost like Alternative 3, but does not include those species of black sea bass, vermilion, greater amberjack, red porgy, and hogfish in that other shallow-water species aggregate.

MR. HARTIG: Would you like to deal with the disposition on how we deal with red snapper now?

DR. DUVAL: Once we vote on this motion, then we'll come back to tomtate and red snapper, and I think, while we're considering this motion, we would then also need to make a few modifications to the alternatives under Action 5, which deals with the bag limits for this other shallow-water species aggregate, to reflect this. I see a grr from Anna, because I know that she's thinking that this doesn't necessarily simplify things, but we are being responsive to the public, and so I think it's better to include at this point than to exclude. Any further discussion?

MR. BOWEN: Probably not in the motion, but maybe some direction to staff to also maybe add some rationale for the public as to why we pulled these species out, and I know that it probably makes sense to us right here at the table, but there's other people that it may not.

DR. DUVAL: Just for the record, I would say that these are species for which we already have established bag limits, and the public is very familiar with those bag limits, and there has been some comment in some areas that folks would not want to see vermilion snapper and black sea bass subsumed within that other shallow-water aggregate. They still want to have the opportunity to maintain their five vermilion or seven sea bass in addition to anything else in that aggregate.

MR. ESTES: Note that Alternative 5 doesn't have these species in the shallow-water species aggregate, because we only have two aggregates.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, and Myra and I discussed that as well, that Alternative 5 is just deepwater species and then everything else, and it does include all of those species within -- It does include these five species within that other-species grouping.

MR. ESTES: Right, and so it would be nice to have an option to exclude those in this aggregate also, for the same reasons, right?

DR. DUVAL: Yes, and I think if we -- That would be another question for the committee, once we dispense with this motion, is do you want to keep Alternative 5 with just two species splits? Is there any more discussion on this motion? Everybody is a little quiet this morning, and so I just want to make sure that everyone is clear on what we're doing here. Any other discussion? Is there any opposition to this motion? One opposed.

MR. BROWN: I've got a question. Is the objective here to aggregate these to group them to create a season, so that there was a season for these fish within this aggregate to be open, and continue to keep the bag limits? Is that the idea? I am trying to understand what is going on.

DR. DUVAL: No, what we heard was that, if we were going to rearrange the current species aggregates that we have, that we have this twenty-fish aggregate, and it has a whole bunch of species in it, if you look at the charts that are in the decision document, it shows you what species are in there, but we have heard some comment to the effect that there are some folks who support having black sea bass, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, red porgy, and hogfish within that other shallow species aggregate and there are folks that do not support having those five species within that other shallow species aggregate, simply due to the bag limit. It has nothing to do with season at this point.

They would like the opportunity to still catch seven sea bass, five vermilion, one amberjack, three red porgy, two hogfish, but also be able to have twenty in the aggregate of the rest of these other species, and so this all just about trying to respond to that public input. Now are we ready to vote? **Anyone opposed to the motion, I see one in opposition; those in support of the motion, eight in favor; abstentions, one abstention. The motion carries.**

Then we need to come back and deal with red snapper and tomtate, and so tomtate is interesting, in that it's included in this -- It's currently included in our twenty-fish aggregate bag limit, but we don't actually have a bag limit on it, and so, for all intents-and-purposes, there is no bag limit on tomtate, and so I think the question from the IPT was do you want to continue to maintain that exclusion that tomtate is just exempt from any bag limits? What I am seeing is heads nodding around the table that they would like to just exclude tomtate from bag limits, as we currently have.

MR. BOWEN: If part of the goal or objective here is to simplify, then it might behoove the committee to consider including it in the aggregate, so we don't have more columns, for lack of a better way to describe it, and that's just a thought.

DR. DUVAL: Under Alternative 3, as it's currently structured, it is included in that twenty-fish limit. I think the question from the IPT was -- Help me out, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: I think, when you are restructuring your aggregates, we don't need to worry about tomtate, because tomtate is already included in the twenty-fish aggregate, and I apologize, and that's probably my fault, putting that in there and causing confusion. What we do need is your guidance on how to proceed on red snapper at this point.

MS. BECKWITH: My question on tomtate, which isn't a species that I spend any time with, but my understanding is that most people use that species when they catch it just for bait, and so they cut them up and use them automatically, and so I think we have had them exempted, but I don't know that twenty would come back to the dock, but the council doesn't have the equivalent of North Carolina's mutilated finfish rule, and so how would that work? Even if we put them in the aggregate and we had the twenty, twenty tomtates aren't going to come back to the dock. As people catch them, they usually put them back out as live bait or cut bait.

MR. BOWEN: We do discard, in the for-hire sector off of Georgia, we do discard the majority of them, but, in some cases, and maybe not necessarily twenty, but, in some cases -- I currently, still to this day, have groups that want to keep them, and I understand, but I do have groups that keep them.

MR. BROWN: Didn't I see sailors choice in here somewhere? That's pretty much a baitfish, too. The tomtates kind of fit right in with that one.

MR. HARTIG: Well, it depends what you're thinking sailors choice is, Mark. Sailors choice, we used to think was a pinfish, but it's not a pinfish. It's a member of the grunt family specifically, and it's a kind of speckled grunt. It's dark and white speckled.

MR. BROWN: That must be a south Florida thing.

DR. DUVAL: Do we actually need this direction to exclude tomtate from the bag limit specification? If it's already -- I just want to make sure that I get a clear sense from the committee. Do you want to include tomtate in the all other shallow-water species aggregate, or do you want to exclude it? We've heard from Zack that, for simplification, it would make sense to include it in that other shallow-water species aggregate. It's exempt from any type of bag limit right now.

MR. HARTIG: The jack guys north of me, they will put 200 of them in a bait well, and you will have 200 tomtates on your boat going jack fishing. If the Coast Guard jumps on your boat and dips into your bait well and says, hey, what are these, and, if you have more than twenty, you could be in jeopardy. Now, after the trip, I don't know what the disposition is, but, normally, I release everything out of my bait well on the way back in, and so I wouldn't have a problem at the dock, but, on the water, a potential problem could exist.

MS. BECKWITH: Ben just answered my concern, because, ideally, I would like to simplify, but, if they are bait and you are going to collect them and it would be an issue, then it's bait.

MR. BROWN: I know a lot of the guys up here in the Carolinas do the same thing. They fill their live wells up, and it gives them something.

DR. DUVAL: Then my suggestion would be to maintain this direction to exclude tomtate from any bag limit specification and remove it from that column in Alternative 3, because right now, the way it stands, tomtate is included in the other shallow-water species aggregate, and if the question from the IPT is do we want to maintain the current exclusion of any bag limits on tomtate, then it makes sense to remove tomtate from the columns that are noted here. Does that make sense? Okay.

Now we can deal with red snapper, and so it seems like red snapper is one of our unique species, and I think my recommendation would probably be to not include red snapper in these aggregates right now, and I'm seeing some thumbs-up around the table. It just doesn't make sense, given where we are. Okay. So, direction to exclude red snapper from the recreational aggregates. I think we're done with Action 2 then, finally. Now Action 3.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to Action 3, this one would specify management measures for the proposed deepwater species aggregate, and so, again, these actions, 3 through 5, are going to depend on what you pick under Action 2, and so we've assumed that you would pick Alternative 3 with the three different recreational aggregates, and so this one would apply to the deepwater species. Right here is how the action was structured back in September, and then over here is the re-constituted Action 3, and so we are still utilizing this sub-action approach.

Sub-Action 3.1 would specify the season for the proposed deepwater species aggregate, and so, right now, we have recreational fishing is allowed for blueline tilefish and snowy grouper May through August 31 annually. For wreckfish, fishing is allowed July 1 through August 31, and there is no seasonal restrictions on other deepwater species that would be part of this proposed aggregate, and so Alternative 2 would allow fishing or possession, and this is where I think we need to be very clear on your intent with the regulatory language, so it ends up how you want it in the regulations. You have got a range of sub-alternatives of May 1 through June 30, May 1 through August 31, July 1 through August 31, or July 1 through October 31. Those are your sub-alternatives for the season.

Then we move on to Sub-Action 3.2, which is where you would specify the bag limit for this deepwater species aggregate, and so, again, your no action has to include everything that is currently in place. As Michelle mentioned yesterday, there is a lot of restrictions, and so we have, for gag and black grouper, snowy, golden tile, and wreckfish, there are specific restrictions for those.

Then Alternative 2 would specify the bag limit, and the range of alternatives there are from one per person per day, two per person, three per person and then sub-alternatives that would also maintain existing restrictions on golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish, and so this is the guidance that you gave us in September.

Sub-Action 3.3 would address the minimum size limits for those deepwater species that still have them, and so it only applies to those deepwater snappers, and it would remove the twelve-inch recreational minimum size limit for those. Then, finally, Sub-Action 3.4 is where you would have the option of specifying any kind of gear requirements, and we just have the two alternatives, and Alternative 2 would require single-hook rigs when targeting deepwater species.

As I mentioned yesterday, it's important that we are consistent in how we specify the months when fishing is allowed versus months when fishing is closed, and then this wording that I just mentioned of possession, harvesting, fishing for, it's important that we're consistent with that, and so I will pause here.

DR. DUVAL: I guess my question is for Monica. How are the regulations currently written in terms of possession of species, and I was just trying to take a quick look as Myra was talking, to see which parts of the CFR have the season on snowy grouper and golden tilefish, which currently runs from May 1 through August 31, and what that language looks like.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I will look at that specifically, but, usually, I think we've tried to use "harvest" or "possess". Sometimes there was -- There was a time period in which some folks wanted to use "retain", and so "retain" is in there occasionally, but it's usually "harvest" or "possess", but it also needs to be consistent throughout, and so I will look specifically for the snowy, the example that you just mentioned.

DR. DUVAL: Because I think it's, in the language in terms of seasons, like for the existing shallow-water grouper, it is prohibit fishing for and retention of species during that four-month timeframe. I guess my point that I'm trying to make is that I'm not sure the language in the regulations itself is consistent versus saying specifying when fishing is prohibited versus when it is open.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I agree with that. There have been different regulation writers through the years, and they have their different ways that they wanted to deal with things, but I agree that it ought to be the same throughout, and so we can take another look at that.

DR. DUVAL: I guess, under Alternative 2, I think it would be clearer to say to allow recreational possession for proposed deepwater species. That makes it abundantly clear, because you can be out fishing any time of year and run into a deepwater species. Thoughts from the committee on that, fishing for or possession or harvest?

MS. BECKWITH: I agree, and I also think that "possession" would be much cleaner for enforcement purposes.

DR. DUVAL: I see Trish smiling over there at the end of the table.

LCDR BENNETT: The possession side, the retaining possession, the only caveat, and I'm trying to just think of it from a geographic sense, is if you have randomly someone who is in possession of a species not even -- I am not even saying snapper grouper, and maybe it's prohibited to possess it in the EEZ, but they have to go around a shoal area, and so they end up in the EEZ, because this happens a lot, and more in New England, but there are some spots off of North Carolina where you have to duck out into the EEZ. The fishing for or possessing or retaining, I think it's just a --

It's tricky, because of some of those navigational issues that we run into as well, and so I'm going to defer to legal on this one.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: For a variety of reasons, we weren't able to have an enforcement attorney here at this meeting, but what I would do, before the next meeting, is I will get with the enforcement attorneys and see what they prefer. Then we can carry that language through, rather than get too wrapped up right here, because I agree with what our Coast Guard rep just said, and so we do have some issues here and there.

DR. DUVAL: I think it's clear what the intent is. It's to harvest or possess, but which is the better word, and so we'll wait for some direction on that. Okay.

MR. BELL: Like Monica's suggestion, the best one is to see what the enforcement folks would think, but, a lot of times, it would depend on how you define "possess", or how you define "retain", or possess with the intention to retain or I don't know, but I think you need to let them sort that out.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so we've got this, and then, under Alternative 2, we have four sub-alternatives. Two of them encompass a two-month wave, and two of them encompass a four-month time period. It's slightly different time periods under each one, but I think it's a reasonable range. I am hoping that the committee doesn't want to mess around with this anymore. I am seeing heads in the affirmative, and so let's move on to Sub-Action 3.2, which is specifying the aggregate bag limit.

The direction we have provided previously was to include sub-alternatives that allow for one, two, or three fish per person per day, but then with those sub-alternatives that would maintain some of those existing restrictions on snowy grouper, golden tilefish, and wreckfish. Snowy is currently one per vessel, and golden tilefish is one per person, and wreckfish is also one per person, or one per vessel. I think wreckfish is one per vessel. I think those sub-alternatives address the direction that we provided last time. Is there a desire on the part of the committee to jettison any of these alternatives? I am not seeing anything, and so silence means you agree, which means that we move on. Okay. Great.

The next sub-action is removal of the recreational minimum size limits for certain deepwater species. That's pretty straightforward and no modifications. Then, similarly, Action 3.4 is gear requirements, and so we only have two alternatives there, but this is just addressing the idea of a single-hook rig in order to cut down on discards, and so I think we're done with this action right here and can move on to the next.

MS. BROUWER: The next action proposes the management measures for the shallow-water grouper aggregate, and so, back in September, this is what the action looked like, and so what we have for you to consider here is, again, the action and sub-action structure. Sub-Action 4.1 would specify the season for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate, and so recall that that was a completely different action back in September, and so we have here Alternative 1, which is recreational possession of gag, scamp, and red grouper, all the shallow-water groupers, is allowed annually from May through December 31.

Alternative 2 would basically just get rid of that shallow-water grouper closure, and so recreational possession of species included in the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate would be allowed annually from January 1 through December 31. That was sort of, again, a suggestion from the IPT, because it is within the range that could potentially be considered for this action, but certainly, if that is something that the committee doesn't feel like it's something they want to consider, then I would encourage you to go ahead and send that to the appendix.

Alternative 3 would maintain that seasonal prohibition on shallow-water groupers from January 1 through April 30 north of 28 degrees, and it would prohibit -- Again, here is that wording of recreational harvest and possession of the shallow-water grouper species south of 28 degrees, and then it would exclude black grouper, and then you have a series of sub-alternatives where that closure would apply south of 28 degrees.

Alternative 4 deals only with black grouper, and so it would maintain the seasonal prohibition on everything else north of 28 degrees. Then, for black grouper, in the EEZ south of 28 degrees, we would have the sub-alternatives that you see on your screen. The highlighted in yellow is edits that the IPT is suggesting, just to clean things up a little bit, and so each sub-alternative is just one of those four first months of the year.

Alternative 5 would, again, maintain the seasonal prohibition on the shallow-water groupers north -- It would maintain it, and then, off of North Carolina and South Carolina, however, there would be specific restrictions for red grouper, and so you have Sub-Alternatives 5a through 5c that would apply only to harvest and possession of red grouper. Rather than go through the rest of the sub-actions, perhaps we should pause here and just take it one at a time, if that's okay.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, I agree. Let's maybe go back up to the top, and so Alternative 2 -- Again, this was suggested by the IPT, just because it is within the range, but it would allow recreational possession of species in the shallow-water grouper aggregate annually from January through December, and I'm not sure that's something, based on public input and what we've all discussed, that we would want to allow.

MR. BOWEN: I make a motion that we move Alternative 2 for Action 4.1 to the Considered but Rejected Appendix.

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Zack. Is there a second? Second by Jim to move Alternative 2 to the Considered but Rejected. Again, the rationale would be that we received input from both our advisory panel as well as the public that they're comfortable with the shallow-water grouper spawning closure, and maybe a few tweaks, but certainly not complete removal of it. Okay. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MR. HARTIG: I fought hard for this exemption for south Florida, but, reading the public hearing comments and going back and looking at what the AP said, reflecting on what the discussions were around the table and the concerns that Roy had, I don't think -- I no longer have the same opinion I did then, and I think it's just going to create more problems if we try and carve out this little area of south Florida for an exclusion.

Basically, I think that we should address this at whatever time gag comes -- If gag gets healthy again, particularly gag, the council could address a blanket possible three-month closure for the

entire area, but, right now, I keep hearing from the people who actually fish for -- **They are continuing to catch gags, but the stock doesn't look very good, from almost everybody that I have talked to, and so I'm willing to go ahead and remove Alternative 3 to the Considered but Rejected Appendix.**

DR. DUVAL: Is that a motion, Ben?

MR. HARTIG: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so there is a motion by Ben to move Alternative 3 to the Considered but Rejected Appendix. Is there a second to that? It's seconded by Zack. I think we would want to have maybe some additional discussion on that.

MR. BOWEN: We've been talking now for this is the second day on using the term "simplify", and I think, as Ben mentioned, when we go to cutting this up by little small geographical differences, that we fail to simplify what we're trying to do. That's just one rationale.

MR. ESTES: I kind of understand what Ben is saying, but I would still like to hear what the public has to say about this more, and so I'm kind of not on the same page, I think, Ben.

DR. DUVAL: This was something that we had a lot of discussion about at the joint south Florida meetings and trying to address these regional differences between really south Florida and the remainder of the region, and that was one of the reasons why we brought both Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 back, and so these two alternatives are really kind of paired. You can't really have one without the other, and, if you remove one, you should remove the other.

MR. HARTIG: Thinking back on that and the timing of all this, things have changed during the timing. Basically, the stock wasn't looking nearly as bad when those discussions were occurring, and people wanted a change, but I'm hearing, almost across the board, from the public that they don't want it changed, and the AP doesn't want it changed, and especially I remember the guys in the Cape saying that they would like some relief from that, but, if we draw this line, they're not going to get it. To me, I think, eventually, you need to go to this rolling closure type concept that we've talked about in the past, and we're not ready to go there yet, and so I just don't think we should move forward, based on the information that I have reviewed.

DR. DUVAL: Any other discussion on this motion?

MR. PHILLIPS: As you noted, the 3 and 4 are tied, and, should Ben change his motion to send both of those alternatives?

DR. DUVAL: Maybe I should reconsider what I said. Alternative 3 really deals with all the rest of the shallow-water grouper except for black grouper, and so this would modify the period of time over which shallow-water grouper are allowed to be harvested in south Florida, with the exception of black grouper, and Alternative 4 deals with simply harvest and possession of black grouper and a prohibition on that. They are pretty much hand-in-hand.

MR. HARTIG: The only reason I didn't include that was because I saw red grouper in that one, but I see that that's just a categorical exclusion for North and South Carolina.

DR. DUVAL: Alternative 5 is actually red grouper. Are folks ready to vote on this one? **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion to move Alternative 3 under Action 4.1 to the Considered but Rejected Appendix, nine in favor; those opposed, one opposed; abstentions, one abstention. The motion carries.**

MR. BELL: Michelle, you can add me to the in-favor of.

DR. DUVAL: **Okay, and so that would be ten in favor.** Thanks, Mel. You've got to be more assertive, buddy.

MR. BELL: I'm just trying to not be rude.

DR. DUVAL: There is no way that you could ever be considered rude, Mel. Okay. Alternative 4. Logic has it that, if Alternative 3 has been removed, then Alternative 4 should probably follow.

MR. BOWEN: **I was prepared to make that motion, and so moved to do the same we did with Alternative 3, the Considered but Rejected Appendix.** Some rationale behind that is, one, they're tied, but two, again, and maybe this is the word of the day, but, for simplification, I think we all should keep in mind that, when we go to discussing black grouper, the identification between blacks and gags are -- To tell the difference is real difficult, and so that's just some more rationale.

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Zack. Is there a second? Second by Ben. We have had additional discussion on this motion. Again, I will just point out that this is all part of the alternatives that were discussed when we had the south Florida workshops to try to get to something that would address the unique characteristics of south Florida. I think this issue is not going to go away, and we're going to need to address it somehow, and so whether it's rolling closures at some point down the road, which is what we heard from the public during the visioning port meetings that they would like to see, but this is going to continue to raise its head to address these regional differences. Okay. **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion, I see eleven in favor, including the virtual hand; those opposed, one opposed. The motion carries.**

Then Alternative 5 deals with red grouper, and so this would simply prohibit harvest and possession of red grouper in the EEZ off of the Carolinas, and the sub-alternatives include different timeframes, and I think the input that we had received from the public was that, at least certainly up this way, was that, in May, fishermen were continuing to see red grouper with roe, and so what's your pleasure on this alternative?

MR. BOWEN: Maybe the time for this is not right now, and so maybe you can clarify, but, even though the landings historically for Georgia and the east coast of Florida, in terms of red grouper, are not very high, from what I remember, and I'm not looking at it in front of me, and to further simplify, maybe we should consider -- If we can consider not only North Carolina and South Carolina, but Georgia and Florida in this as well, to prohibit red grouper in an extended timeframe other than the other shallow-water groupers. I hope that I'm making sense.

DR. DUVAL: I think I follow you. I think what you're saying is that you might want to see this alternative revised so that it includes the entire region and not just the Carolinas, and is that correct?

MR. BOWEN: Absolutely correct.

DR. DUVAL: I think, if I am recalling, and I am looking to our AP Chair here for a minute, my sense was that there were some folks who, in the Keys I think, were interested in red grouper, given some of the restrictions on hogfish right now. That was my sense, and I'm seeing some heads nod around the table, and so just to point that out. I don't recall what the red grouper landings are for Florida. I think the information we have right now is based on those aggregates, and so it's all lumped together, and did we have that information in a previous decision document, maybe in the one in September? We might be able to try to pull that up.

MR. ESTES: Was this alternative based on recruitment or spawning closure or something like that that we don't think necessarily occurs in Florida?

DR. DUVAL: This was based on spawning condition of the fish and geographic differences in when that spawning condition occurs, and so the concern that fishermen up here had expressed was that they -- The shallow-water grouper spawning closure did not encompass the time at which red grouper were being encountered in a spawning condition, particularly up this way. We heard multiple public comments on that, and that really May was the missing month up here, in terms of when those fish are spawning, and so that's why this alternative was constructed the way it was, so that it would only address the area that stakeholders felt was not effectively addressed by the existing closure. A follow-up?

MR. ESTES: So we have that issue about the unknown and then we think that we are getting some spikes in recruitment when we have storms, for example, and we're looking at that, and so we don't know enough about recruitment of red grouper, in my mind, to tell people, at least in my state, no.

MR. BOWEN: Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't we just finish up an assessment on red grouper that showed overfished and overfishing was occurring?

DR. DUVAL: The assessment does show that the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring, and we'll be dealing with that later in our agenda today. We have an expedited framework to just revise the annual catch limits and move those down. I think Jim's point is just when are the fish spawning in different geographic areas, and we know that fish are in spawning condition in different areas at different times.

MR. HARTIG: I mean, I can see Zack's point, but I go back to the fishery performance reports and listen to what the AP said, and, yes, North Carolina in particular has seen a substantial decline, and that's the area of abundance for that stock, but, the areas to the south, the fishermen almost unanimously said that we haven't seen any change in red grouper and it's still at the baseline levels, low baseline levels, that we see, and I don't think prohibiting red grouper in those areas is going to have any real benefit to the stock long-term, because the catches are so low.

There is Florida, and, Florida, when you start getting back into the center of abundance of red grouper in the Gulf, some of that is Keys fish as well, and that stock seems to be doing relatively well. They just had an increase in the commercial allocation, although, if you talk to the fishermen,

they would disagree with that, but they did get an increase in the assessment, but that's just observations.

MR. BELL: This whole thing really came up as an issue in the Carolinas and all, and so that's why things are structured the way they are, and it's just another example of one of those fisheries where there is regional differences and impressions, and certainly from the Keys all the way to the Carolinas is -- It's not the same, necessarily, and so this is set up to deal with the problem, I think, that we were really focused on.

If you try to -- I guess, as Ben was saying, or Jim, if you try to tell people in Florida or convince them it's a problem down there, in their opinion it's not, and so I think the way it's structured right now kind of deals with what we were trying to focus on, and so I would be okay with just leaving it like it is, I think.

DR. DUVAL: I think the way it's structured right now is maybe a baby-step towards rolling spawning season considerations. I am seeing some heads nod, and so let's go ahead and maybe just maintain this alternative the way it is right now. Okay. Then the next sub-action is the aggregate bag limits, and we have not walked through this.

MS. BROUWER: Sub-Action 4.2 specifies the bag limit for the proposed shallow-water grouper aggregate, and so Alternative 2 has the range that you indicated that you wanted to consider back in September, and so Sub-Alternative 2a is two fish per person per day. Then Sub-Alternative 2b is two per day with existing restrictions on gag and black grouper, and the rest of the sub-alternatives are structured the same way, with a three-fish per person per day and a four-fish per person per day option.

MR. BOWEN: **Given what we've heard and what we see, I am inclined to make a motion that we remove Sub-Alternative 2e and 2f of this action to the Considered but Rejected Appendix.** I just think four fish per person on grouper is way too many, considering what I'm seeing on the water and the testimony we've heard from the public and the advisory panel.

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Zack and a second by Jim to remove Sub-Alternatives 2e and 2f to the Considered but Rejected. Is there discussion? Zack has provided his rationale, and it doesn't sound like anyone around the table is disagreeing with that rationale. Four groupers would be quite a lot.

MR. HARTIG: The one question I have is the ABC on reds is going down tremendously, and I don't know whether or not you want to put specific more -- Like one red into this sometime down the line when we discuss red grouper, and I don't know if we're going to be discussing bag limits red grouper and if that comes back as one fish to this at some point.

DR. DUVAL: That's a great thought. What is your pleasure? Do folks want to consider modifying and having an exception for red grouper in here of one per person?

MR. HARTIG: I will move it as a motion, that we allow only one grouper within the grouper bag limit within the shallow-water grouper aggregate.

DR. DUVAL: I think let's dispense with this motion first, and then we can do another motion. **If there's no more discussion on this motion, is there any objection to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** Then, Ben, you are putting forward a motion to --

MR. HARTIG: **A one-fish grouper bag limit, red grouper, within the shallow-water aggregate.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Ben to establish a one-fish per person limit on red grouper within the shallow-water grouper aggregate, and is there a second to that? Second by Mark. Is there discussion?

MR. HARTIG: This would be region-wide. It takes some of Zack's concerns into account, and the ACL is going to be so low that we're going to need to push back on this, so we can allow that fishery to remain open as long as possible.

DR. DUVAL: Anybody else?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just a question. It's one per person? I see some of the regulations, and like, for snowy, it's one per vessel, but you wanted one per person? Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Any other discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

I think the only -- I am just looking at some of the IPT comments with regard to language, and, again, Monica is going to look into possession versus harvest and possession.

LCDR BENNETT: Just kind of looking at the definition per Magnuson of what fishing is, just for redundancy purposes, fishing is the catching, taking, or harvesting of fish, and so you could probably get rid of "harvesting" if you're saying "fishing", and so I'm just throwing that out there.

DR. DUVAL: Awesome. Thank you. Then I think the other thing was consistency in specifying months when fishing is allowed versus months when fishing is closed, and I think, again, that's another regulatory language thing. We have a prohibition on fishing for the shallow-water grouper closure that exists, and so I think it's easier for the public to understand when fishing is open, oftentimes.

I am not sure that -- I mean, that's just my own thoughts, and I think that the IPT, working with Monica or an enforcement attorney, could maybe give us a little bit better direction on what should the language be in these alternatives when we go out to the public, and so we'll see this again in March.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Right, and I will be happy to do that, and I know they'll be happy to work with the IPT.

MR. BROWN: Ben, do you think that, since we made that harvest and possession timeframe for North Carolina and South Carolina -- I got to thinking about what Monica said, that maybe the possession limit should be one per vessel for that area.

MR. HARTIG: I would have to review the numbers again, and I don't know that we have to go that far, but, if we looked at the catch rates now versus what the new ACLs are going to be, the new ABCs are going to be -- Why don't we hold that until Full Council, by the time we get the red grouper presentation, and we can talk together and see what we get out of that.

DR. DUVAL: Great. That takes us to Action 5, which is specify management measures for the proposed other shallow-water species aggregate, and I think we'll need to make a few changes here as well.

MR. HARTIG: I need to ask a question before I forget it. Myra, I haven't looked at the Considered but Rejected Appendix in a long time. When an action is moved there, or whatever we move to there, is there an explanation of why we did that?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, there is a discussion paragraph that explains the rationale for considering it but then later rejecting it.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you very much. I think that will be critical for why we moved that seasonal. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Moving on to Action 5, this would specify the management measures for the proposed other shallow-water species aggregate. This one incorporates some of the old actions from the document that you saw in September, and here's what Action 5 looked like back then. It simply removed the minimum size limit for those deepwater snappers. Per your guidance, this action then was restructured with the sub-actions. The first one specifies the bag limit. Here is your no action, and so you've got your snapper aggregate bag limit, your grouper aggregate bag limit, and the twenty-fish aggregate for species that are not included in the previous two.

Alternative 2 would specify a twenty-fish daily maximum per person per day for this proposed other shallow-water species aggregate, and it would retain the ten snappers within the aggregate, and those are listed in parentheses, and the existing individual species bag limits, and so that would be if you chose to include black sea bass, vermilion, greater amberjack, red porgy, and hogfish, and this is a mistake here. Mutton snapper should not be included in that parenthetical.

Alternative 3 would, again, specify a twenty-fish daily maximum, and it would specify that only ten fish would be gray triggerfish, and this is some guidance that you had given to us some months ago. It would, again, retain the ten snappers within the aggregate and the existing species individual bag limits. Alternative 4 would be the same thing, except it would also specify that only ten fish within that aggregate could be Atlantic spadefish. Again, we're trying to include guidance that you had given us before, and then the rest of that is the same.

Alternative 5 has been suggested by the IPT, and so this one would specify a ten-fish daily maximum, retaining, again, the ten snappers within that aggregate and the existing individual species bag limits. I will pause there so we can discuss that bit.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so I think one of the things that Myra and I talked about in terms of these alternatives was that, given that we have added an alternative under Action 2 to address the direction previously that would exclude the species that already have bag limits from the other shallow-water species grouping, that we might need to cross out this language under Alternatives

2 and 3 that states “and existing individual species bag limits” and provide a note that species included in the aggregate are dependent on the alternatives selected in Action 2, just to make it perfectly clear to the public that what’s going on -- Because I think it could be confusing if that clause is maintained and people read that and they think that automatically these other five species are going to be included in that aggregate. That was a suggestion that I had, and I would like to see what the committee thinks about that. Jim is giving me a thumbs-up.

MR. HARTIG: It sounds appropriate, given the discussions we’ve had.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Then do these alternatives encompass what the committee has discussed in the past? We talked about our concerns about the snappers, and so Alternative 2 maintains that ten-snapper limit. Alternative 3 addresses concerns that we heard about gray triggerfish, that folks are concerned about the pressure on gray triggerfish and that up to twenty gray triggerfish is too many. Then Alternative 5 retains the ten snappers, and how is that different than -- Sorry. It’s a ten-fish maximum.

MS. KNOWLTON: Would it be an improvement, under Alternative 3, to change the language from where ten fish can be gray triggerfish to say where no more than ten fish can be gray triggerfish? Upon first reading that, it didn’t make sense to me, with a new pair of eyes, and so thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Good call.

MR. HARTIG: I thought we had discussion at the last meeting to simplify this ten fish thing and just no more of any one species can be ten fish. I thought we had that discussion at the last meeting, which seems to simplify this quite a bit, because you don’t get into the single-species discussions, and you cover everything that you wanted to cover in that ten-fish. You cover a more restrictive gray triggerfish, and you leave the ten snappers the same. I don’t think you change anything with the ten-fish, other than you wouldn’t be able to have twenty of any one species.

DR. DUVAL: We had some pretty lengthy discussions about that, and I think we jettisoned it, because there was a concern that you could have ten lane snapper and ten yellowtail snapper, and people were concerned that you would exceed that overall ten-snapper limit.

MS. BROUWER: Ben, I think Alternative 5 addresses what you just said, and so that one specifies a ten-fish daily maximum and keeps the ten snappers within that aggregate as well.

DR. DUVAL: Alternative 5 just means that I could keep no more than ten overall of the species in that aggregate, and so it chops it in half. How do folks feel about that? We would need a motion to add this alternative if we want to keep it, because it’s something that’s just been suggested by the IPT. We haven’t done that.

MR. BROWN: That still supports what I had recommended earlier with that twenty-fish overall, and this is just within that, right, with the ten fish?

DR. DUVAL: That’s the next action. An entirely new action was created to get to what your suggestion was for just an overall twenty-fish limit across species, and so that’s the next action. That’s not this action. I think now is the time if folks wanted to consider anything else, and so, if

you wanted a twenty-fish daily maximum per person per day -- One of the things that has been suggested by some of our advisory panel members is no more than five fish of any one species in this aggregate, and that doesn't necessarily address the no more than ten snappers, because you could have five of snapper X and five of snapper Y and five of snapper Z.

MR. BROWN: But this says a ten-snapper cap, right?

DR. DUVAL: Alternative 5 has a ten-snapper cap, as does Alternative 2.

MS. BECKWITH: Can you scroll up to Alternative 2? For sure, a ten-daily fish limit would be too small, and so I think the Alternative 5 would be not enough. I am quiet, because I just don't see where we're simplifying things, and so I'm just mildly perturbed over here that we have lost the vision for this vision.

DR. DUVAL: What was the rationale for the ten-snapper limit to begin with? I feel like this is - How did the ten-snapper limit come to be? What was the rationale originally for the ten-snapper limit?

MR. BOWEN: Are you speaking of this document or just how it --

DR. DUVAL: I am talking what we have right now. How did that ten-snapper limit that we currently have on the books come to be and why?

MR. BOWEN: I think that was on the books before you and I were even --

DR. DUVAL: I know that, and I'm asking why.

MR. BROWN: I think it was back when we had like -- There was a ten-vermilion limit, but we also had like two red snapper per person, and then I don't know if we even had mangroves, a limit on mangroves, at that time, but, anyway, it was a ten-fish limit on snapper, however it broke out.

DR. DUVAL: Myra has pulled up on the screen here some of the background for the recreational aggregates and that the ten-snapper aggregate was implemented through Amendment 4, and so this is consistency with the Gulf reef fish regulations and also Florida state regulations. You can see there's a bullet there showing the rationale to assist in achieving a 30 percent SPR for those species.

MS. BECKWITH: If the concern is a 30 percent SPR for vermilion, then it would be covered to say there is a total of twenty, no more than ten of each species, and I just -- What we heard was we wanted bag limits with the least number of exceptions, and we are not getting there, and so, unless there is a biological reason that we can touch back and say, okay, you can't have -- It has to be ten of all snappers, and I would just say no more than ten of any species, to the maximum, would sort of cover, or at least get closer to what the public asked us to do, and so that's my opinion. I am struggling to see where we're going to end up with this.

DR. DUVAL: Anna and I have talked about this. We were saying it would be really nice if, assuming we select Alternative 3 or something like Alternative 3, that, under your deepwater species column, you have a number, and maybe it's two or maybe it's three, and, under your

shallow-water groupers, you have a number, and maybe it's two and maybe it's three, and then, under your all other species, you have a maximum, and maybe it's twenty, and you can't have more than five of any one, and that helps Chester when he is printing out his regulations card. Those are easy numbers for the public to remember.

I think the challenge is that there's been some history and rationale for some of the other limits that we have in place. If we modified the ten-snapper limit, that has implications for Florida, in terms of consistency with state regulations as well as consistency on the Gulf coast, and I am wondering if there's a way we can wrap that in. I like Anna's idea of no more than ten of any one species and a maximum of ten snappers, and I don't know.

MR. PHILLIPS: Let's say, if we follow Anna's idea, I guess the next question would be to ask Florida how bad is that going to confuse your anglers, or do you think the FWC would be inclined to have something similar?

MR. ESTES: It will confuse our anglers, and I have no idea what FWC would think about that.

DR. DUVAL: I am thinking, maybe to get to what Anna is saying, we could take Alternative 2, which is the twenty-fish daily maximum, no more than ten snappers may be retained within that aggregate, and no more than ten fish of any other species other than snappers may be retained within that aggregate, and that gets you twenty, ten, ten.

MS. BURGESS: Just a question about the ten snappers, and I appreciate what Anna is saying, and I appreciate where you're going, but I'm going to throw another exception in there. We have rulemaking going on for mutton snapper right now that's going to bring it down to five fish per person, which Florida has already done in state waters. Just a question of clarification of whether the committee would intend to limit it to five mutton snapper once that rule goes into place.

DR. DUVAL: We had a lot of discussion, and I think it was the committee's intent to maintain that five-fish mutton snapper limit, and so that needs to be incorporated in here.

MR. HARTIG: I like where you're going. I like what you outlined.

DR. DUVAL: When I look at the tables that the IPT put together for the different alternatives, which are incredibly helpful and I love the color-coding, when I look at Alternative 3 -- Mutton snapper is included in the other shallow-water species, and so I think we would need some clarifying language to indicate that, even though mutton is in the aggregate, it's not the intent to change that five-fish bag limit that is currently underway. Okay.

MR. HARTIG: That is covered in the IPT's wording by saying, after the ten snappers within the aggregate of lane, yellowtail, gray, and cubera, and existing individual species bag limits. Then mutton snapper is highlighted in that, and so, the way the IPT has worded Alternative 5, although the numbers probably aren't going to work, but they do have -- They account for everybody.

MS. KNOWLTON: Just a question for clarification. Under Alternative 5, the end of that sentence, "with the existing individual species bag limits", that has to stay in this alternative, because of the delineation of the ten fish and ten snapper, whereas we recommended that that wording be deleted, based on the previous actions from this morning, in Action 2?

DR. DUVAL: We hadn't gotten to Alternative 5 yet.

MS. KNOWLTON: I'm sorry. I was moving too fast.

MS. BECKWITH: This is going out to the public. If we put in an option that was originally Chester's idea of just saying a twenty-fish daily maximum, no more than five of each species, it would actually cover vermilion, and that's a different conversation, I know, but, if we had no more than five of each species and a maximum of twenty -- I am sort of failing to see the need to keep it down to ten snappers total, and I think that would get closer to what the public would want, which is there a twenty-fish maximum, no more than five of each species, and it's mixing apples and oranges, but, if we go back to Florida's original concern about taking all these individual species with bag limits out of it --

Is it worth exploring a twenty-fish total or a twenty-five-fish total or a thirty-fish total, as a way of maintaining all these sort of outside species that have individual bag limits and pulling them back and saying, okay, we have some black sea bass now, but nobody is catching them, and why don't we just bring black sea bass down to five, and, if we have to move in the direction of a different size limit for black sea bass, we can deal with that later, but we're not catching seven black sea bass, and so I don't know why we're going to retain a seven-fish bag limit for black sea bass instead of pulling them into this aggregate.

Vermilion snapper is already five per person, and so at least that takes two additional species out of the sort of access and has the potential to pull them into this overall aggregate, and, if we have an overall aggregate and no more than five can be of any one species, then I don't care if they catch more than ten snappers overall if each snapper is five each. I don't see where that matters.

MR. HARTIG: Well, I would ask my FWC compatriots over there, but I believe yellowtail is ten, correct? I know gray, in-state, is five, and so that wouldn't be a problem, but then cubera is only two, and so you've got some exiting -- If we can get over these humps, we can do this, and I think we can do exactly what you said, simplify this amendment and make it more acceptable to the public, and so I don't exactly know how to do that within the confines of what you're trying to put forward with five fish, unless you have an exception for those two species in the snapper complex, yellowtail and cubera. I don't have a problem with a five-fish lane snapper recreational bag limit. I don't have a problem with that. I don't know if the rest of our group does or not, but cubera and yellowtail have different, and yellowtail is the most important snapper for south Florida.

MR. BOWEN: With the ongoing assessment on sea bass, I think -- I understand your point, Anna, I totally do, but I am inclined not to mess with anything on sea bass until we get the outcome of that assessment that's ongoing right now.

DR. DUVAL: I think Anna's suggestion would actually bring the bag limit down, is what she's saying, from seven to five.

MR. BOWEN: To that point, Madam Chair, we're not reaching the ACL now, and so I don't think reducing the bag limit is going to benefit.

DR. DUVAL: Right, and I think Anna is just saying that it would simplify things, and so it's unlikely to be impacted by the outcome of the assessment, or vice versa, and that's all.

MR. GRINER: I think we've got to be careful that, in an attempt to simplify things, that we don't reduce bag limits. The public, the first thing they're going to jump on is you have cut my bag limits instead of simplifying, and so I think we've got to be really careful that, in an attempt to simplify things, we don't put more restrictions on bag limits. We don't take those two black sea bass away. At the end of the day, it's not going to affect the stock whether they're not catching two more, but the perception is going to be that we have cut the recreational bag limits.

MR. BROWN: I think that the snapper issue is probably more of a Florida issue, because, here in the Carolinas, it's mostly just the vermilion and the red snapper that we see the most of. We'll see a few muttons, but that's the bulk of our catch.

DR. DUVAL: Let me see if I can get us off the dime here a little bit and just remind folks that we're going to see this amendment again in March, and so the IPT is going to have the opportunity to clarify some of these, and I think the biggest thing is really just the composition of the aggregates that we -- Making that change to Action 2 to add that other alternative to exclude the existing single-species bag limits that we have, and I am just wondering if perhaps an alternative under here that could address people's concerns about someone possibly retaining twenty fish of any one species would be having a modification to Alternative 2 that specifies a twenty-fish daily maximum per person per day, no more than ten fish may be snapper, and so you retain that ten-snapper within the aggregate. Additionally, no more than ten fish of any non-snapper species. Do you see what I'm trying to get at? What we have clarified here is that the species included in this aggregate are dependent upon what is selected in Action 2.

MR. HARTIG: I think it would also be helpful to the IPT if we give them the diagram that you described before, when you had the complexes and you have what we want to get out of them. This is how we want to move forward, and how do we get there?

DR. DUVAL: I think that's pretty easy. That's taking each one of those three columns and writing a number over the top of it. I think everybody agrees that would be something that we would want to get to, but it's really a matter of we do have these other exceptions. We have this ongoing rulemaking for mutton snapper that we've already indicated that we want to make sure that we don't step on that when we do this. I think that's another note. Other than that, would folks be amenable to adding an alternative that is similar to what I have suggested here, that no more than ten fish of any non-snapper species?

MR. BROWN: Do you need a motion?

DR. DUVAL: I guess there's two ways to do it. We can either just modify Alternative 2, or we can add an entirely new alternative.

MS. BURGESS: A question about the intent for this, Michelle. The no more than ten fish of any non-snapper species, when I read this as it shows right now, you can have ten snappers, and then you can have ten of something else, and so then folks -- I thought maybe the intent was that no more than ten of any individual species, and I don't think it reads that way in the revision. Right now, it says ten snappers and then ten others.

DR. DUVAL: I see what you're saying, and so it needs to clarify that no more than ten fish of any individual non-snapper species, and would that address it?

MS. BURGESS: I think that gets at what you want.

MR. PHILLIPS: I am just kind of -- We're in the weeds a lot, but I'm just kind of thinking back to Anna's stuff, and I think we've got so many bag limits on a lot of these species already, and, with the exception of the deepwater stuff, I am wondering if it's just easier to follow all the bag limits on everything and, what we don't have bag limits on, do an aggregate or a total twenty-fish of everything and try to figure out a way to make it simpler. I know it's not where we're at, but this is really complicated, because we're trying to work around all the bag limits anyway.

MR. BROWN: We did get some input from the North Carolina recreational guys about the triggerfish situation, that they caught a lot of triggerfish and not much other things, and so they were concerned about doing this and it impacting them, because they didn't have anything else to target. For me, it's different. I don't have that situation, but I'm just saying that there was concern from some of the for-hire guys about going in this particular direction.

DR. DUVAL: The concern from -- I went back and read all that stuff last night, both the input we got at this meeting last year, where we approved this amendment for scoping, as well as the transcripts from the scoping hearings that we had here in North Carolina and the webinar, was that people were concerned that twenty triggerfish was too much. They felt like ten was plenty of triggerfish, so as to stretch that out, but they felt like there were a lot of vermilion around, and they would want to see vermilion adjusted, if anything, and so I'm just trying to get to that within a particular alternative.

MR. HARTIG: The other thing, Mark, is, if we reduce this bag limit on triggers, we probably won't have any closures, and so people will be able to catch those for the entire season, and that should help as well.

MR. BROWN: I don't disagree. I am just saying that that was some of the input that we got.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so how do folks feel about simplifying modifying Alternative 2, as shown on the screen, or would you prefer to add an entirely separate alternative that indicates that no more than ten fish of any individual non-snapper species could be retained?

MR. BREWER: **You are working along with what Charlie was recommending, and, as I listened to it, and as I look at what is happening up here on this board, I think that's a pretty good idea, and so I will make that motion.**

DR. DUVAL: Is it a motion to modify the alternative as you see it on the screen or to add another alternative?

MR. BREWER: **To add another alternative.**

DR. DUVAL: Okay. There is a motion by Chester to add another alternative that would basically modify Alternative 2.

MR. BREWER: **You would retain all existing bag limits and, for the, quote, other species, a maximum of ten.**

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Here is Chester's motion to add an alternative that would specify a twenty-fish daily maximum per person per day for the other shallow-water species aggregate. No more than ten fish can be snappers within the aggregate, those species listed in parentheses, and no more than ten fish of any individual non-snapper species and retain the five-mutton-snapper limit. Is it the committee's intent to maintain the five-mutton-snapper limit throughout any of these alternatives? Okay. Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Ben. Is there any further discussion?

DR. MCGOVERN: Just a question. I am just wondering how this is different from the no action.

DR. DUVAL: Because no action says that you could keep twenty fish of anything in the aggregate. You could keep twenty triggerfish, or you could keep twenty almaco, or you could keep twenty jolthead, or twenty banded rudderfish.

MS. BECKWITH: The only difference, Jack, is that we're sort of absorbing in that ten snappers into the regular species without a bag limit aggregate that has got a maximum of twenty, and so, to Tim's point, we're actually reducing the total number of fish that the recreational can keep from -- They used to be able to have ten snappers, and then they could have twenty of each of the ones that didn't have a bag limit, and so what we're doing is we're sort of melding those two together and putting a maximum of twenty on there, and so I don't know if that's an improvement, but it doesn't feel like it's simplifying a whole lot, but that's what that is.

DR. DUVAL: Any other discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

I think we need direction that the committee's intent is to maintain the five-mutton limit throughout any of these alternatives. I feel like we need some language in here that indicates our struggle and that we would really like to get to, I think, what Anna and I have been talking about, which was you've got your three columns of your three sets of aggregates, and you've got a number over each one of those columns, and that makes it easy for anglers to understand what they can go fish for. I think, if I were to pick the numbers, it would be three, three, and ten, but that's just me, but maybe I can work with you to add some language to the committee report that indicates that we would love to get to this place.

MR. BROWN: Michelle, would that be confusing with the existing bag limits to do it that way?

DR. DUVAL: Nope. I don't think it would be confusing. In other words, Mark, if you have a deepwater aggregate, you have a shallow-water grouper aggregate, and then you've got an aggregate for everything else, and maybe that everything else doesn't include vermilion, black sea bass, greater amberjack, the five species for which we have existing individual species aggregates, you could put a number over the deepwater species column of three, and you could put a number over the shallow-water grouper column of three, and then you could put a number over the every other species column of ten, and then you've got your five individual fish that are sitting out there.

I think that would be a lot easier for anglers to remember and understand. It's just a philosophical thing, that's all.

Are we done with this action? Are we going to add Alternative 5? This was something that was suggested by the IPT. Do you want that? No? So, we're not going to add Alternative 5. As Kathy pointed out, we crossed out the clause under Alternative 4, just like we did under Alternatives 2 and 3, for the "and existing individual species bag limits", noting that we would need to add some language indicating that whatever is in the aggregate depends on whatever is selected under Action 2 and exclude tomtate and red snapper, and I think we've clarified that. Okay.

Then the last action, and I promise we will take a break, is Action 6, which is specify the aggregate bag limit for the proposed snapper grouper species aggregate, and so this is the Mark Brown action, and I will let Myra run through this.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so this is the action that would allow you to specify the bag limit if you were to select Alternative 6 under Action 2, which includes all snapper grouper species within an aggregate. We had to add an action to accomplish that, and so your Alternative 2 reads to specify a twenty-fish daily maximum per person, maintaining current restrictions for individual species, and so everything that is currently in the books would remain, and there would simply be a twenty-fish daily maximum. Then the IPT suggested adding Alternative 3, which is the same thing that I just stated, maintaining the current aggregate limits, and then having sub-alternatives to allow you to maybe just narrow down the limits for gray triggerfish and Atlantic spadefish.

DR. DUVAL: Does everybody understand this? Alternative 3, if we want to add that, we would need a motion to do so.

MR. BROWN: **I would like to make that motion to add Alternative 3.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Mark to add Alternative 3 under Action 6 to the document. Is there a second to that? It's seconded by Zack. Is there discussion?

MR. BOWEN: I know we just did it this morning, but we may need to do some wordsmithing as far as taking the red snapper out of that alternative.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, we will do that.

MR. BROWN: Do you need to take the tomtate out too, or is that already done?

DR. DUVAL: Yes, it's already excluded. Is there other discussion on this? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

That takes us to the end of this document. Let's go ahead and take a ten-minute break, and then we'll come back and take up the rest of our agenda.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. DUVAL: All right, everybody. Let's go ahead and come back up to the table. Our next agenda item is Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27, and so this is our commercial

document, and Myra has a staff presentation that she's going to use to orient us again for our discussions and walk us through what we did last time.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Michelle. As I did for the recreational amendment, I have a short overview to prep you for the discussions that will follow this morning on the Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 27, which addresses commercial management measures for snapper grouper.

In September, you approved the purpose and need, and you removed the action to modify the powerhead prohibition off of South Carolina, and you added an action to specify a minimum size limit for almaco jack for the commercial sector, and you did some modifications to the actions and the alternatives and provided some guidance on how you wanted those to look, and you modified the timeline to be parallel to the recreational amendment, since these are sort of sister documents and they are moving along the same timeline, which is right here.

Again, in March, you would have completed analyses to review to allow you to select a preferred alternative, and you would approve it for public hearings, which would take some place sometime between March and June. In June, you would review those comments and modify the amendment and approve all actions. Then we would bring it back to you for formal approval in September of next year.

Similar to the recreational amendment, we need you to go ahead and modify the purpose and need, as necessary, and finalize it at this meeting. Consider removing actions and alternatives that are not within realistically what you would like to consider for this amendment, and then finalize all actions and alternatives so that we can do the analysis for you and bring it back to you in March.

In September, this is the list of actions that are included. Action 1 establishes a split season and modifies the trip limit for blueline tilefish. Action 2 establishes a split season for snowy grouper. Action 3 establishes a split season and modifies the commercial trip limit for greater amberjack. Action 4 establishes a split season and modifies the commercial trip limit for red porgy. Action 5 modifies the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper, and I have crossed out "in the second season", because there are additional alternatives that were included in September that made modifications not just in the second season.

Action 6 implements a commercial trip limit for the other jacks complex. Action 7 implements a minimum size limit for almaco jack, and that's the new action, and Action 8 modifies the prohibition on commercial harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers and specifies a trip limit for gag. We will need some guidance with that action to perhaps split it into two different ones. Action 9 removes the minimum size limits for certain deepwater species, and Action 10 reduces the minimum size limit for gray triggerfish off of east Florida.

Specific guidance and things to consider as we move along this is edits to the purpose and need, in light of the complexity of the proposed management changes. We have already dispensed with removing sand tilefish from the deepwater complex. One of the things that was included as an appendix to your decision document is a series of steps that detail what the Regional Office has to go through for every trip limit reduction and closure season package, and that is simply to illustrate that it's a very lengthy process, and some committee members expressed interest in knowing how

all that works. Also, I do have some analyses that were updated for this meeting, but not all the analyses are complete at this point, due to time constraints.

Another thing we're going to talk about is there is two different methods that were used for the commercial analyses that were done in the region, and the SSC had some recommendations, and so Marcel will talk about that. As I said, we might need to spend a little time figuring out the structure for Action 8, and that's what I have for you, in terms of that presentation.

The decision document is Attachment 5a. I will just walk you through this real quick. Then, once we get into looking at the analysis, then we'll get Marcel to come up and give you the SSC's recommendations.

The list of actions, I have just gone through that, with some things that are highlighted, because we still need some guidance on how to address those things. Again, the objectives are the same, as I just talked about, the timing, the purpose and need, and so the purpose and need that you approved in September is what's up on the screen. The purpose is to increase commercial access to the snapper grouper fishery, minimize discards, and simplify regulations. The need is to achieve optimum yield for the commercial component of the snapper grouper fishery and improve regulatory compliance and consistency to aid enforcement.

As far as the IPT comments and recommendations, there was a lot of discussion. The IPT doesn't agree that this amendment would simplify regulations overall, and some folks just threw out some language there of consider maybe an equitable distribution or increasing geographic access to clarify the intent, and so here's what the IPT suggests that you consider for a purpose and need for this amendment.

The purpose would be to address commercial stakeholder input for increased commercial access to the snapper grouper fishery and to minimize discards, and the need is to more efficiently manage the commercial sector of the snapper grouper fishery to achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse socioeconomic effects for the commercial fishermen in the South Atlantic region.

DR. DUVAL: I like the IPT's modifications to the purpose and need. I'm looking for input from the committee and a motion to either make additional edits or approve the ones that are there, and so the first hand that I saw was Anna and then Mark and then Jim.

MS. BECKWITH: There was a phrase that was used in the red snapper amendment, I think, that I liked, which was "to enable equitable access for fishermen participating in the snapper grouper fishery", because that's something that we have heard from our commercial stakeholders in North Carolina often, is that there is sort of an inequity in our seasonality, at times, and so, for the purpose, if that could be added to the purpose, to address stakeholder input for increased commercial access and enable equitable -- However you guys want to do it. I don't want to wordsmith, but that would be my ask, is to add "enable equitable access for fishermen participating in the snapper grouper fishery", or "increase equitable access", or however you guys want to do it.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. That's Anna's suggestion.

MR. BROWN: If this is what everybody wants -- I mean, it looks close enough to me. **I would just go ahead and make a motion to accept the IPT's edits to this purpose and need, as modified.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Mark to approve the purpose and need, as modified, and there is a second by Jim. Is there discussion?

MR. ESTES: Once we dispense with this, I've got something else that's minor, but I need to point it out.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so is there discussion on this motion?

MR. DEVICTOR: I believe, in Regulatory Amendment 26, didn't you switch off of "achieve efficient management" to "improve management", and so, maybe to be consistent, you just want to change that phrase.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, you are correct. Okay. Is there other discussion? Is everybody okay with these modifications to the purpose and need? If there is no other discussion, are folks ready to vote? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** Mel, did you have something on the purpose and need?

MR. BELL: Rick caught it. It was the change you just made.

DR. DUVAL: Great. Thank you.

MR. ESTES: It's minor, but it might cause a little angst. In the background, in the first sentence, we describe this amendment as a recreational amendment instead of a commercial amendment.

DR. DUVAL: I think that was brought up last time, actually, as well. Okay. We're catching all kinds of things today. All right. Moving on from the purpose and need, and we're going to get Marcel up here.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a brief report. The SSC was asked to provide some feedback on two methods to project the commercial landings. One was based on a three-year average, and the other was based on a seasonal autoregressive integrated moving average, or SARIMA, model.

After some discussion, the SSC favored the use of the three-last-years method. We felt that the complexity of the SARIMA model makes it less favorable as a management tool. The committee also noted that the data from the last three years may be more representative of the current fishery than information from the entire time series. Having said that, the information that was provided was limited, and I feel that that may have hampered the full evaluation of the SARIMA model by the committee, and it's my understanding that we may see that, or we may have another opportunity to comment, and so I think it would be good, if there is an opportunity, that the committee receive a presentation and possibly discuss that SARIMA model a little further, but that's just a personal comment from me.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Marcel. Are there any questions for Marcel about that input? Okay. Thank you.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know how to bring this up, but, looking at the purpose and need, and I do have a question for Marcel with the SSC about this, but, in the future, is there any way possible, because I believe it's able to get manipulated, through showing the landings of the state, and I was wondering if analysis could be done in the future and how this would help to show where fishermen fill out their logbooks at the location of where they're fishing and, from now on, also let it be shown where the fish are being caught at.

My reasoning for showing that is, in looking at some of these split seasons and your purpose and need of different things, I believe it would -- I just don't believe some of the purpose and need that is outlined in here shows anything, or I believe there is a better way of showing it. I am probably not explaining myself well, but, if you were to show -- Like for instance, in North Carolina, when you look at this purpose and need and you show where they make inequities and different things, it would be better to have transparency of where the fish are caught at, because I believe we're missing something here, from a fisherman's point of view, of part of --

I know I am probably not explaining myself well, but what would be the problem with showing where the fish are caught at by what the fishermen write on their logbooks of what they have to report, instead of showing catch landings in a state, because it's not a transparency, to me as a fisherman, because I see, through some of this purpose and need and splitting seasons, that it could be affecting where the majority of the fish are caught at. Then also what it shows is where the majority of fish are caught at, and it would be better to see it by the logbooks of the fishermen.

DR. DUVAL: I understand what you're saying, Dewey. I think you're looking at sort of -- You would like to see a map with those logbook grids that is really what we like to call a heat map that shows sort of where the harvest is occurring versus just what state it is landed in, because of the geographic differences, I think off of all the states, of where the fish are harvested, and sometimes those split seasons can have a disproportionate impact on different parts of different states, let alone just one state all together.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, absolutely, and that's information that's having to do with confidentiality, because it's put out there in your logbooks that you fill out, and it's grouped together, and so I don't see why that would happen, but I believe hot spots would show something, because I just look at the purpose and need, and not really splitting hairs, but I just don't see -- I see the purpose and need part as maybe to further a one-sided argument about we need some more fish. In actuality, the fish could be coming from that area that is hollering that we need more fish for our seasons or adverse conditions.

If you put up the hot spots of where fish are caught at, that would kind of smooth stuff out, from just a transparency part of it. I was kind of curious of how that would work with the SSC and still looking at a total state, because all states are different, and the different regions -- You know, you've written in here in the purpose and need that we need fish up here, and we don't fish here, and there is blueline tilefish and different things, and the best way to show it is to put a map of where the fish are caught at.

Therefore, you can infer some stuff in looking at that, but, more than likely, a fisherman is not going to travel a hundred miles to go catch 200 pounds of grouper, just to say we can look at stuff like that, and so I just think, in the future, if it's possible, and I don't know if a motion needs to be made, and I believe the data should be relatively available over time to show the hot spots, the heat maps, and, particularly, we're doing a little exercise where we're looking at a buffer zone in the Mid-Atlantic for squid off of Nantucket Island, and they gave fifteen years of the hot spots of where the people have fished at, on your logbook reporting and stuff like that.

I just think it would help, in the future here, with this Snapper Grouper Committee, with the purpose and need and equities and non-equities and all the other things, that, if you showed the hot spots of where the fish are caught, based on what the fishermen have put in their logbooks, I think that would go to further transparency and also help on your purpose and need getting fleshed out a little more to reality. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Dewey. I agree. Certainly, I think probably off of any of the states, maybe with the exception of Georgia, because it's kind of a short coastline, but you will see differences in where the bulk of harvest is occurring, in terms of different areas of the North Carolina coast versus different areas of the Florida coast. I mean, we know that for certain, and so what Dewey is saying is that that would help the committee to make some decisions as to are you really achieving equitable access when you're considering some of these actions.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: It wasn't just for the blueline tilefish or the grouper. It would be the -- In the future, it would be all the things that come before this committee to show hot spots, because I believe that parses out closer, and I don't believe that you have to worry about any confidentiality hot spots of where the fish are caught at, and I believe it would be interesting to say that. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: I do think there are, sometimes, confidentiality concerns, depending on how many folks are harvesting from a particular logbook grid or how many trips are coming from that particular logbook grid. I think that is probably something that we have run into in some SEDARs, but I'm not disagreeing with your point that that would be useful information.

DR. REICHERT: Real quick, to that point, if you will allow me, you will notice, under my report for the blueline tilefish, the SSC actually does make a recommendation that it would be extremely helpful to get more geographic information of catch locations, and so that's consistent with what you just mentioned, and so I just wanted to mention that. Thank you.

MR. HARTIG: For some species in particular, a temporal component is critical. For amberjacks in south Florida, it's a relatively short season, but a major portion of that catch is caught in that timeframe.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Good discussion. I would like to go ahead and move into the first action, which deals with split seasons and trip limits for blueline tilefish.

MS. BROUWER: Recall that, in September, you reviewed the -- We had information for you on the distribution and the percentage of blueline tilefish landings by state in recent years. You were able to provide some guidance on the range of alternatives for further analysis, and so you removed an alternative, and you clarified the trip limit sub-alternatives and requested analysis on a 40/60

split of the commercial ACL between two six-month seasons, and so here is an updated table, and, also, I should mention that all of the analyses that I am going to project here, all the details of all the analyses, are included in Attachment 5b, which is the appendix that was put together by the Regional Office with all these numbers.

This table shows you, for each of the proposed split season configurations and trip limit configurations, when the season is expected to close, and there is the two different methodologies, the mean of 2014 through 2016 landings and the SARIMA model, and so you can see the column that is in bold is the mean of those estimates for each of the alternatives and then the confidence intervals.

There is a fairly good agreement between the two methodologies for the majority of these, and so, under 2a, which would split the ACL 40 percent to the first season and 60 percent to the second season, and then it would put a 300-pound trip limit in that second season, and you can see that you would have a projected closure some time in mid to late June for the first season and early August for the second season.

Similarly, you can see what those projections are for the other alternatives. 2b would have a 150-pound trip limit for the first season, under 40 percent of the ACL, January through June, and 300 pounds for the second season, with 60 percent of the ACL, July through December. Then you have, under Alternative 3, various trip limit combinations without splitting out the ACL.

Table 2 just shows you recent landings and any closure dates in recent years, so that you can sort of compare what the projections are showing and what has happened in recent years, and so here is the action alternatives revised, per your guidance, and there is just some editorial changes here, and there is your Alternative 3, which does not split the ACL and just has the various trip limits that kick in at different points of the year.

The SSC comments and recommendations are included in here, and Marcel just covered those, and we have what the Snapper Grouper AP commented or recommended, and so this is going to be the structure for each of the actions, and then whatever comments or recommendations the IPT has.

One question we had is why a 400-pound trip limit is not being considered under Alternative 2, since it is considered under Alternative 3. Is it or is it not a reasonable alternative that should be analyzed? Then, as I mentioned earlier, and this is going to be a bullet that you will see repeated under the various actions that consider split seasons and trip limits and trip limit step-downs, is the complexity of this type of management and how long it might take. I will pause there for any discussion or questions.

MR. ESTES: I maybe figured this out, but maybe I haven't. Would you go back to Table 1, please? I am looking at 3a and 3d, and I am looking at the closure dates of August 30 and August 8, and so we have a shorter season in 3a, and, for the beginning of the season, we have a 100-pound limit, than we do in June, than we do in 3d, two months difference, I guess, and then we have the same trip limit and then we have May through December, and so we're opening up earlier in May, yet the closure is later, and so does that mean that we are catching more of the fish in January to April, because it doesn't seem exactly logical to me, because of the number of months that we have there. Does that make sense?

DR. DUVAL: Yes, and I had noticed the same thing in a couple of other tables that we'll get to in some of the other alternatives, that it seems sort of odd that you would have -- It's either like a longer season or a longer period of time over which there is a smaller trip limit, yet the closure date appears to be earlier. Do folks understand what Jim is saying, that, under Alternative 3d, you would maintain that 100-pound trip limit for two months longer, yet the projected closure date is actually like three weeks earlier? It seems a little odd.

MR. ESTES: I just want to make sure that -- That may be just how it is, but maybe somebody could double-check to make sure that these dates are right, if they wouldn't mind, please.

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

MR. PHILLIPS: Maybe somebody can -- Because it's the other way around, if you look at the column where it says "U95", and so maybe somebody can explain the difference between the two.

DR. DUVAL: You're asking to explain the difference between the mean and the U95? That's the upper 95 percent confidence interval, and so that's just giving you sort of like the upper range of how early something could close within the years that are being considered. It's different for both of those alternatives as well, and so it's much earlier under 3d as well as -- The upper 95 percent confidence interval is earlier under 3d than under 3a, and so it's a similar differential.

MS. BROUWER: I will be happy to request clarification from the Regional Office on some of these analyses. Unfortunately, I was not the person putting these together, and so I have very limited ability to answer specific questions about them.

DR. DUVAL: I think one of the other things that the IPT questioned was why not a 400-pound trip limit being considered under Alternative 2 and would that not be a reasonable range of alternatives, and I guess the opposite thing I would throw out is, is 400 pounds even reasonable under Alternative 3? In other words, would it make more sense to simply remove Sub-Alternative 3c, but I just throw that out there for the committee's consideration.

In other words, is everyone -- We made some modifications to this alternative to try to address some of the regional disparities in access to the resource during these different timeframes, and so this is why we constructed Alternative 3, which really just looks at a different trip limit. There is no splitting of an ACL, and so presumably less administratively burdensome to simply have a change in trip limit, in order to address the fact that blueline tends to be a bycatch of the snowy grouper fishery, particularly during those early months when snowy grouper is open, and, as the season progresses, the blueline tilefish resource becomes more important, in terms of being a larger component of a trip for the northern part of the range.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would be inclined to take it out, but I will listen to -- Is that what you want to do?

MR. HARTIG: Go ahead.

MR. PHILLIPS: **I will make the motion that we send 3c to the Considered but Rejected.**

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Charlie to move Sub-Alternative 3c to Considered but Rejected, and Ben is seconding that motion. Is there discussion on this motion? Really, we were trying to set some things up that would stretch this out as much as possible, and certainly having a 400-pound trip limit from May through December does not appear to do that, even if we need to check on some of these analyses. **If there is no other discussion, is there any objection to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

Can we just get direction to staff to accept these suggested edits to the language of the alternatives? Is that okay with everyone? Okay. I am seeing heads nod around the table, and so we'll make sure that we get that.

MS. BROUWER: Action 2 looks at establishing a commercial split season for snowy. In September, similar to blueline tilefish, we had commercial landings by state for you since 2002. The committee provided guidance on the range of alternatives, and, as I said, the analyses are all included in Attachment 5b, and this is one of the tables from that analysis, and so it shows you the projected closure dates under the various alternatives.

For Alternative 2, you have 60 percent of the commercial ACL that would be put in the first six months, January through June, and 40 percent to the remainder of the year, and so then, based on the two methodologies, you have projected closures at the end of June, under one of the methodologies, and the other one is a good bit different, and so that projects a closure in mid-February under that ACL.

Then, for the second season, it's the 26th of September versus the 28th of July for Alternative 2, and then Alternative 3 would split the ACL 70/30 for those two six-month seasons, and there would not be a closure in the first season, according to one of the methods used here, using the last-three-year methodology. The SARIMA model would project a closure at the end of February, and then, for the second season, the 21st of September to the 21st of July is the range for the two different analyses. Here is a table showing you recent landings and closures for snowy grouper. Here is the language of the alternatives. It's just a couple of little edits there, and that's it.

DR. DUVAL: Just a note under Table 3. I think the second set of three columns, at the end, it should say "SARIMA" instead of "mean". I just wanted to make sure that everybody caught that. Is there any discussion on this action? I think we would need to get direction to staff to just accept those little suggested edits. Are folks okay with that? All right. If there is nothing else on Action 2, we will move on to Action 3, which is split seasons and trip limits for amberjack.

MS. BROUWER: For amberjack, we did not -- Remember that we did not have information for you in September. The data were not available in time for the briefing book, and so here is a figure showing the average monthly landings by state from 2005 through 2015, in pounds whole weight. Florida is denoted there in the blue, Georgia in red, South Carolina in purple, and North Carolina is in green.

DR. DUVAL: Myra, just a question that someone had raised to me about this graph versus -- Figure 1 versus Figure 2. In Figure 1, it notes that 2016 was excluded due to a closure, and we've had other similar graphs in the past where certain years have been excluded from these bar graphs that depict average monthly harvest based on closures, and I just wanted to make sure that people understood that the reason that those years where there would be closures would be excluded is

because, if there's a closure that occurs in June, and then you have zeroes for the remaining months of the year it would really, really pull your average harvest down, which is why we have things like Figure 2 that show the proportion of harvest by state over the year, to try to provide you a little bit more clarity.

I think some concern that I have heard is that, by excluding those years, that you may not be getting a clear picture of how those closures are impacting other states, and I think that sort of gets to what Dewey was saying about having geographic heat maps, and so I just wanted to point that out, in case there were any questions about things like that. Thanks.

MR. HARTIG: The one thing that would help me, Myra -- I mean, the graphs are great and fantastic, and they really open your eyes about how the fishery is prosecuted, but to have the numbers by month, so that I can look back and see, in those different percentages, 60/40 splits and things, are they going to be equitable to the various factions in the fishery, and I went back and used -- Which graph was it? There is another one where I drew -- I guess I used Figure 1 and just eye-balled the various numbers and estimated the catches for those particular months, but it would be nice to know those in a chart. I mean, you have to have those to make the chart anyway, and so it would be just nice to have those in a chart as well, so you could see the impacts.

MR. PHILLIPS: Just some clarification and taking into consideration the notes from the IPT on the complexity of doing all the openings and closings and figuring. It says establish a commercial split season, but there is not any options for just lowering the trip limit and leaving a single season, and so is that something we can't put in there, because we're saying we're doing a split season, or do we want to look at possibly lowering the trip limit to 1,000 pounds or 800 pounds, and then it's just open all year, or it stands a good chance of being open all year, and it might be simpler, which is one of the things that fishermen tell us.

DR. DUVAL: That is certainly a committee prerogative. I guess my advice would be let's let Myra walk through the rest of the information, and then we can get to something like what you're suggesting, Charlie, of adding an alternative to do that.

MS. BROUWER: Other things to point out is this figure here does not include the month of April, because there is a seasonal closure for the commercial sector for that month, and so just pointing that out. Then there is another note in here that there was a species-specific code that began being used for amberjack in 2011, but it wasn't until 2015 that unclassified amberjacks was completely removed as an option, and so those are just little caveats to keep in mind.

Table 5 here is similar to what you've seen, and so you've got the two different methodologies that project when the seasons would close under the various alternatives, and the fishing year is different for amberjacks, and so that's noted in the column under season, and so, for Alternative 2, you would have a 1,200-pound trip limit March through August, and that would -- Under the two different methods, the closure would happen sometime in early June, or maybe mid-May. In the second season, you would have 1,000 pounds that would step down to 750 pounds when 75 percent of the ACL was met, and there is no predicted closure under one of the methods, or a closure at the end of December.

Sub-Alternative 2b also keeps 1,200 pounds for the first part of the year and then has 1,000 pounds stepping down to 500 pounds once 75 percent of the ACL is met, and you can see what those

projected closures are under that alternative. Sub-Alternative 2c modifies the trip limit in the first season and puts a step-down to 500 pounds from 1,000 once 75 percent of the ACL is met, and the same thing for the second part of the year.

Alternative 2 would split the ACL 50/50 for those two different seasons, and then we have the same combination of trip limit options under a 60/40 split of the ACL. Table 6 is your landings and closures in recent years, and then here is where we get into the language of the alternatives, and so we have some edits to Alternative 1, and then just various clarifying things in the language of the alternatives.

One thing that you had asked that we include is some language as to when a trip limit reduction would not occur, and so we have added the language under the sub-alternatives, but we still need guidance on the date that would trigger that, and so you could see here, under Sub-Alternative 2a, it says a trip limit reduction would not occur in Season 2 unless 75 percent of the seasonal quota is met or projected to be met on blank, and so that was based on your guidance in September, and recall that there was something similar that the council did for golden tilefish, where there was a caveat that if 75 percent of the ACL hadn't been met by September 1, I believe it was, then the trip limit reduction, the step-down, would not occur, and so this is a similar sort of thing.

Then Alternative 3 is exactly the same thing with a different ACL split between the two seasons. The Snapper Grouper AP had some recommendations. They suggested some modifications to Sub-Alternative 2c, and so, basically, they removed or they suggest that you remove that language that would specify when a trip limit reduction would not happen, and they had suggested January 31 as that cutoff date, and that's all I have for that action.

DR. DUVAL: Myra, I think I have, and I suspect other folks do as well, in Table 5, I have similar comments as to the previous table for the previous action, where, if you're looking at the projected closure dates, I think particularly under Alternative 3 options, where you have a greater proportion of the ACL allocated to a March through August season with the same trip limit, yet the projected closure date is ten days after the season opens, and so it doesn't seem -- It seems like maybe something got flipped around or that might be something that we want to double-check, because I would find it tough to believe that the season would close ten days later after it opens when there is 60 percent of the quota allocated to that season.

MR. ESTES: Erika suggested to wonder if one of them is actually the calendar year and the other one is a fishing year, and so that might be something you need to look at.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, good thinking.

MR. BOWEN: To be fair and equitable to the northern range, I would be inclined to, and maybe this is not the right time, and I will ask for your guidance on this, Madam Chair, but I would be inclined to take Alternative 3 out, just so it's fair and equitable to the people in North Carolina, and keep it as a 50/50 split and decide from the alternatives in Number 2, but, again, I would ask for your guidance on that, too.

DR. DUVAL: Let's get some comment.

MR. HARTIG: Zack, fair and equitable is in the eye of the beholder. Fair and equitable, to me, means that you at least have some sense of your historic participation included in your catches, and, if you look at Florida, we catch about 80 percent of the catch over the entire time series, and so, if you do that, you're going to really impact Florida catches substantially. I think we can get to where we need to go in this and keep some fish available for the northern region by using some of these.

Reducing a trip limit upfront, I don't have a problem with that, and that will help. That will keep some of the pounds, hopefully, going into that second season, and the step-downs as well, but I could not support what you want to do. I understand why you want to do it, but it would really significantly impact Florida, and the 60/40, from what I could get, does, on average, fit for us. We don't need a different split. We don't need a higher split, and so it will impact probably half the years to some degree, based on an average, but it's still close enough for me to know that it's going to help Florida. The other thing I would bring into this is that, if we do cut some of that fish out of that first season, you're saving some of the spawning fish, and so that's not a bad thing either.

DR. DUVAL: I think, Charlie, this would be where you might want to add an alternative that simply lowers the trip limit and keeps it the same for the entire year, and then I have a couple other thoughts after you get to that.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I think we did move the start date for amberjack to help Florida a while back, and so we've already partially done that, but I would like to make a motion, and if somebody wants to help me wordsmith it, then that would be appreciated. **I would make a motion to add an alternative for a 1,000-pound trip limit for the year, with no step-down, and an 800-pound trip limit.** I don't know if there's any other things that we might want to look at.

DR. DUVAL: Charlie is adding an alternative to look at a modification to the trip limit year-round with sub-alternatives of 1,000 pounds and 800 pounds, and does that make sense? Now that we've got the motion up on the screen, is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Ben. Is there discussion?

MR. PHILLIPS: Of course, we will still have our spawning closure.

DR. DUVAL: Yes.

MR. HARTIG: Charlie, as part of this motion -- The intent of this motion is to get at some of what NMFS said about their closure packages, or do you have other reasons?

MR. PHILLIPS: A lot of it has got to do with the closure packages and the complexity of the things, and we haven't really been closed on amberjack until the last year. We've been pretty much staying open with 1,200 pounds. If we lower it a little bit, I think we can get to where we want to go without getting in the weeds so far, and, the simpler we can make things, I think the better off we are, plus let's work with the Region and the IPT people as much as possible.

MR. HARTIG: Can we get Rick or Roy to talk about these closure packages? I mean, we're going to see this throughout this amendment, and this is something the fishermen have asked us to do, and we're getting into the realm of what you can or may not be able to do, and I just need to know,

from you guys, your perspective on how you will be able to accomplish this, and will it be in a timely fashion to actually get the step-downs we need to make a difference in the slowing down of the fisheries?

DR. CRABTREE: Well, it creates an administrative cost, because we have to draft a multi-page document, and we have to get reports from the Center and projections, and it has to be cleared by Monica and go up to Headquarters, and so we can do it, but it's taking staff time away from working on other things for you, and it's putting more burden on GC, where they could be working on other things, and so I would encourage you to think hard about -- In my judgment, these step-downs really don't accomplish much, in most cases, and so we just need to think about is the administrative costs of doing some of these things worth it.

Then sometimes we talk like having a lower trip limit and having the fishery open all year is economically a plus. In my judgment, it's not. You're better off to have a closure, because that means you caught the whole quota. If you put a trip limit in place and it stays open all year, that means you didn't catch the quota, and so I think any economic analysis is going to say that you lost revenue, because fishermen left uncaught fish, and I guess you could address that through carryovers and things, but, anyway, we can do these things, but it takes staff time, and we have staff, and we're not at a point where we just can't do it, but it does pull them away from working on other things that you would probably like to do.

DR. DUVAL: I think it's probably a matter of where the fish are being caught and who is catching them, and that was the point of split seasons at least, was to try to address some of those geographic things. I mean, I tend to agree with Roy. I'm not so sure that our existing step-downs have done a whole lot, and I guess, regardless of what the mix-up is in those tables, Table 5, where you saw what the projected closure dates were, I would just note that, the past three years, we have closed amberjack early, and it has created a little bit of inequity that we're trying to address, but there is no difference between the projected closure date for Options 2a and 2b and Options 3a and 3b, and so, whether you have a 750-pound step-down or a 500-pound step-down, there is no difference in those dates, regardless of the accuracy of the dates, but I am just saying look at is there a difference in those alternatives, and there isn't, and so that is digressing a little bit from the motion that Charlie made.

MR. BOWEN: Just for clarification, Charlie, this motion still is intended for a split season and not a -- We've heard from the North Carolina folks that what we're doing now is cutting them out of the fishery, and I think that's the reason that we even started this action in this amendment anyway, is to give some relief to the North Carolina guys that have been cut out the last three years, because their fish don't show up. From what they tell me, they don't really show up here until October, and so I was trying to keep in line with trying to keep the North Carolina guys -- To let them have some fish.

MR. PHILLIPS: I agree, Zack. With the exception of the last two or three years, we've been going through most of the season. If we lower the trip limits, we're going to keep the season open longer, and they will have access to some fish without the step-downs and all the complications and the stuff that Roy's office is going to have to deal with, and so, to me, this may be the best of all -- When you look at all the total picture, it may be the best and simplest for everybody, for the Region and for the fishermen. It's simple, and they're going to get more fish. They're going to have access to more fish.

MR. BOWEN: To that point, I think it started really cutting the North Carolina guys out when the fishing year changed, to be 100 percent truthful about it, and so, if North Carolina can have some fish with this, then I could go along with it, because, right now, I'm just not going to support it, because I don't know.

DR. DUVAL: I think that's the point, is we would need to get that information back, Zack. Just to remind everybody, the trip limit on amberjack went up to 1,200 pounds when the ACL decreased, and so it's a little bit a counterintuitive thing that occurred there, and so maybe dropping the trip limit -- We might see that it stretches things out.

MR. CONKLIN: It's not just North Carolina that's getting cut out. It's all three of the other states, and so South Carolina and Georgia. I think, if we could address and fix the yellowtail fishery, we wouldn't have -- Florida wouldn't be targeting the amberjack quite as much. It seems to me that, from what I'm hearing and what I've heard from stakeholders, is these three alternatives don't really capture what the commercial fishermen are wanting, and I think that, if we could consider adding a 50/50 split with a 1,200 or 1,000-pound trip limit, with no step-down, and then do a 60/40 option with a 1,000 or 1,200-pound, with no step-down, it would accomplish, or at least would be an alternative that would accomplish, the goals of what the fishermen want and without the step-downs, because, historically, step-down don't work the way we want it to.

DR. DUVAL: Ben and then Anna, and I would just remind you that we have a motion on the table, and so we would like to get to --

MR. HARTIG: I will wait.

MR. DIAZ: I just want to mention that we're currently dealing with something similar to this in the Gulf, but it's on the recreational side. The recreational quota was being caught up in the eastern Gulf before the folks in the western Gulf would have a chance to harvest them, and we're trying to deal with that right now by changing the season start date, and I'm not sure you all's history, but that's how we're handling it for the recreational side of the Gulf.

DR. DUVAL: That's what we did a couple of years ago, Dale. We changed the start date of the fishery from May 1 to March 1, to try to -- As sort of a compromise, because that early part of the year is really important to Florida during the Lenten season, but the later part of the year has become important for North Carolina, and so we were trying to address it by the season start date, originally. Any other comments to this motion to add an alternative for a year-round season with sub-alternatives of 1,000 pounds and 800 pounds? Are people ready to vote on this motion? **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion, I see nine in favor; those opposed. The motion passed nine in favor and two opposed. Abstentions? Two abstentions.**

Chris was talking about some other like modification to, I think, some of the existing alternatives that we have, where if you could just set up a trip limit and maintain the alternatives for a 50/50 or a 60/40 split of the quota, but then set a trip limit of either 1,200 pounds all year or 1,000 pounds all year under each of those alternatives, and was that correct? He is nodding his head yes.

MS. BECKWITH: I was going to suggest something similar to Chris, which was basically keep the alternatives in Table 5 as are, with the split seasons, but just take out the step-down option, and

so just mirror another alternative or make a sub-alternative that you either add the step-down or you don't. I want to retain the split season, but I am not interested in seeing the step-downs, and I think that would speak directly to our purpose, which is equitable access.

DR. DUVAL: We would need a motion to that effect, and so it sounds like what I am hearing folks say is eliminate the step-downs under Alternatives 2 and 3, and could I please get a motion from the committee, so that that's clear?

MS. BECKWITH: **So moved.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Anna to remove the step-downs under existing Alternatives 2 and 3. Is there a second to that? Second by Zack. Is there discussion? I think the rationale that we've heard is that the step-downs are administratively burdensome, and they can be difficult to track. They don't, even with the table such as it is, which we have some concerns about the accuracy of, it doesn't appear there would be much difference with the step-downs included.

MR. GRINER: I just want to make sure that all of these new alternatives are going to come back into this table to be analyzed, right?

DR. DUVAL: Yes, and so it's really modifying those existing alternatives to eliminate the step-downs.

MR. CONKLIN: I think removing the step-downs and adding Charlie's alternative will be a great range of alternatives to take out to the public.

DR. DUVAL: I think my understanding, from Anna, is that she wasn't adding an alternative that removed the step-downs under existing Alternatives 2 and 3, but she was modifying existing Alternatives 2 and 3 to just eliminate the step-downs.

DR. CRABTREE: That was my understanding, and I am very supportive of taking the step-downs out, but I would hate to see us add a whole lot more, because this is getting to be a monster.

DR. DUVAL: **The motion reads: Modify Alternatives 2 and 3 to remove the trip limit step-downs. This maintains the seasonal split 60/40 and 50/50, again reminding folks that you will see this again in March, and so there is no selection of any preferred alternatives.**

MR. GRINER: For now, I would like to see them stay in there. We can have another alternative that simply doesn't have them, and then we can see how that affects this Table 5 when they come back, but I think, for now, they need to stay in here so we can see. The goal here was to make some fish available in the fall for North Carolina, and, from what I can see from this chart, regardless of the accuracy of it, the step-downs do move us more into that direction than anything on here.

DR. CRABTREE: It does seem to me, as you do split seasons, the step-downs become even less effective, because, if you have just one season, the step-down happens when 75 percent of the quota is caught, and so there is 25 percent left with the lower trip limit, but, when you split it, now it's just 25 percent of 50 percent, and so it's even less fish, and so what happens a lot of times is we end up projecting the closure date and announcing the step-down at the same time as the

closure, and it turns out the step-down is in effect for like six days or something with these split seasons, and so it really seems that they become even less effective if you do split seasons.

MS. BECKWITH: As we modify it to take out the alternatives, we've got an option there that's 1,200 and then 1,000, and then 2c is 1,000 and 1,000 in the first and second seasons, and so we might want to add an alternative that looks at 1,000 and 800, which would get a little bit closer to what Charlie was getting at, and so as an additional -- The considerations would be 1,200 pounds and 1,000, first and second season, and then 1,000 and 1,000, and then 1,000 and 800, for consideration.

If we remove the step-downs from the alternatives, then you're only really looking at two trip limit options there, which is 1,200 and 1,000 and 1,000 and 1,000, and so, if we just add one more option that looks at 1,000 in the first season and 800 in the second season, that might give us an appropriate range. Does that make sense?

DR. DUVAL: It makes sense to me. I think, if you look at that table, like Anna said, when you remove the step-downs, you are really just left with 2a and 2b would be exactly the same thing, and 2c is just Charlie's motion of -- Well, no, not quite. You could add, as Anna has suggested, another sub-alternative under each of these alternatives that would have a 1,000-pound trip limit in the first season and an 800-pound trip limit in the second season, but I think I would like to dispense with the motion that is on the screen. Then, if we want to go back and do that, we can do that, and so the motion is to modify Alternatives 2 and 3 to remove the trip limit step-downs. Is there any more discussion? **Is there any opposition? Two opposed. The motion passes with two opposed. Are there any abstentions, one abstention.** Okay.

MS. BECKWITH: **I move that we add an additional alternative to consider a trip of 1,000 pounds in the first season and 800 pounds in the second season.**

DR. DUVAL: Would that be to add sub-alternatives to Alternatives 2 and 3 to consider 1,000 pounds in the first season and 800 in the second season?

MS. BECKWITH: That is exactly what I meant.

DR. DUVAL: Anna has made a motion. Is there a second to that motion to add sub-alternatives to Alternatives 2 and 3 to consider a 1,000-pound trip limit in Season 1 and an 800-pound trip limit in Season 2? Seconded by Zack. Is there discussion?

MR. CONKLIN: I think these fish are going to get caught, but, just thinking about it, wouldn't you want to have a higher trip limit in the first season and a lower one in the second? Excuse me. Lower in the first and higher in the second. That way, if you don't catch the fish and they carry over, you can --

DR. DUVAL: I think the point of a higher trip limit in the first season is the importance of that fishery to the southern part of the range, and so a higher trip limit is preferred. I think the other alternative that the committee could consider is simply an 800-pound trip limit for each of the two seasons, if that's what you want to look at. I don't know what kind of support that would have around the table. Now that we have removed the step-downs, you have sub-alternatives of 1,200

pounds in Season 1 and 1,000 pounds in Season 2 and then 1,000 pounds for each of the two seasons, and so those are your two sub-alternatives under each of those splits right now.

MR. CONKLIN: Personally, I am not a fan of different limits for different seasons. I like consistency, but --

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Are there other comments around the table? Then let's go ahead and vote it up or down. **A show of hands of those in favor of the motion, eleven in favor; any opposed, one opposed; any abstentions. The motion passes eleven to one.**

MR. HARTIG: I don't know if we're going to do any more on jacks, but just a couple of comments about jacks. I mean, there has been some comments around the table about why the season closed and things of that nature, that Florida was catching all the fish and things of that nature, but the problem is, and it's not really a problem, is the fishery has gotten better. There are a lot more amberjacks in the ocean, and we saw substantial recruitment three and four years ago, and myself and the fishermen in north Florida discussed this and said, man, jacks are going to be looking good for future. Low and behold, that translated, and now we have an abundance of jacks.

Now, it has caused a problem in the last three years, because the fishery has closed early, especially for North Carolina, because that's when they catch the majority of their fish, but I think we can hopefully get some fish their way, so that those closures don't occur in the future. That's my intent anyway.

The price of jacks, when we have discussed jacks before, jacks were less than a dollar, when we had discussions about jacks. Now, when jacks aren't flooding the market, they're a two-dollar animal, and so it's a -- They're worth twice as much as they were the last time they talked about jacks.

DR. DUVAL: I appreciate that perspective, Ben, in sort of how things operate. Before we leave this action, we did have a motion from the AP to have an alternative that would set a 1,000-pound trip limit for both seasons and a step-down to 500 pounds would occur in each season once 75 percent of the seasonal quota is met or projected to be met and that that step-down would not occur in Season 2 unless 75 percent of the season's quota is met or projected to be met on January 1. Is there any desire on the part of the committee to add this as an alternative? I am kind of seeing heads shaking no, given the discussion we've had about the administrative complexities. Okay. Can we get direction to staff to accept the IPT's suggested edits, which are all highlighted in yellow?

MR. HARTIG: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Direction received. Great. The next action is a commercial split season and modification of the commercial trip limit for red porgy.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to Action 4, again, you made some changes in September. You took out one of the alternatives for consideration, and the analyses for this action have not yet been updated. We made some suggested edits to the language of alternatives, just sort of editorial sorts of things, and then we are also suggesting that you modify the range of the sub-alternatives to be

the same for Alternatives 2 and 3, and that pertains to the trip limit, and so Sub-Alternatives 3a through 3c would be thirty, forty-five, and sixty fish.

The same thing for Alternative 3, and then we would suggest that you remove Sub-Alternative 3c and instead add an alternative that would remove the harvest and possession restrictions and sale and purchase prohibition for red porgy during January through April and then specify a commercial trip limit of 120 fish during that time, January 1 through December 31, and so it just makes it a little bit cleaner, and that's our recommendation there.

The Snapper Grouper AP expressed support for Alternative 2, Sub-Alternative 2c, but I see now that that's -- This may have been before the renumbering, but I think the forty-five fish is what they were supporting. That's what I have for this action.

DR. DUVAL: It seems to me like the IPT-suggested edits are a good thing to clean things up. It's really removal of Sub-Alternative 3d, I guess, is what it should have been. I mean, that's addressed in Alternative 4, and so it really cleans it up for the analysis. Can I get some direction to staff to accept those IPT-recommended edits?

MR. HARTIG: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: Yes. Okay. I am not hearing any desire to modify any of these, please. Thank you. Great. Then we could move on to the next action, which is modify the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper.

MS. BROUWER: You had some suggested modifications to alternatives in September, and the analyses were updated, and so you have here Table 7 that shows the projected closures under the various alternatives, and, this one, there is -- The top of the table shows the projected dates when the trip limit step-down would be triggered, and the bottom part of that table shows the projected dates when the fishery would close under the various alternatives.

Again, a table showing recent landings and closures, and here is where the alternatives are. Sorry for all the yellow, but there were a lot of edits that needed to be done to clean this up, and so Alternative 2 would retain the trip limit and the trip limit reduction in Season 1. For the second season, there would be a modification to the trip limit to 750 pounds gutted weight, and it would retain the trip limit reduction to 500 pounds when 75 percent of that quota is met, and then there is the rollover language in there. The IPT suggested -- We're going to try to be consistent in how we refer to these trip limit step-downs, and, instead of using "step-down", the IPT has suggested trip limit reduction. That is the way it's in the codified text.

The Snapper Grouper AP had a suggestion for you to consider adding analysis for a 500-pound trip limit year-round without any reductions to the trip limit and also consider adding an alternative for 650 pounds in both seasons with no step-downs. Consider also looking at a 750-pound trip limit in Season 1 and 500 pounds in Season 2, with no step-downs, again, and then they also had some support for your Alternative 2. The IPT had no comments, other than the edits, that we are suggesting.

DR. DUVAL: Again, given our conversation that we had under one of the previous actions with regard to amberjack, I guess I would put it out there for the committee that do we want to maintain

step-downs, trip limit reductions, excuse me, for this fishery in both seasons? The AP had several suggestions for some alternatives for a year-round -- Well, having the same trip limit in both seasons with no reductions. I will just open it up for discussion there.

MR. PHILLIPS: **Madam Chair, I would like to see an analysis on what it would look like if we had a 1,000-pound trip limit with no step-downs, an 850-pound trip limit for each season with no step-downs, and maybe 700 pounds. If you get below 700 pounds, or 750, it's going to be really hard for those forty-foot-plus boats to run seventy miles offshore and go make a trip, but I would like to see that as an option.**

DR. DUVAL: Can you say those numbers again, Charlie?

MR. PHILLIPS: **1,000 pounds, 850, and 700 with no step-downs.**

DR. DUVAL: Is that with a split season or without a split season?

MR. PHILLIPS: **I think they're going to still want the split season, and so I can live there.** I think it might make it easier on Roy's office and easier for the boats, and we just don't get many days for these step-downs. It's a lot of work for very little gain.

DR. DUVAL: I am taking that in the form of a motion.

MR. PHILLIPS: **Yes, ma'am.**

DR. DUVAL: **Okay, and so Charlie has made a motion to add alternatives for commercial trip limits of 1,000, 800, and 700 pounds for each season, with no trip limit reductions.** Is there a second to that motion? Second by Ben. Is there discussion? This motion would certainly encompass the range of the motions that were made by the advisory panel with regard to the different trip limits that they wanted to see.

I think folks want to take a good look at the tables, in terms of when the trip limits were modified versus when the closure occurred. It's been pretty variable, and I know, a lot of times, really that is pretty significantly impacted by weather, as to how long the fishery is open at the 1,000-pound trip limit before that trip limit is reduced and then again before it closes.

MR. CONKLIN: It seems like, lately, we've been working on different year classes, and we're catching a lot of smaller fish in my neck of the woods, and so it's taking longer to get to the trip limit. We're having to catch more animals, and it's a lot more gutting down and stuff like that, and, also, when is the assessment going to be completed on vermilion? I know we're going through one right now.

DR. DUVAL: I think that's SEDAR 55, and so I think that is going to the SSC in April, I believe.

MR. PHILLIPS: I think we get it in June.

DR. DUVAL: I think we get it in June of next year.

MR. CONKLIN: So we'll be able to change preferreds and stuff after we see what the results of the assessment are, and is that correct?

DR. DUVAL: The way this is scheduled right now is that you will see this again in March, and then that's when you would be selecting preferred alternatives and approving for public comment to occur between the March and the June meetings, and so your final decisions might be informed by the assessment.

MR. CONKLIN: If we change preferreds at that point, would it drag the amendment out, or we would have the latitude to do that, as long as we don't add anything?

DR. DUVAL: You can change your preferred, as long as you're not adding anything. We have a motion on the table to add alternatives to just look at different trip limits for each of the two seasons without any reductions. Is there any other discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

I guess the next thing is do you all want to -- If you don't want to change any of these alternatives as they are, which a couple of them have trip limit reductions in Season 2, and a couple of them have trip limit reductions in both seasons, and do you want to maintain those all? I am asking if folks want to maintain the alternatives as they are written, and so Alternatives 2 and 3 maintain things the way they are, 1,000 pounds in Season 1 with a step-down to 500 pounds when 75 percent of that Season 1 quota is met.

For Season 2, the trip limit is modified. It's either 750 pounds, stepping down to 500 when 75 percent of the seasonal quota is met, and, in Alternative 3, it's just a 500-pound trip limit for the entire second season. Alternative 4 would modify the trip limit for both seasons, dropping it to 750 pounds and removing the step-down in Season 2.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would be inclined to remove Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, if there was some support. **I am going to make the motion to remove Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 and see where it goes.**

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Charlie to remove Alternative 3 and Alternative 4. Is there a second to that motion? Second by Anna. Again, just to review, Alternative 3 keeps things the same that we have in Season 1 right now with a trip limit reduction, and it modifies Season 2 to have just a 500-pound trip limit throughout Season 2 with no trip limit reduction, and Alternative 4 maintains a trip limit reduction in Season 1 and removes it in Season 2, but just has a 750-pound trip limit for each of those two seasons.

MR. PHILLIPS: I think we've pretty much got most of these covered, one way or the other, and a 500-pound trip limit is just too low for a lot of the big boats. It's fine for day boats, but it's just too low to really work off of, and so I think we've got our status quo, and I think we've got plenty of alternatives, and then, again, just the complexity of doing all the step-downs.

MS. BECKWITH: But there's a step-down in Alternative 2, and so I'm just wondering why you decided to keep that one in and get rid of the step-downs in the other ones. This isn't my fishery, and so I want to be sensitive to the fact that I'm not a commercial fisherman. I want to maintain

things that are equitable, and I think the split seasons are good, and I would like to get rid of the step-downs, but I don't necessarily want to be the one making these choices.

I think there were some reasons for that 500 in the second season, and I think that an option in there may be worth maintaining that as a consideration, but we can do that in the motion that Charlie just did, but I want to be sensitive that the step-downs are not that productive, but I don't necessarily want to be wiping the slate myself, because I am not a commercial fisherman, and I don't understand all the implications of these, and so my intent is to simplify some of these by taking away the step-downs, and so I think a commercial fisherman at this table probably needs to make the rest of these touch-ups.

DR. DUVAL: What we had discussed in the past was that there are more species that are open to harvest during that second timeframe, and so perhaps a lower trip limit made sense, because you had more options available for harvest and to put a trip together.

My sense is that people are having a really tough time kind of wrapping their heads around what the impact of doing this might be, and so, if we move Alternatives 3 and 4 to the Considered but Rejected, what you're left with is Alternative 2, where you keep things the way they are in Season 1, and then you would drop the trip limit to 750 pounds in Season 2, still having a step-down to 500 pounds. Then we have the alternatives that Charlie has added, where you would establish either a 1,000-pound, an 850-pound, or a 700-pound trip limit for each of the two seasons. I think that would be it, and so consider that before you vote on this motion.

MR. GRINER: Can you go back to the motion again? I would like to see Alternative 2 stay in there.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. I just want to make sure that people are okay with removing Alternative 3 and 4, and that's why I reviewed that, because, if you remove Alternative 3 and 4, this is what you have left with Alternative 2 and the alternatives that Charlie added.

MS. BECKWITH: The difference between Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 is that, in Alternative 2, you start with a 750 in the second season with a step-down to 500. In Alternative 3, you would maintain the same that we have now, but you would end up with just a 500-pound limit in the second season with no step-down, and that's the difference.

I guess this is a question to the commercial guys around the table, but what makes more sense? I know that, for the bigger boats, 750 would be better, but, again, Alternative 2 sort of retains that step-down, and so I almost think that, if we restructured Alternative -- It seems to me that the question is we need to see the analysis of having a 750 in the second season or a 500, and we are missing the opportunity to view that without a step-down, and so, if we're going to get rid of Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, then I think Alternative -- We almost need an alternative that keeps everything the same, but just, in the second season, gives us an option to look at the analysis for 750 and the option for 500 with no step-down.

That's what is missing to me. If we're trying to get rid of the step-downs, then I would like to see an alternative that keeps the first season the way it is, which is Alternative 2 and 3, but I would like to see the second season consideration of a 750 in the analysis and 500 in the analysis, but without a step-down.

DR. DUVAL: Then, Anna, really what you would want to see is just a slight modification of Alternative -- It sounds like you are supporting Alternative 3, which has just a 500-pound trip limit for the entire second season, and that you would want to see a modification to Alternative 2 to just have a 750-pound trip limit during the second season, no step-down. Then my suggestion would be that you vote against this motion, and then you could offer up something else to modify those two.

MR. HARTIG: Weren't we trying to align the season of vermilion with gray triggerfish, and where did we do that, or did we do that?

DR. DUVAL: We did do that. Gray triggerfish is split the same way, January through June and July through December, and it's split 50/50 with a 1,000-pound trip limit, but there is no step-downs.

MR. HARTIG: Something like that, if we have that in there, might be appropriate as well.

DR. DUVAL: That's what Charlie's motion did. Charlie's motion added alternatives that just have the same trip limit for each of the two seasons.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Any other discussion on this motion? Are people ready to vote? **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion to remove Alternatives 3 and 4, I see four in favor; those opposed, eight opposed. The motion fails.**

MS. BECKWITH: **I think what I want to do is move to remove Alternative 4 and modify Alternative 2 to get rid of the step-down.**

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Anna to remove Alternative 4 and modify Alternative 2 to remove the trip limit reduction. It's seconded by Charlie. Is there discussion? Just to make sure that everybody understands what this does, it's that you would have the same -- Your measures would be exactly the way they are right now in Season 1 under Alternative 2, but your trip limit would be 750 pounds for the second season. Alternative 3 is exactly the same thing, except that your second season trip limit would be only 500 pounds, and then we would eliminate Alternative 4, which has a modification of both season trip limits to 750 pounds, but only removes the trip limit reduction in Season 2.

Any other discussion? Do people understand what this does? Then we still have Charlie's motion from previously that would look at three sub-alternatives for consistent trip limits between the two seasons with no step-downs. Is everybody ready to vote? **A show of hands of those in favor of this motion, twelve in favor; any abstentions, one abstention.**

That takes us through -- That is Action 5, and so we still have a trip limit for the jacks, which is Action 6, and we have the minimum size limit for almaco jack, which was a new action that we added, and we have Action 8, which was the shallow-water grouper closure, and my recommendation there is that we be consistent with what we did in Regulatory Amendment 26.

Then Actions 9 and 10 are reflective of similar actions to remove minimum size limits that we have in 26.

It is 11:58. Do you all want to take a lunch break and then come back to those actions, or do you want to plow through and get them done? Okay. Let's go ahead and recess for lunch and come back at 1:30, and we need to plow through this quickly, because we have Nikolai here to give us the SEDAR 50 overview, and I'm pretty sure that he wants to get this done today.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. DUVAL: We are going to reconvene the Snapper Grouper Committee. We are going to pick back up with Action 6, which is implement a commercial trip limit for the other jacks complex, and so I'm going to turn it over to Myra to just walk us through this.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Michelle. In September, you suggested some edits, and you removed Alternative 3 from consideration, and we have some updated analyses here for you. This table uses the same methodology that I've already explained to project closure, and so you have sub-alternatives under Alternative 2 that all have trip limit reductions, and you had indicated that you wanted those reductions to go to halfway the value of the trip limit, and so we structured that way, and then the IPT is also suggesting that you consider Alternative 3, which would be a straight trip limit without these step-downs, and so that's why those are highlighted. The Region did some analyses under the assumption that you would want to consider adding that alternative to this action, and so that's what is presented here in Table 9.

Table 10 has the landings, recent landings, and closure dates, and so here is your alternatives. As I said, there is trip limit reductions for the sub-alternatives under Alternative 2 when 75 percent of the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met. The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel said that trip limit reductions may not be necessary, and that's what I have for you to consider.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Myra. Considering all the other conversation that we've had today around the table with regard to trip limit reductions, I think the IPT's suggestion to add Alternative 3 is a good one, and so I would be looking for a motion from the committee to do so.

MR. PHILLIPS: **I so move, Madam Chair.**

DR. DUVAL: **Motion by Charlie and second by Zack to add Alternative 3 to this action.** Is there discussion? I think, again, the rationale is that these trip limit reductions can be administratively cumbersome, and so it behooves us to have some analysis looking at these different trip limits without it, and I think they're already -- It looks like, Myra, there already has been the analysis in the table, and so there's not a lot of difference to some of these, and I think it seems like a 500-pound trip limit probably doesn't even do a whole lot anyway. Okay. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

Then I think we would just need direction to staff to approve the IPT's recommended edits. Is everybody good with that?

MS. BECKWITH: If we know we're not interested in step-downs, even if the analysis has already been done, would be of any benefit to get rid of Alternative 2 or just leave it in as is?

DR. DUVAL: It's already been done, and so we might as well just leave it in. That way, it at least demonstrates to people that there's not a whole lot of difference. Okay. Action 7.

MS. BROUWER: This is a new action that would implement a minimum size limit for almaco jack for the commercial sector. In September, you asked us to include it in here, and you gave us a range of minimum size limit options, and so the Regional Office was able to quickly do the analysis for you, and so Figure 3 shows the length distribution in two-inch increments from 2014 through 2016, and so about 37 percent of the almaco jacks that are harvested are below twenty inches, and so here is your figure here, and you have the various sub-alternatives there. Let me just pull up what the range is right here.

You had asked us to look at a range from twenty to twenty-six inches fork length, and so some of the highlights of the analysis that I extracted from the appendix and put in here for you, to just give you a little bit more detail, since this is the first time you are seeing this. Then you can see here, in Table 11, the various percent reductions in harvest under the proposed minimum size limits, per these analyses.

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel discussed this recently, and they were in agreement with the range of alternatives that is being considered. They talked about whether the council might want to impose a minimum size limit also for the recreational sector, and they agreed that it was not necessary for that sector, mainly because of where anglers are fishing. They are not going to be encountering the larger fish. The IPT didn't have any recommendations for you at this time.

DR. DUVAL: I think the direction we had given was just to use these two-inch increments previously, and so do we even need a motion to approve inclusion? I think you did what we asked you to do, and so I think the analysis looks good, and the AP has weighed in on this. Unless somebody else has a burning desire, I don't see the need for any changes.

MR. PHILLIPS: Myra, if we put a size limit on that, that's also going to slow down the harvest from the chart that we would be looking at ahead in the jacks complex, because almaco is still in the other jacks complex, right?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, almaco is in the other jacks complex.

MR. PHILLIPS: So, whatever dates that we are looking at are going to be further down the road, and so it would just make the season longer.

MS. BROUWER: I see what you're saying, what the combined effect of the -- I would have to talk to folks in the Region to make sure that that's captured for the March meeting, if there's an analysis that's going to clearly show the combined effects of those two things.

DR. DUVAL: I think it would probably be helpful to have that combined effects analysis, and I think the way we've done this before is that the size limit action usually comes before the trip limit action, and is that generally -- I mean, I'm just saying for, and I guess it doesn't really matter, but, for purposes of analysis, my understanding was that usually the size limit reductions were captured first and then the trip limit reductions were incorporated on top of that, and so however you all

need to rearrange the order of actions to make sure that that's clear. If there is no rearrangement necessary, great. Rock on.

MR. HARTIG: Just one short comment. I saw the TIP data, 2014 through 2016, generated 3,587 samples, and that's not a small sample size, and so we might keep that in mind for the future, about what you want to look at with almaco, possibly, with an assessment.

DR. DUVAL: I think Myra has captured that direction to staff to rearrange the actions, if necessary, to capture the effects of both minimum size limit and trip limit for the other jacks complex and to bring that back to us in March. Okay. That takes care of Action 7. Next is Action 8, and that is the modification to the seasonal prohibition on commercial harvest and possession of shallow-water groupers and to specify a trip limit for gag.

MS. BROUWER: Here, you have already made changes on the recreational side, and, as Michelle mentioned earlier, you might want to consider the same changes for this action. You had asked us to bring you a map of where 28 degrees North is, and so we'll clean this up for the final document, but, just for discussion purposes, we have this map for you to refer to.

The issue here is that there is an alternative that looks at a commercial trip limit for gag during the month of April, and so it's a different type of analysis, and, for comparison with the rest of the alternatives under this action, it would be cleaner, if you are still going to consider that, to do so in a separate action. Otherwise, the comparison is just not going to be meaningful, and so we have that for you to consider and some of the same edits and things that you've already seen. I don't believe the advisory panel had any further comments on this action. They had previously recommended no action on modifying the shallow-water grouper closure.

MR. HARTIG: Just as we did for the recreational fishery, we can remove Action 8, and I would remove the trip limit as well, because that was based on the season occurring in that small geographic area, and so we can move all of that.

DR. DUVAL: So, Ben, you're making a motion to remove Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 from this action?

MR. HARTIG: **There you go.** Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Is there a second to that? Seconded by Charlie. Is there discussion? Clearly, to be consistent with what we've done in the Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26, this would match that, in terms of any modifications to that seasonal prohibition on shallow-water grouper harvest.

I think all the same concerns would apply here, in terms of what we've heard from the public to try to deal with the regional differences in access and that we do need to find some way to deal with this regional difference, particularly as it regards gag and black in south Florida, and that hopefully there might be some alternative means of doing that via rolling closures down the road. Is there any other discussion of this motion? **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion to remove Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 from Action 8. It passes unanimously.** I guess I should have asked for opposition.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to Action 9, this is pretty straightforward. There has been no changes. This would remove the minimum size limit for those three deepwater snappers. There really isn't anything that needs to be done on this action at this point, and so I'm going to move along.

Action 10 reduces the commercial minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in the EEZ off of east Florida. Again, you already have a preferred, and there is analyses that are included in Attachment 5b that we've already gone over, and so, again, no action required here. That wraps it up for this one.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Thank you for your work on that, and so I think we want to go ahead and get Nikolai up here for the presentation on the blueline tilefish assessment, and so this was SEDAR 50. After Nikolai gives his presentation, then we will ask Marcel, our SSC Chair, to provide the SSC input. I will just note that there was a revised version of this presentation that is posted in the Late Materials Folder, and so, if folks want to follow along, that has been posted, and so we'll let Nikolai get up here.

DR. PONWITH: Nikolai is no stranger to stock assessments in the Beaufort Lab at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, but I think it's his first presentation here, and we are really excited to have Nikolai as a member of our team. He completed his PhD at UNC Wilmington working on black sea bass and red porgy reproduction, and he has been in the Beaufort Lab since about 2013, where he did his post-doc, and so we're pleased to have him on our stock assessment team there, and he served his journeyman status there, and this is his first involvement as a lead stock assessment scientist, and so welcome.

DR. KLIBANSKY: Thanks for that introduction. I am just going to be presenting kind of a brief summary of the blueline tilefish assessment that we've been working on and completed this year. You're probably familiar with -- There's a lot of documentation for this assessment already, and so I'm just going to kind of give a brief overview of what we did.

The presentation will follow this general outline. I will go through the summary of the assessment process, I'll talk about a couple of workshops that we had on stock ID and ageing data prior to the main data workshop assessment and review workshops that we had, and, although we looked at a lot of different versions of assessment models for this assessment, which is sort of unique, as I guess a lot of them are, but I'm going to be presenting the final model that was recommended for use by the SSC. After I go through that summary, I will talk about the methods of that model, the results, and then just some brief conclusions before taking questions.

There was some question, I think primarily, about the northern boundary of the blueline tilefish stock prior to this assessment, and so this stock identification workshop was held in 2016, in June, and we looked at a lot of different data inputs, and, ultimately, we came to the conclusion that the data didn't support the existence of separate biological populations at either the northern council boundary or the southern council boundary at the North Carolina/Virginia border or at Cape Hatteras.

Subsequent to that, a joint SSC sub-panel looked at what the stock ID workgroup did and supported those conclusions with regard to the biological populations, but, for the purposes of the stock assessment, a conference call was held after that determining that they wanted to have the southern

boundary, the southwestern boundary, for the stock, for the assessment, be at that boundary of Key West, and so that established the southern boundary of the stock.

The northern extent of the data that we expected to use was initially thought to be going all the way up into the Mid-Atlantic, but, at the assessment workshop held in May of 2017, we determined that the data wouldn't really allow for that, and so the northern boundary of the assessment is actually at Cape Hatteras, and, for the assessment that I will be presenting today, we'll be just looking at data from the southern boundary at Key West up to Cape Hatteras.

Following the stock ID workshop, we had an ageing workshop kind of to shore up ageing for the stock, which had previously been assessed with an age-structured model using lots of age data and growth function and whatnot, and what sort of surprisingly came out of that was that the participants in that workgroup, in that workshop, determined that blueline tilefish couldn't really be aged precisely at that time.

The consequence of that was moving away from using an age-structured model and not using the age composition data, growth model, or the natural mortality estimates that come from ageing values, and so we moved toward using age-aggregated surplus production models, and so this is just a brief summary of workshops that were held and webinars, just to kind of give you a sense of the effort that went into that process.

We had the data workshop in January of 2017, and we had three webinars and calls with the data workshop panel prior to that, one after, plus another webinar with the data workshop and assessment panels, and that's where we got all the datasets that were used in the assessment and then ultimately in the report. In May, we had our assessment workshop, a webinar before, and a couple more webinars with the assessment panel, three webinars after, and the result of that was to recommend an ASPIC, and that's the software that we use, but it's also a convenient acronym, and so I will say "ASPIC" probably a lot during this presentation. ASPIC is an age-aggregated surplus production model, and that was recommended as the base model, and that's the one that I will be presenting today.

We had the review workshop in August, and the assessment passed, but the review workshop panel had preferred a different analysis that we had presented. Ultimately, the SSC decided to go with the recommendation of the assessment workshop panel, and so my presentation will be the ASPIC model.

As I said, at the October meeting, the SSC recommended the assessment workshop-based model, and that's the quick title that I've come up with for it, for managing blueline tilefish south of Cape Hatteras. Just for more information, the base model is described in a lot of detail, and please read it, and it's really worth reading, in the assessment report, and these are the sections, just so you know exactly where to look, because it's a pretty long document, as a lot of them are. If you have this presentation as a PDF, all of this blue font is clickable. It's hyperlinked to the website, to the SEDAR website, and so hopefully they won't change the URLs for that website and the links will work fine.

Projections, which I will present today, are described in the document that I submitted to the council on November 13, and I don't know where that's available at this time, but I will present you a few slides on that. This is just to reiterate that this a presentation of the assessment

workshop-based model and a couple of the projections, most recent projections, that came out of that. Just to highlight that this really reflects the efforts of a lot of experts on this topic, particularly the data and assessment workshop panels and the analytical team.

Now we'll be getting into the specifics of the assessment workshop-based model. The model really models, and I will talk about that in a minute, and we'll talk about ASPIC Suite Version 7. This is a much simpler model than the BAM model that we usually use for SEDAR assessments at the Beaufort Lab.

It's an age-aggregated surplus production model, and we're basically just looking at the annual biomass. There is no age structure. It's assuming that recruitment plus growth minus natural mortality gives us this estimate of surplus production in the population, and we're just fitting to the catch per unit effort indices of abundance, and so we're not fitting to length comps or age comps or anything additional, and this just has a few parameters that the model is estimating of B_1 over K , $FMSY$, MSY , and then these Q , catchability, parameters.

I like to look at models in terms of inputs and outputs, and so the inputs, in terms of data, are fairly straightforward. We have just a single series of removals, and so we're combining landings and dead discards into one series and not looking at them separately by fleets. It's put in the model in weight and several indices of abundance and the annual CVs, the errors around each of those estimates. Initial values, that is to say initial values of these parameters, that go into the model when it's around those parameters and the number of different settings, and that's really all that goes into the model and gets tweaked. The outputs are the single estimated predicted biomass estimates of these basic parameters and then the catch per unit effort series, and then we get these status series and ultimately status estimates as well.

The data, again, is restricted to the area between Cape Hatteras and that southern council boundary in the Southeast, and so basically between these blue lines. As I said, we had just aggregated removals into one data series. Here, I have it as a stacked bar plot, and you can kind of get a sense of what the major components of the removals are. It's largely commercial landings for most of the time series. This later green spike is recreational landings, dead discards being a relatively low proportion of the removals over time.

We had available -- Well, initially, we had many indices of abundance, but, relevant for this talk today, there were three indices of abundance that we considered using, commercial handline, commercial longline, and recreational headboat index, shown here stacked up, and this blue one is the headboat that's extending farther back in time and then the red and green -- Red is commercial handline, and the green is commercial longline. The variation around that is associated with the CVs that were provided to the assessment team by the data workshop.

Early on, it was determined that the headboat index should be excluded from a base model run for a number of reasons, and this just kind of summarizes them. The fishery only covers the margin of the blue line tilefish distribution, and so it was thought not to be a good representation of what was really happening in the population. There was some concern that the wide swings in the CPUE early on might be representative more of fleet behavior than actually what was happening -- Rather than real trends in abundance, and it was negatively correlated with the other indices, and so it was saying something different.

The handline and longline indices were both thought to be worth using and were thought to be equal quality, and so one thing we'll often do is to put indices in a single model, but, in this case, since they were equal quality, it was determined that the best thing to do would be to actually run the model as sort of two separate models and then average the results, and so, had we combined the indices into one model, we tend to weight the indices based on their CVs, and it would, in this case, place undue weight on the handline index, and so this is the decision that was made by the assessment panel, and that was ultimately the reason why we basically ran the model as two separate models and then averaged the results.

This model that we came out with from the assessment workshop, the models, which then were averaged, were run from 1958 to 2015, and the removals series extends that whole period of time. The indices of abundance actually only go from 1993 to 2007, in the case of commercial handline, and 1993 to 2008 for longline, and then headboat wasn't used in the model, in the base model, and so ignore that for now. Then the status determination was based on the F current value, which is the geometric mean of the last three years of F over F_{MSY} . Overfishing was -- We considered overfishing if that ratio is greater than one. $MSST$ was set at 0.75 times B_{MSY} , and B status was the biomass estimate from 2015 over $MSST$, and so it was considered overfished if that value was below one.

I will go through all the different methods before presenting the results, and so that gets us to the end of the description of the base model methods, but we characterized uncertainty in that model using bootstrap procedures that are standard to the ASPIC software, and so ASPIC actually fits the observed data and then saves the predicted population data and residuals. The normalized inflated residuals are then randomly drawn with replacement incorporated into the predicted values to generate a trial resampled dataset, and then the resampled data are fit, the results are saved, and then it just continues to loop through that process several thousand times.

Then we had two models that then were averaged, and so, in the case of the uncertainty, the results of the bootstrapping were combined. Basically, just the data were merged to sort of combine those into one large dataset to characterize the uncertainty in the average of the handline and the longline models. The point is that characterizing uncertainty all around that was slightly different than the way that the average base run was determined.

I had presented other projections in previous documentation, but what I will just show today was the most recent projection request by the council for these $P^* 30$ projections, and we did them in a couple of different ways. One is having F current, the F in 2016, which is the year after the terminal year of the assessment, set to F current, and then F in 2017 to 2020 was set at the F corresponding to $P^* 30$, and then the next way was to actually just set the F in 2016 and 2017 to F current, and then those subsequent years were, again, set to the F at $P^* 30$.

The $FP^* 30$, that symbol is basically the F associated with $P^* 30$, or P^* is just the allowable probability of overfishing in a single year. The projections are made from those combined bootstrap results, and so it's just combining those bootstrap results to get one bootstrap dataset, and then that is then projected from, and so we're not making separate projections from the separate models. It's one projection from that one combined model. Then the uncertainty in the projections just comes from the bootstrap runs, and so BAM projections are a bit different than that. We have other sources of uncertainty, but, in this case, it's just coming from the uncertainty in those bootstraps.

This is starting to look at the results from the base model, and so this is -- I am not showing you results from the separate handline and longline models, but just from their averages, and so this is an estimated biomass series, which is quite high from 1958 through the early 1980s, and it drops down pretty low by the late 1980s, and is low for a couple of decades before gradually increasing up to the present. That's due to these F s that are pretty low for a long time and then increase rapidly in the 1980s and diminish short of gradually, with obviously some highs and lows, until they kind of bottom out a little past 2010 or 2011 and then increase again.

These are density plots from those -- This is just showing the uncertainty around a few of the estimates, and I know it's probably hard to see if you don't have the plots on your screen, but, basically, a couple of features that I wanted to point out is the uncertainty is fairly wide around a lot of these values. You can see that it's somewhat bimodal, although the orange lines, which are the base run estimates, are pretty close to the higher peaks in all of these plots, and the bimodality is a function of combining those models, those separate models.

This is just looking at uncertainty around the status plots, and so this is now looking at B over $MSST$ instead of just B , and so you see that B over $MSST$ is below one for a number of years in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, and then it's increasing above there in more recent years. This is looking at F over $FMSY$. Again, it's corresponding to those high F values earlier on. F over $FMSY$ was above one in the 1980s, and then getting lower and lower through the 2000s. It goes below one in the mid-2000s, and it's been mostly below one, save for 2013, when we had that high year. That was associated with that high recreational landings in 2013.

This is another way of looking at uncertainty in the model results, and so we're looking at B over $MSST$ on the Y-axis and F over $FMSY$ on the X-axis, and the green crosshairs are centered on the base run estimate, and then the lengths of those crosshairs define -- They extend to the 5th to 95th percentiles of distributions of B over $MSST$ and F over $FMSY$. You can see most of the bootstrap runs have B over $MSST$ above one, although a fair number of the runs actually have F over $FMSY$ exceeding one, though the base run estimate was not.

These are just the specific estimates from that base model and some of the associated errors and medians. If you're familiar with the reports, these figures are -- Pretty much every figure that I have shown you here is directly from the reports or previous presentations, and so it may be somewhat familiar.

Now we'll get into the results of the projections. This slide just describes the -- It serves as kind of a legend to the plots in the next few pages, but I will just tell you what they are. These are the results with only 2016 set at F current. The top-upper-left is F , the upper-center is B , the top-right is yield, the bottom-left is F over $FMSY$, B over $BMSY$, and B over $MSST$. B , biomass, is increasing slightly, and yield goes down after that first year, and then is increasing slightly as well. The dashed lines are the medians, versus the solid line is the base run estimate, and so they're pretty similar, which is reassuring.

These are just the specific values associated with those plots, and this is the corrected version of this presentation. I think the initial version that I had sent out had a table that was -- I think actually it was from the $MSY/FMSY$ projections, and so this is the corrected one that I am showing you now, and I think will be made available, but the original projections that I had sent to the council

were correct. Then this other version of the projections is very similar, in terms of results, but you can see that F was kept higher in those first couple of years to be set at F current. These are the specific values, but I don't need to talk about them, I don't think.

Just a few basic conclusions from this assessment. Blueline tilefish south of Hatteras are not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring. Bootstrap analysis suggests that the stock status is fairly certain. Only 5.8 percent of the runs were found that the stock was found to be overfished, and it's sort of less certain, the F status.

In terms of F status, 28.8 percent of the runs found the stock to be undergoing overfishing, and, from those recent projections, they show the yield increasing and a relatively low risk of biomass falling below MSST up to 2021, up to the end of the projection. That is the end of the presentation, and, at this point, I am happy to take any questions. If you have any questions about the specifics of the models, they are also very well documented online, and so that's sort of the best source for some of that.

DR. DUVAL: I think what I would like to do is actually get Marcel up here to give the SSC's review before taking any questions, and thank you, Nikolai, for a great presentation and also for all of your efforts on the assessment, as being the lead analyst. Nikolai definitely -- The review team certainly put him through his paces with all of the different things that they wanted done at the review workshop.

DR. KLIBANSKY: Thank you.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks, Nikolai, for that overview. A lot of the things that I have in my brief presentation Nikolai already went through, and so that makes my job a little easier, and, as Michelle said earlier, this was a little bit of a complicated assessment. The SSC reviewed the assessment and felt that the assessment was representing the best scientific information available, and we felt it was an adequate basis for determining stock status and providing fishing level recommendations.

The uncertainties were addressed according to the committee's expectations, and that was done using sensitivity runs and the bootstraps that Nikolai mentioned, and we had extensive discussions about the significant level of uncertainty in the assessment, and we felt that this was, in essence, a relatively data-poor assessment, and the degree of uncertainty came from the fact that there were no age data available, as Nikolai mentioned, and, as a result, no direct age-related parameters.

The growth parameters were estimated from a meta-analysis or from length information, and the meta-analysis included, we felt, a relatively small number of species. The estimates for natural mortality also came from a meta-analysis, and the maturity estimates were based on very few samples in the data.

Also, as you saw, there was no fishery-independent index. Another thing that we noted is that the used indices ended seven years before the terminal year, and that means that the most recent years were basically projections with known catch, and the model is deducting the removals from the estimated production, and this means that an index at the end of the time series to track recent and current stock status.

Then, also, there was some discussion about recruitment from the Gulf of Mexico, and that was unknown, and that could affect the South Atlantic stock dynamics, and so, as Nikolai said, there were two models presented to the SSC, the age-structured production model, and the SSC did not, again, as Nikolai mentioned, did not recommend the age-structured production model, and that was consistent with the recommendation from the assessment panel.

The main concerns we had were that it added model complexity, and there was a sensitivity to many of the assumed parameter values, which increase the uncertainty, and the report mentioned that it does allow for further exploration of the uncertainties, but the committee felt that that, by itself, was not a sufficient reason to select the ASPM model. I already mentioned that the growth parameters were estimated from the length data that we felt were relatively sparse, and they also differed considerably from those that were determined during the data workshop. There was also some concern about the fixed CVs at 0.2, which artificially changes the relative weighting of indices.

Also, we noted that, when the headboat index was removed, and Nikolai explained why that index was removed, the results were more similar to the ASPIC model, using the same indices, and so, as Nikolai mentioned, the SSC recommends the age-aggregated ASPIC model for the fishing level recommendations. We felt it was more appropriate for the available data and the uncertainties. It allows for less explicit accounting for the uncertainties, and we realize that, and it may provide some more conservative estimates of productivity, because it ignores the age structure in the population. Also, the SSC supported not using the headboat index.

After the review, the SSC went -- One thing that I need to mention was that this is all for the blueline tilefish population south of Cape Hatteras, and I have another slide coming up for the part of the population north of Cape Hatteras. Again, we recommended the use of the ASPIC model, and, after the review, we applied the ABC control rule, and I am more than happy to run through that ABC control rule with the committee, but we ended up with P^* of 30 percent, and that's where the projections that Nikolai mentioned were based on, and this is the table for the ABC and the OFL.

My next slide is about the population north of Cape Hatteras, and so I'm not sure, Madam Chair, if you want to interrupt the presentation for some questions or you want me to finish the presentation and to entertain questions after that.

DR. DUVAL: I think I would like you to go ahead and present what you have on the portion of the stock that's north of Cape Hatteras, because I think it's important to give the full picture of what this assessment entailed.

DR. REICHERT: Okay. Thank you. The blueline tilefish north of Cape Hatteras, we had some discussion about that, and we had very little, if any, information that we could base our recommendations for an ABC on, and so our recommendation was to have a representative go to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's SSC meeting, where they will discuss that, and I believe it's in March or April, if I am remembering that correctly, and, also, we recommended that we should form a joint working group with the South Atlantic and the Mid-Atlantic SSCs to determine and review the data, and that's the task of that committee, and recommend a method for the ABC to the councils.

We felt strongly that this working group should include a member of the assessment team and include, since we expect it to be a fairly complex task, to include an in-person meeting and perhaps a webinar or a call with the Mid-Atlantic SSC representatives to prepare for that working group. We recommend that the completion of that work should be March of 2018, and that's the date of that Mid-Atlantic SSC meeting. Then those recommendations could be presented to the South Atlantic SSC possibly via email or a webinar, and we recommended some members of that working group, and that's Scott Crosson, George Sedberry, and Rob Ahrens.

The last slide I have is the research recommendations and some considerations for the next assessment. Most of the research recommendations are addressing the significant uncertainty issues that were brought up during the assessment, including resolving the age issues, getting more information on life history, including growth, get more information on maturity, a fishery-independent index, investigating that recruitment from other areas, in particular the Gulf of Mexico, and something I mentioned earlier today is the detailed spatial information, because we felt that that will help tremendously in determining the ABC in the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic jurisdiction.

In terms of the next assessment, we felt it is important to monitor the changes in fish length in the catch and the changes in landings, which may give some information on stock distribution and what may happen to the populations, especially if the mean length is declining. That may be a signal, and, also, we felt it was very important that some of the issues that were impediments in the current assessment be addressed, because they will decrease the model uncertainty significantly and increase the likelihood of a successful stock assessment.

Then, also, explore available data-poor methods to assess the biological stock as one unit. As I mentioned in the beginning of my presentation, we felt that this was a relatively data-poor stock, and so there may be other methods available, especially when other information becomes available, and then, the timing for the next assessment, the committee felt that very much depends on the availability of the additional information, in particular from some of the research recommendations, if those issues can be addressed. That, Madam Chair, completes my presentation.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you for that, Marcel, and I will just say that I was a participant -- Well, I was one of the council's observers during the data workshop for this species, and Anna was one of the council's appointed observers for the assessment workshop and the review workshop, and so I was at all three components of the workshop, both the assessment and the review workshop. Dewey was at all three components of the workshop as a Mid-Atlantic Council appointed observer.

I think the challenge with this stock is absolutely the limitations in the data, which is what led the assessment panel to draw a break at Cape Hatteras, and I just want to emphasize that's not a biological distinction in the population. It's not a biological stock boundary. It simply was related to the limitations in the data, and so just drawing your attention, again, to the recommendation from the SSC that whatever we can do to assess this population in the future as a single biological unit is recommended, and I guess the only other thing that I think is probably unusual, a little bit, about this assessment is that the review panel preferred a more, I guess, complex model than what was recommended by either the assessment panel or the SSC.

The SSC has recommended for use the age-aggregated production model, or the ASPIC model, as Nikolai presented, but the review panel thought that they wanted a more complicated model, because they felt that it took better advantage of the limited information that we had, and so it was a little bit of an unusual occurrence, and so, right now, we have the SSC's recommendations for catch levels for the portion of the population that is south of Cape Hatteras, and we're still waiting on information for the portion that is north of Cape Hatteras.

The challenge there is clearly going to be how to divide that between the two different jurisdictions, because both the Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic have indicated they would like to manage within their jurisdictions, and our management priorities are slightly different for each. Are there any questions for Marcel or for Nikolai?

MR. HARTIG: Nikolai, on Slide 14, and I will start there, with the extreme removal of most of the virgin biomass there in seven years, that seems -- I don't know of any other species that even approximates that. Maybe golden tilefish is possibly similar, but that's a lot of removals in a really short timeframe, especially for a hook-and-line fishery. A longline fishery, yes, and that's a possibility, but it just brings me back to Slide 8 from there, and then you look at --

Although we didn't use the recreational headboat, and I understand why, because they targeted these fish initially and then they didn't and then they did again, and so it's really tough to use an index from that, but it does -- If you look at the catch rates after 1980, or you look at their initial catch rates, and then you go just a few years later, their catch rates are comparable to what they had when the fishery was first prosecuted, and so the thing that gets to me is, if we did have that dramatic drop in biomass in that seven-year period, the recreational headboat fishery wouldn't be able to approximate the landings they had before that happened.

I wonder, when we take this fishery down in such a short amount of time, if that's really what happened, is what I am trying to get at, and I know you guys talked about this in the data workshop, when the commercial fishery has always made the point that a lot of those fish were golden tilefish and misidentified in that timeframe, but there is a question about the recreational headboat fleet really couldn't have had that level of harvest again after the stock declined that much. That's just an observation.

DR. DUVAL: Ben, you're looking at the slide that Nikolai has shown up here, this pretty steep decline in biomass and then it seems to me like you're toggling between that and perhaps Slide 10 that shows the total removals, and is that -- I just want to make sure that the rest of us are following what you're talking about.

MR. HARTIG: I was on the indices page for the comparison, and I had eight out of thirty-nine on mine, and it's not the same presentation that he has, unfortunately. This is the one that I had previously. That one, where it shows the recreational headboat.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so it's Slide 11 in the updated presentation.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: I just wanted to make sure that people were able to follow which slides you were talking about and that's all.

MR. HARTIG: If you look at that, you can see the point that I was trying to make, that their landings are comparable a few years down the line, from 1980, with what they had originally, and so I just wonder, if that actually happened, how that could actually occur.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was curious to wonder if maybe, in SEDAR 32, when there was research recommendations, how many of them had been achieved, and I noticed that, in SEDAR 50 here, you also have some research recommendations, and, as a fisher and also sitting through these stock assessments, it's been really extremely frustrating for me as a fisherman and sitting there looking at research recommendations, which that's all they are is research recommendations, but, as we go on, we have to -- Our toolbox started out with one you can carry on this species, and now it's a tractor-trailer parked outside, and I think it's doing a great disservice to the fishers, and I know particularly in my area, looking at the fishermen and the people that I represent. It is frustrating.

It seems like, until there is a decision on what's going to be a protocol of gathering information -- If there's no money for that, that's fine too, but we need to look back at how we went at SEDAR 32 and what the recommendations of the reviewers or the panel was, and also the SSC, and have we fulfilled any of those, and, if not, we move on to the next.

It is frustrating, and it was frustrating for me to sit through these stock assessments and seeing the data poorness of it and being able to go from a toolbox to an eighteen-wheeler out there to reinvent things that are able to pass the best available science, and so what has been done since SEDAR 32 that looked at recommendations, and have any of them been fulfilled as we moved into SEDAR 50, and do we suspect that any of the SEDAR 50 recommendations -- What might be a timeline of looking at achieving some of them in the future, because I would hate to go to the third stock assessment and the page gets even longer, because I'm probably not going to be here by then, but I'm just curious, and I know that's some rambling on, but that's just the way I am. Sorry.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Dewey. I think Marcel wanted to address some of your comments.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and thank you, Madam Chair. I do not have an answer to your question directly of what research recommendations were completed prior to this assessment. However, there was an extensive discussion in the SSC relative to this point, and not just for this stock assessment, but for other stock assessments also, and I think, tomorrow -- One of the recommendations that came out of the SSC was that perhaps this should be added as a terms of reference for stock assessments, where there is going to be an evaluation of the research that's done since the last stock assessment, to see which of the issues that were identified in those previous stock assessments were actually addressed in research, and so I agree with that point, and the committee actually agrees with that. Thank you.

DR. PONWITH: I am frustrated by imperfect knowledge on these assessments too, given what's at stake, in how we use the outcome from these assessments. We all want the data to be better, because we want the assessments to be better, because we want to be able to use them to do a better job of managing these resources to the good of the ecosystem and the good of the fleet.

What I don't want is for people to become discouraged about the long list of research needs, because those are worth their weight in gold, and it's because they help us make decisions about what gets done next, and it helps people who are applying for S-K funding, to say this would be a

good project, and it helps mentors who are bringing graduate students up, to say that's a project my new post-doc or my doctoral student or masters student can take on, where there is somebody there with a catcher's mitt waiting for this work to be done and I want to do something applied, and so it has lots of uses.

The challenge that we have is that every single stock assessment we do we create a list of these research needs. What we need to do then is shuffle those decks, and this is a good project for the council to help us with and your SSC to help us with, and that is, instead of having a kitchen drawer full of all of these needs that are all layered in one giant layer in the drawer, we could take a look at the assessments that have been done over the last three years and shuffle the deck to say, if we got one thing out of all of these lists from all of these assessments, it would be this, because it has the highest impact to improving the assessments going forward, and then go from there.

It helps us to focus, and it helps the academics and the state researchers to focus, and so I think that that would be a really valuable thing, and the very first thing we would have to do before we did that is exactly what you asked for. What was on the list from the last time that we can check-off, so we know where the gap remains, and add to it from this one.

DR. KLIBANSKY: I just wanted to add to that. I think one thing that happened between SEDAR 32 and SEDAR 50 is that some of the research that was done actually showed us that there is more that we don't know than we knew, the ageing issues that came up and then from the stock ID, and a tremendous amount of genetics data was generated coast-wide and into the Gulf of Mexico, and so we started to realize about how -- It was just a number of things that sort of maybe needed to be added to that list, and, instead of checking things off, we sort of expanded, in a way, from that, and so I just wanted to throw that out.

DR. DUVAL: I think clearly improvements in understanding or in actually being able to age these fish would be probably one of the biggest benefits that we could bring to a future assessment, is having solid age information. Really, in terms of moving forward, Amendment 38 is sort of earmarked for changes to blueline tilefish, but we really can't do anything at this point until we get the remaining ABC information and recommendations from the joint efforts of the Mid and South Atlantic SSCs, and so that won't be until -- Like Marcel said, I think March or April is when the joint SSCs will be meeting.

I am looking in the back of the room, towards Mike Errigo and John Carmichael, for a little bit more information on the joint workgroup meeting between the Mid and South Atlantic SSCs, the tasking of the workgroup. That was supposed to happen, I think, prior to the Mid-Atlantic's SSC meeting in March, and so could we expect to see an update at our March council meeting?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We hope so.

DR. DUVAL: By June at the latest? Okay. So, we would expect to see additional information by June at the latest. My recommendation, I guess at this point, is, unless Roy or someone else has another suggestion, is we need to get this information before we can move forward with an amendment.

DR. CRABTREE: We certainly do for the north of Hatteras zone. I guess we could go ahead and make an adjustment of the ACL south of Hatteras separately, if we wanted to do that through a

framework, but we're not overfishing, and so I don't know that there is a big urgency with that, but it does appear that there is going to have to be a joint allocation decision made between us and the Mid, and I'm curious as to, procedurally, how would we do that? Would we have joint meeting with the Mid, or what are you thinking there, Mr. Chairman or Michelle or whoever?

My only concern would be I think we have some reductions in the south of Hatteras catch levels that come out of this, and, because there is going to be an allocation decision involving two councils, resolving what we're going to do north of Hatteras could take more time than one might expect.

DR. DUVAL: I think maybe I would want to -- I would at least want to get an update in March as to how this joint conversation is progressing between the two SSCs, because trying to figure out some means of allocating between the two jurisdictions is one of the tasks on their list, and we have had conversations, or Charlie and Gregg have had conversations, with the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council, which schedules all assessments for the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils, about trying to address these jurisdictional issues with regard to assessments in the future.

I don't really have any sense of a procedural document, because we don't have joint management authority. The Mid-Atlantic has management authority. The final rule for their blueline tilefish amendment published in mid-November, and I think it becomes effective next week or something like that.

MR. WAUGH: Yes, there is a report from that NRCC meeting in the Full Council tab, and what we've talked about so far is using the Chair, Vice Chair, and ED from the three councils and piggybacking on CCC meetings to discuss how we deal with these species, but my understanding for how we're approaching the blueline tile is our SSC and the Mid-Atlantic's are going to coordinate, but our SSC is coming up with an ABC for the stock from Hatteras to the North Carolina/Virginia line, and the Mid-Atlantic is working on an ABC for their area of jurisdiction. John can correct me if I'm wrong, but that's my understanding of how we're working, and so there won't be any need for the two councils to get together and agree as long as the SSCs work out those values.

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, and that's fine if there is some scientific basis for a way to divide it up, but, if it just becomes a what's fair and equitable and who gets how much decision, I suspect the SSCs will not be willing to wade into that, and it's not clear to me, given what they have north of Hatteras, that there will be a clean scientific method for splitting it up, and I think, if you use landings histories, what years you choose will make a big difference in how much goes where, and so it's not clear to me just how complicated this will be.

DR. DUVAL: Tony, and then we will wrap this up.

MR. DILERNIA: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Finding that the stock north of Hatteras is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring --

DR. DUVAL: Just let me interrupt you, Tony. That is south of Hatteras.

MR. DILERNIA: South of Hatteras?

DR. DUVAL: South of Hatteras. North of Hatteras, a number of data-limited tools were applied to the stock north of Hatteras, and I am just looking over to Nikolai to make sure that I don't say anything wrong. The results of those data-limited analyses were provided to the SSC, and that's what led to their decision to get a sub-group of both Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic SSCs together to try to come to some resolution on which of these methods would be the best to use to develop an ABC for that part of the stock north of Hatteras, and so there is no status determination for the area north of Hatteras that has come out of this assessment.

MR. DILERNIA: Okay, and so -- I apologize for walking in a little late, but, when I walked in, I thought I had seen a projection on the screen that stated that north of Hatteras that overfishing was not occurring and the stock was not overfished, and I must have misinterpreted that then.

DR. DUVAL: That was south of Hatteras. There were definitely no slides in that presentation that said that.

MR. DILERNIA: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so is everyone okay with what I have suggested, in terms of we're going to keep this on our agenda for the future and we will hopefully be getting an update in March as to how these joint discussions are going? Okay. I see Marcel nodding in the background.

Our next agenda item is Amendment 47, and this is the for-hire moratorium document, but, before we dive into that, I just want to bring Marcel back up here really quickly. He actually has to leave this afternoon, and he has just a couple more brief things to provide to us, one on red grouper and one on golden tilefish, and so I just want to let him kind of zip through that part of his report, and then we'll dive into the for-hire moratorium document.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I apologize that I have to leave this afternoon, and so thank you for allowing me to give the remaining SSC report on red grouper and golden tilefish. I do not have a presentation for those, because they are relatively short.

I would like to start with red grouper. The SSC reviewed the provided projections and considered them the best available scientific information and useful for management. However, the committee did express some concern about the assumption that the discards were constant over time. This was a result of the fact that the recruitment and selectivity have remained unchanged throughout the projections.

As you have mentioned before, the reports on the water and the fishery-independent index both suggest that there is not really a change in the low-recruitment trend for red grouper, and, as a result of that, the SSC recommends using the lower-recruitment projection scenarios for fishing level recommendations. As a reminder, the assessment results indicated that recruitment was low in recent years, and so the projections were done under average and low recruitment, and so the SSC recommends the projections at FMSY under low recruitment for the OFL and the projections at F rebuild under low recruitment for the ABC, and the numbers are provided in the Table 3 and 4 in the SSC report, and I think you've actually seen the numbers in a previous meeting.

We stress, as a committee, that the projections should be considered for the short term, no longer than five years, as recruitment may change. It may increase at some point in the future, and so, if that's the case, then there may be a reason to adjust those projections, and that concludes my report for red grouper, and I entertain any questions, if you may have them.

DR. DUVAL: Any questions for Marcel on red grouper? I don't think this is anything different than what we expected when we reviewed those two different sets of projections in September. It's sort of consistent with where we suspected the SSC would go, which was to use the projections at the low recruitment for the catch level recommendations.

DR. REICHERT: Indeed. In terms of the golden tilefish, the SSC reviewed the update of the golden tilefish assessment that used the Dirichlet binomial likelihood method, and there was a lot of work that went into that update, and the revision was very informative with regard to the use and the limitations of that method, and the SSC really appreciated the work that was done. The report adequately documented the analysis and the results.

The overall results of the committee was that the Dirichlet method has not been sufficiently tested using the composition data obtained from sparse sampling, which was the case in golden tilefish. A main issue was that most runs of this revised model did not converge on a solution, and, due to the uncertainty and the poor model performance, the SSC recommends not to use the revised tilefish assessment for stock status and fishing level recommendations. As a result, the SSC recommends using the previously-specified ABC recommendations.

The SSC repeated a strong recommendation for implementing a fishery-independent survey for this species, because we feel that that may significantly decrease the uncertainty and increase the chances of a successful stock assessment next time around, and that completes my report for the golden tilefish.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Marcel. Any questions for Marcel on golden tilefish? Okay. Thank you very much, Marcel, and safe travels on the way home.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you very much.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, and so the next item on our agenda, and you are not getting any breaks this afternoon, and so don't even think about it. If you need a break, you get up and you go help yourselves. We have a hard stop today at 4:30, because of public comment, and I think you can anticipate that I am going to shift the agenda a little bit to try to deal with some of the things that we have on our plate. John Hadley is going to take us through the options paper for Amendment 47, which is Attachment 7 in your briefing book.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, everyone. Today, as Michelle mentioned, we'll be going over the options paper for Snapper Grouper 47, the for-hire permit moratorium. Before we jump into the paper, I just wanted to briefly bring everyone up-to-date on what happened during the last meeting, and it was included in the options paper, a very broad overview, and the decisions that need to be made at this meeting to keep the amendment moving forward.

If you recall, at the last meeting that this was discussed, which was in June of 2017, the committee reviewed a white paper on limiting entry into the snapper grouper fishery, and they approved a

motion to begin work on an amendment that would establish a moratorium on federal for-hire snapper grouper permits. The direction was for this amendment to be reviewed at the December 2017 meeting.

We'll go over these in more detail, but the general categories and decision points that will be covered are the start date of a moratorium, the exceptions for eligibility, transferability of permits, allowing new entrants and potentially establishing a permits pool, and establishing a time limit or a sunset provision for the moratorium. Finally, any other provisions that the committee would like to see discussed.

In the options paper, there are draft actions and alternatives that have been created based on previous discussions of the council, documents prepared for limited entry, and individual council member input. As you will recall, limited entry, in some form or fashion, was discussed from June of 2016 through June of 2017 and the meetings in between.

The actions and alternatives are new, and they have not yet been formally reviewed by the committee or the council, and so they're really included as a starting point for discussion purposes, and we're very early in the process, and so input on the options presented and other potential options is certainly encouraged.

The actions needed at this meeting are to review the options paper to consider the goals and desired outcomes of the amendment. In doing so, provide input on the draft purpose and need statements. Also, provide input on the draft actions and alternatives and any other options that should be developed, and, finally, review the timing of the amendment and decide the next step. Importantly, whether or not the committee feels that this amendment is developed enough to send out to scoping. If not, maybe further develop the amendment for review at a future meeting. That's all for that, and I will take any questions before I jump into the options paper.

DR. DUVAL: Any questions for John at this point? I think people just probably want to get into the options paper. Again, it's Tab 7, Attachment 7.

MR. HADLEY: Very quickly, I will provide a little bit of background. Some members of the council felt that a moratorium could help with logbook reporting compliance, business planning, professionalizing the for-hire fleet, vessel overcapacity, data quality, and possibly reducing fishing pressure on some stocks.

There were some concerns raised about a moratorium or limiting entry to the fishery and the conflicts that could arise from those that do and do not get permits, issues with the current control date, as well as what will happen to permits obtained after that control date. Then some folks were concerned that it could potentially lead to sector separation between the private sector and the for-hire fleet.

A little bit more background. Table 1 in your document is a recent breakdown of the for-hire snapper grouper permits for the South Atlantic. You will see the State of Florida dominates those, and I will mention this is based on the registered homeport of the vessel that the permit is issued to, and so most vessels are, not surprisingly, from Florida. It was dominated by the Florida Keys, followed by the Florida east coast and the Florida west coast. This is followed by North Carolina, South Carolina, the Mid-Atlantic region, and then Georgia.

Then Table 2 is the number of permits issued annually from 2008 through 2017. As you can see, towards the beginning of the time series, there are approximately 1,500 permits issued to all states. Then that tended to decrease through time, until approximately 2014 and 2015, when you started to see a rise for 2015 and 2016 and 2017 in the number of permits issued.

I won't go over the objectives. They were briefly mentioned in the presentation before, but, as far as potential timing for the amendment, and this is just a very draft timeline, but you will review the options paper at this meeting and then decide whether or not the amendment could go out for scoping. If so, that would take place in late January or early February of 2018. In March, the council could review scoping comments and preliminary analyses. In June of 2018, the council would modify the amendment and the actions and alternatives within the amendment and potentially send these out for public hearings in August of 2018. At the September meeting, you would review the public hearing comments and modify the amendment. Then, in December, review and approve for formal review.

With that, I will jump into the purpose and need. The draft purpose and need, the purpose of this amendment is to establish a moratorium on the issuance of South Atlantic charter/headboat for snapper grouper permits to new applicants. The need for this amendment is to minimize adverse social and economic impacts in the snapper grouper for-hire fishery, improve logbook reporting compliance and data quality, reduce vessel overcapacity, and reduce fishing pressure. I will pause there.

DR. DUVAL: I think Anna may have had a question about some of the tables that you presented initially in the background.

MS. BECKWITH: Thanks. In PDF page 3, under Table 1, there is a sentence in there that says that, over the time series, the number of permits has increased approximately by 8 percent to 15 percent and so on and so forth. My ask is that, when you guys go back and review this, that you do those comparisons not including 2016 and 2017. I would like all of that to go up to 2015, because our permit numbers were basically stable until 2015, and I think we, in our discussions around this table, certainly had an impact on the number of permits for the years of 2016 and 2017, and I don't want that to be perceived by the public that there is this increase in permits, and so I want those comparisons to be done through 2015 and then, if there is a specific need to denote an increase in the percentage of permits, to compare 2016 and 2017 independent, if that makes sense.

MR. HADLEY: So essentially kind of use 2015 as your end baseline year.

DR. DUVAL: Great. Any other questions on those first two tables? John has reviewed the purpose and need, and I'm thinking it's a little bit premature to think about approving a purpose and need at this point. I would prefer to go through the document before, I think, coming back to that, because I think there is a lot more discussion to be had. I think comments on the purpose and need will probably be more focused once we've had a chance to go through the remainder of the document, I guess is my point that I am making. I think we could seriously go down one of Charlie's rabbit holes if we try to get into that right now.

MR. BREWER: I respectfully disagree, and that's because I have yet to understand what the need is for all of this, and, until I understand that there is a need, I don't know why we should even start

going with options and whatnot without having to know what it is that we're trying to accomplish here, and that has not been made clear to me.

DR. DUVAL: I certainly appreciate that, Chester. I think there is a wide variety of opinions around the table with regard to what the purpose and need would be and whether there is a need, clearly, and so that's why I think it would be my preference to allow John to walk through the document and see what is in there before we come back to decisions about purpose and need and moving forward, and I recognize that you disagree with that.

I think there are actions that we have covered in other amendments that probably other folks on the committee have disagreed with the purpose and need for those actions as well, and so I guess I would ask for your indulgence to allow John to walk through the document before we come back to that, because we will have an opportunity to make a decision as to whether or not you all want to move forward with this.

MR. BREWER: I certainly would grant you my indulgence.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you. It is much appreciated.

MR. HADLEY: As mentioned earlier, we're getting to the decision points on possible approaches for a moratorium, looking at the start date, exceptions for eligibility, transferability, allowing new entrants, time limit, and then any other provisions. I will jump into the start date for the moratorium. As you will recall, the council approved a control date of June 15, 2016 for the for-hire sector of the snapper grouper fishery. This control date could be used to determine eligibility to receive a snapper grouper for-hire permit, or the council could consider another date, and so this would be Alternatives 2 and 3, which we'll go through in just a second.

Another thing worth mentioning, if permit speculation or a rush on permits is a concern, the council could consider a double control date, and so, in this case, a permit holder would have to have a valid permit on both dates to be eligible once the moratorium was in place.

I will jump into the draft Action 1 language, and this would establish a start date of a moratorium on the issuance of South Atlantic charter/headboat for snapper grouper permits. Under Alternative 1, there would not be a start date for the moratorium. Under Alternative 2, this would use the control date as the measure for eligibility. Alternative 3 is another date could be chosen for eligibility. Then Alternative 4 would be the double control date. In this case, what is in there right now is the current control date of June 15, 2016, and another date, and that would certainly be wide open at this moment. Then any other alternatives within that realm.

DR. DUVAL: I think what I would like to do, John, instead of having us get down too far into the weeds on each of these actions is I think, if you can walk through all of the actions and what's in there, and then we can, I think, come back and have a broader discussion about purpose and need and the goal and modifications to some of those individual actions, if people so choose, and is that okay with the committee? Okay.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Continuing on, it would be to look at exceptions for eligibility. The council may want to consider exceptions under certain circumstances to allow participants into the fishery that do not meet the eligibility requirement. One example could be historic captains, and

so the council could establish a way to identify individuals who have worked on vessels under the for-hire permit of another person or a corporation, and some of these qualifying measures could be a minimal proportion of personal income from working on a for-hire vessel as the for-hire captain, and this is Sub-Alternatives 2a and 2b. Then another sort of proof of working as a for-hire captain before a certain date, and so this would be Sub-Alternative 2c.

Draft Alternative 2, again, would establish the exceptions for eligibility. Under Alternative 1, there would be no exceptions. Alternative 2 would establish an exception to allow captains to obtain a for-hire permit, provided that the captain could provide documentation of the following, Sub-alternative 2a being a personal income at any level from working on a vessel, for a for-hire vessel. Sub-alternative 2b would be a certain percentage, and so this would be a minimum percentage to qualify of personal income from working on a vessel with a valid permit before the control date. Sub-Alternative 2c would be some sort of proof of operating a vessel with a valid permit before the control date, and examples could be some sort of affidavit, any other kind of proof that the committee and council would find appropriate.

Then we get into transferability of permits, and so, essentially, there is three broad measures that could be considered here. One is no transfer of permits, and the other being some sort of limited transfer of permits, or there could be no restrictions, and so an open transfer of permits.

One thing that the committee may want to consider is allowing transfers between immediate family members or between vessels with the same owner, or transfers could be frozen and then allowed after a certain period of time, and that's Alternative 4. Then, finally, the council may want to opt to prohibit any transfers, and then you will naturally have attrition in the fishery, and these permits will be retired, and, in a subsequent action, we will get into this, but those permits could go into a permits pool.

Under draft Action 3, this would establish transferability provisions for the for-hire permit. Under Alternative 1, there would be no transferability provisions. Alternative 2, there are no restrictions, and so this is kind of your open transfer provision. Alternative 3 is transfers of the permit would be prohibited except to immediate family members or vessels owned by the same person or entity. In this case, it would be helpful to have some discussion on what "immediate" is, as far as family members. What is immediate family, as far as siblings, aunts, uncles, what have you?

Alternative 4, in this case, transfer would be prohibited for a given number of years after the moratorium takes effect. Then, after this time, transfer of permits would be allowed, and the sub-alternatives range from three to ten years that are provided, and certainly other years could be added as well.

Then Alternative 5 is transfer is prohibited, and this sets your provisions for when a permit would be retired. If the original permit holder does not renew the permit within one year of its expiration, the permit is retired, or Sub-Alternative 5b is a record of for-hire fishing activity by the South Atlantic for-hire logbook would be required, and, if not, then the permit would be retired. Then certainly any other provisions to put in there, and one that has been mentioned as an example would be to limit transfer between headboat and charter boat use.

Moving to allowing new entrants, there are three draft actions provided for this. The council could set a minimum number of permits that would trigger additional -- Essentially, a minimum number

of permits that would trigger additional permits becoming available to a permits pool, and one question that you might want to consider is when would retired permits be made available again, and so as soon as they are retired, on a specific date each year, or when a minimum threshold is met and then new permits become available.

If the council decides to establish a permits pool, it should be specified how the permits are distributed, and some options that are provided include a lottery system or a waiting list, where permits would be distributed to new entrants in a set manner, and, additionally, there could be the creation of a new entrants or a greenhorn permit that would allow unpermitted vessel owners to enter into the snapper grouper for-hire fishery. This could be renewed for a limited number of years, after which time the permit holder would be eligible to receive the permit if there could be documentation of for-hire activity or for-hire effort, and we'll get into the details of those different forms of documentation.

Draft Action 4 reads establish a permits pool for new entrants to obtain a South Atlantic charter/headboat for snapper grouper permit. Under Alternative 1, there would be no permits pool for new entrants. Alternative 2 would establish a permits pool that would open on January 1 of each year. The number of permits in this pool would be the number of permits that were retired in the previous calendar year, or possibly the number of permits necessary so that there is a given number of active permits in the fishery, and so this is if there is a specific level of participation that is desired.

Alternative 3 would establish a permits pool when the total number of permits reach a given percentage of the number of permits that were available when the moratorium was implemented, due to permits not being renewed or transferred and therefore being retired. The two sub-alternatives provided are 80 percent or 90 percent of that original number.

Moving on to Action 5, that would establish a system for these permits to be distributed. Under Alternative 1, there would be no such system. Alternative 2 would establish a lottery system to distribute the permits within the permits pool, and Alternative 3 would establish a waiting list to distribute the permits within the permits pool.

Then, finally, Action 6 would establish a new entrants permit. Again, this is your sort of greenhorn permit for the for-hire sector of the snapper grouper fishery. In Alternative 1, there would not be such a permit. Alternative 2 would establish a new entrants permit that would allow previously-unpermitted participants to enter into the fishery, and the permit could be renewed for a given number of years. This is Sub-Alternatives 2a through 2c. Right now, one and two years is in there, and I could certainly add to that, and, after which time, the permit holder would be eligible to receive a South Atlantic charter/headboat for snapper grouper permit if he or she could provide proof of for-hire fishing activity via the South Atlantic for-hire logbook. Those are Sub-Alternatives 2d through 2f, and there is sort of a minimum threshold on the number of trips that would need to be logged per year to be able to qualify.

Alternative 3 is very similar language. In this case, the major difference is the end here, as far as proof of for-hire fishing activity, and this would come in the form of proof of income from for-hire fishing activity, and the three sub-alternatives, Sub-Alternative 3d through 3f, are that the permit holder must provide documentation of personal income at a certain percentage of their total income, the permit holder must provide documentation of a personal income of at least a certain

dollar figure from for-hire fishing activity, and, very similarly, the permit holder must provide documentation of gross revenue. In this case, personal income versus gross revenue from for-hire fishing activity.

Then, finally, as far as this action, other provisions that have been mentioned that could be considered for the new entrants permit are possibly requiring an annual U.S. Coast Guard safety inspection, an additional fee for the permit, only allowing harvest of certain snapper grouper species for the new entrants permit, making the permits renewable for a calendar year on the same date, for ease of enforcement, and so, in this case, all permits would expire on the same date and must be renewed on or before to continue for-hire fishing activity. Then some other options that have been mentioned is proof of a captains license, minimum number of hours logged as mate or captain on a snapper grouper for-hire permitted vessel, and also some sort of logbook training and reporting requirement.

With that, I will get into the last action that we have provided, and that is regarding a time limit or a sunset provision for a moratorium, and so the council could consider this. A time limit or a moratorium could allow the council to evaluate the current for-hire sector conditions and to design a permanent limited entry system without a large fluctuation in the number of permits.

Some examples of how this time limit or moratorium has been used in the past is one being the king mackerel commercial permit, where a moratorium on new permits started October 16, 1995, and it went until October 15 of 2000. This moratorium was extended until October 15, 2005, and there was an indefinite limited entry system established on July 7 of 2005.

Another example is the Gulf reef fish and Gulf coastal migratory pelagic charter/headboat permit, where a moratorium on new permits started on June 16, 2003, and it went until June 16 of 2006, after which an indefinite limited entry system was put in place in June of 2006.

The draft Action 7 would establish an expiration for a moratorium on South Atlantic charter/headboat for snapper grouper permits. Alternative 1 is this expiration would not occur. Alternative 2 is the moratorium on permits will end after a given number of years, and, in this case, Sub-Alternatives 2a through 2d -- The years provided range from three to ten after implementation, unless the council takes action before that.

Alternative 3 would depend on stock status of a given species or group of species, and so the moratorium on South Atlantic charter/headboat for snapper grouper permits will end when a given stock is no longer designated as overfished. The initial sub-alternative provided is for red snapper. With that, those are all the draft actions provided.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, John, for walking us through everything, just to show sort of the big picture of what you all have fleshed out, and so my suggestion is to go back up to the top, and I think there were some folks who had some comments on purpose and need, and I know Anna had her hand raised previously and Zack and then Tony and Mel.

MS. BECKWITH: Before I get started with some comments on the purpose and need, I do need to preface some of these suggestions with the fact that I just need to point out that the majority of North Carolina charter guys do not support moving forward with this amendment. I have listed

plenty of my concerns on the record over the last couple of meetings, and certainly I have my concerns moving forward.

It seems that this council does have the desire to move forward and the votes to keep pushing this forward, and so, if that's the case, then I will become very involved in trying to shape this in a way that I think will do the least damage and certainly achieve the purpose of trying to get improved logbook reporting, but, my efforts in shaping this amendment, I do not want to have misinterpreted as my support for this amendment.

Having said that, under the purpose, I would like to strike "new applicants", because, as we discuss this amendment, we are attempting to take into account the need for new entrants, either with a permit pool or with a greenhorn permit, and so, under the purpose, I would like to strike the last two words, "new applicants", and just have it read: "The purpose of this amendment is to establish a moratorium on the issuance of South Atlantic charter/headboat for snapper grouper permits."

Under the need, and, Michelle, if you would like to deal with the purpose first, we can do that, and then I can go into my comments on the need.

DR. DUVAL: Why don't you get it all out there, and then we can -- Then I've got Zack next on the list and Tony and Mel and Jim, while we're dealing with purpose and need, and so make all of your suggestions and then we will move forward.

MS. BECKWITH: Thank you. I appreciate your indulgence. Under the need, the first portion that says, "to minimize adverse social and economic impacts on the snapper grouper for-hire industry", I would like to strike that. My reasons for that is, in general, I disagree that this statement is accurate for this amendment, as we will be decreasing freedom of commerce, and we potentially will be making new entrance more difficult and expensive, and we'll actually be reducing customer choice in what is traditionally a customer service industry.

I am okay with improving logbook compliance and data quality, and I would like to reword the "reduce vessel overcapacity" to actually read "address regional concerns with overcapacity". I understand that the Florida Keys has come concerns with overcapacity, and we have certainly received some comments from that, but my general sense from our North Carolina charter guys is that we do not have a concern about overcapacity, and so that would more accurately reflect that.

In terms of reducing fishing pressure, I am uncomfortable with that statement, because I am not sure that it's accurate, because, since we are considering a moratorium on permits and not looking for a reduction on permits, and we're also, outside of this amendment, not necessarily looking to reduce private angler access to these species, I am not sure that that is an accurate thing in the need statement, and so I would like to strike "reduce fishing pressure", but I wouldn't mind adding that the need is to help professionalize the industry. Those are my comments.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Anna.

MR. BOWEN: As far as the purpose, I would like to see somewhere in there where it says professionalize the for-hire fleet. I am going to definitely need some help wordsmithing this, but just giving some ideas. To Anna's comment about the need, the need part of the statement, it says she wants to reduce -- I think we need to keep that in there, but we should use the word "cap fishing

pressure”. We’re not trying to reduce it. We’re just trying to cap it, and so then I will probably have some other statements, but I will let the rest of the committee go.

MR. DILERNIA: Could someone just give me the definition of a charter boat that you all use here and also for a headboat? What is the difference in the definitions between the two vessels, because we don’t use that in the Mid. We use inspected and uninspected, and so, if somebody could help me with that, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: I am going to look over to our attorney on the left side of the table, but I think we have a general definition.

MR. DILERNIA: If I may, if a headboat is --

DR. CRABTREE: It’s one permit, and it doesn’t have any limits on passenger capacity or anything, and so there’s not a permitting difference. Now, there are vessels that are in the Beaufort Headboat Survey, and we have used that distinction at times in the Gulf to distinguish between charter boats and headboats, but, in the South Atlantic with this, I don’t think we’re distinguishing between the two. It’s simply a for-hire permit to take passengers out for charter to fish for snapper grouper.

DR. DILERNIA: Okay, and so, if I saw anywhere in this amendment the term “charter/headboat”, I could substitute the term “for-hire” and that would be -- Okay.

DR. CRABTREE: I think you could.

DR. DILERNIA: That solves my dilemma. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: There is a difference between how a charter vessel is defined and how a headboat is defined, but, as Roy said, for permitting purposes, it’s all the same permit, and so there are differences in the definitions, and I think --

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: There is a lengthy definition in the 622 regulations, but I think what Roy said is pretty much accurate, and we can go with that.

DR. DUVAL: So it’s a vessel less than 100 gross tons that is subject to Coast Guard requirements to carry six or fewer passengers, a charter vessel. I am just reading you the Code of Federal Regulations.

LCDR BENNETT: Right, which don’t necessarily match with the Coast Guard’s definition for U.S. Code, in terms of the differences between an inspected passenger versus an uninspected passenger vessel, and so you can have up to twelve people and still be an uninspected passenger vessel, but, once you get beyond the twelve, then it becomes that inspected passenger vessel, or your headboat, if you will.

DR. DUVAL: I don’t want to get into the weeds of this right here. I mean, there is inspected and uninspected passenger vessels, but then there is also a definition in our 622 rules that says a charter vessel means a vessel less than 100 gross tons that is subject to the requirements of the U.S. Coast

Guard to carry six or fewer passengers for-hire and then engages in charter fishing at any time during the calendar year, and then it goes on and on and on.

MR. BROWN: I have an inspected vessel, and it's for over six. If you're an inspected vessel and you carry more than six people, then you're required by a lot of other specifications.

LCDR BENNETT: I understand that, but you can choose, if you are an uninspected -- You can choose to carry up to twelve and still be an uninspected passenger vessel.

MR. BROWN: When did that happen?

DR. DUVAL: I am thinking this is probably an offline conversation, because this is really about the permit, and the permit applies to both a charter vessel and a headboat, regardless of how you define them, and so I would like to move on to my list, which is Mel and then Jim and then Kathy.

MR. BELL: Thanks, and, to that point that you guys were just discussing, apparently, when you fill out the application, you just check which it is, and I don't know that they question that, but you're right that that's a whole other thing that needs to be addressed separately. Back to this, going to the need, what we're down to, the three areas there, when folks like Zack or folks like Robert Johnson or others on the AP talk about professionalization of the industry, I take that seriously, and that means something, and I get it.

I understand that, if you've got a more professional, focused industry that abides by the rules and all, you end up with a better fishery and things are great, and it's also easier for them to compete on a level playing field, and I get that, and so I understand that need and desire to professionalize the industry.

Related to overcapacity, I think, similar to perhaps what Anna said, I don't think that our folks in South Carolina think that there's a capacity issue. When you start looking at some of the data that we do have access to, and particularly through our own charter boat reporting system, it doesn't really seem to be an overcapacity issue. It may be more of a Florida thing, or it may be in other states, but I can just speak for South Carolina, and I don't think we see that as an issue here at the moment.

The one point in there that I do kind of issues with, in terms of improving compliance, is we talked about better data and the need for compliance with logbook reporting, and we don't have a system in place. It's very hard for us to say that we need to do this to improve reporting compliance when we don't have reporting yet, and so my preference in all of this, and that may be, at some point in time, a very valid argument, but it's not a very good argument right now when there is no actual reporting numbers or compliance numbers to reference, and so we can't say that, hey, year one, year two, the end of this, we're at 50 percent or 60 percent within a week or two or something afterwards and that's not acceptable and therefore we need to improve it.

We have no earthly idea what the reporting compliance will look like until we actually get into this, and so I'm of a mind, personally, if that's sort of your strongest argument, it kind of doesn't exist at the moment, and I would be more inclined to sort of put this whole concept on ice for a while, until we actually have some data that we can reference and say we need to go from whatever

percentage to closer to 100 percent, and so that's where I think, in terms of the need, it's real hard to argue for that as a primary need here when you have nothing to reference.

Now, we can certainly say that, in the Gulf of Mexico, when they did this, the reporting went better or improved or their reporting is better because of it, and that's fine, but we can't really say that right now, and so that's where I'm -- I mean, I think this concept has use, and it's potentially a valuable tool, and you want to use that tool when you need that tool and you can demonstrate a clear need for the tool, but I don't feel real comfortable right now that we can do that, and so I don't want to necessarily kill this whole concept, but what I would prefer to do is kind of put it on ice and let staff focus on other things at the moment and maybe come back to it at a point in time where we can argue more strongly for a need particularly for the compliance piece. That's my two-cents' worth. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Mel. I know there are a number of people who want to say to that point, but I'm going to go around my list, because, otherwise, we're just going to get too many people jumping on to that point, to that point, to that point, and so I would appreciate it if folks would remember what their point is and to address it, but I would like to get through my list.

MR. ESTES: I agree with what Mel's statements were. In fact, I would offer to Mel that I will bring the ice that we can put this on, and I would also like to talk a little bit about what my observations were, and I'm new to this, but what my observations were about this process and then a little bit about philosophy.

You all discussed this some time ago, and what I thought I heard, before the motion was made to start an amendment, what I thought I heard, and I thought I heard some agreement when the motion was made, was that we want to have a discussion about this, which I guess we're having now, which is fair enough, but it feels like that starting an amendment is putting us on a road, and I don't see any exits, and I see maybe a Y at the end of the road, and one of the ways is a stopping place, and I doubt it, is sector separation, and I can't see how this can't lead to that, and that's another discussion that we can have.

Then, if we go to sector separation, I can see having some kind of catch shares, and, both of those things, I think we need to look around and see what we're doing in other places and evaluate how it's working there, and so I will say that, and so I think the process bothers me a little bit, and then I think we started with a tool, and maybe this is how we always do it here, but we thought about a tool, and now we're trying to figure out why we need it, and that seems illogical to me.

Philosophy, I have the greatest deal of respect for our charter fleet, big time. When I was a kid, sixteen years old, my heroes were wildlife officers and freshwater fishing guides, and I haven't stopped that, and the ones that I know are very professional, and so I have the highest respect for that, but I think that the object of our management ought to be the recreational fishermen. Some of them have boats, and some of them don't have boats, and those that don't have boats need to be the object of our management, and thank goodness for the charter people to allow them to go seek the bounty, and so I appreciate that, but I think that we're focusing on the wrong thing.

That's Jim's philosophy, and that's all I have to say right now, but I agree that I think we need to put this on ice until -- One more thing. We are working on our visioning amendment for recreational fisheries. In that visioning amendment, I thought how that started was that we were

trying to ensure access, possibly even increased access, to that. This seems to me like this would either cap it or slow it down, and I think that we are conflicting those two things.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Jim, and I guess just one point on the discussion. We actually did have discussion on this at two previous meetings before we got to the point of a motion being made to begin an amendment for a moratorium, and so that took place over two meetings.

MS. KNOWLTON: Very quickly, I would just like to say that I agree with the overall intent and content of what Anna said, very strongly, and Mel. I think that reporting compliance absolutely can't be part of this, in terms of improving it, since, as he said, we do not have a current approved reporting method, and, also, just generally speaking, to me, the majority of the content of this need is in no way, shape, or form a need. Those statements are means to an end and not individual needs.

What's actually on page 13, in my opinion, is closer to a need statement, and that's the second sentence of the top paragraph, saying that a time-limited moratorium could allow the council to evaluate the current for-hire sector conditions, and I would alter that to say, "and to discuss whether a permanent limited entry system without seeing a fluctuation in the number of permits", and that, to me, is, very simply, the need, should it proceed, for this evaluation at this time. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Kathy.

MR. BREWER: We are supposed to be constituent or stakeholder-driven, and I don't know how many folks have read the comments with regard to this proposal and our discussions that took place, in I believe, six meetings that predated this. It wasn't just two meetings. We've been talking about, and this is the seventh meeting.

DR. DUVAL: Just a correction that we had decided that we wanted to have focused time on the agenda that was noticed, so that the public would know that we were talking about it, and so that occurred at the December meeting last year, and we set aside time in March and June, and those are the two meetings that I was referring to.

MR. BREWER: I agree, but we were talking about this issue, and we've been talking about for a while, and the reason that you're seeing, I believe, such pushback is -- I think I have admitted to my former life in the past, but, in my former life, I have watched very carefully what went on in the Gulf of Mexico, and I watched the turmoil that was caused, the ill-feeling, the animosity that has now occurred between the private recreational sector and the charter/for-hire sector.

You go back actually to I believe it was Amendment 30B, and Amendment 30B, what transpired as a result of that amendment is that the federal charter/for-hire guys were not allowed to fish in state waters when a particular species was closed in federal waters, and that was true even though they had all the proper permitting to fish in state waters and had state permits. That was unfair to them.

We went down the road then of limited entry, and that was approved. After it was approved, we then began to discuss and have animosity over Amendment 40, and 40 was sector separation. Following shortly on the heels of Amendment 40 were Amendments 41 and 42, which were catch shares in the headboat and charter/for-hire, and they're still fighting over that. They've been

fighting over this thing for years, and, rather than go down that road, I think that it would be a very good idea to take a look at actual problems, if they exist, and deal with them.

Now, I had a discussion with Ira, because Ira got up at one of our meetings and he spoke in favor of limited entry, and I have the greatest respect in the world for Ira, and I asked him, and, I said, Ira, I agree with you on so many things, and why are you so in favor of this? He said, it's because the system as we have it right now is not fair, and I said, what do you mean? Then he said, it's because I can come back to the dock and there's a state guide that's right here beside me and he's pulling fish off the boat that I haven't been allowed to let my clients keep, and they want to know why.

I think that -- The reason why is because, and I didn't know this. I had to ask, and come to find out that we have a rule, much like 30B, in the South Atlantic that prohibits our federally-permitted guides from fishing in state waters if a particular species is closed in federal waters but open in state. Ideally, the best thing to do would be to have concurrency between state and federal, but we don't have that, and so our federal guides right now are at a disadvantage, and I think that's something that needs to be looked at.

We say that we're stakeholder-driven, and I looked just a moment ago, and there is fifty-three comments for today's meeting, or this week's meeting. Of those comments, fifty-one of them are vehemently opposed to us even going down this road, and there's one comment, I think, on cobia, and there is one comment from somebody in Murrells Inlet who is in favor. If you took a look at the comments on prior meetings, I believe we've had like 147, and they are vehemently opposed. Any of the problems that we have talked about here can be resolved and taken care of without going to something that is so dangerous and so divisive, and I really think this is a road that we should not go down.

MR. GRINER: I was just going to say that I really don't like the verbiage in there about reducing fishing pressure. I think I don't want to give the perception that we're trying to keep people from going fishing.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Tim.

DR. PONWITH: Just in response to Mr. Bell's comment about wanting some data before we move to doing something like this to solve a problem that we're not sure exists, the bottom line is we have those data. I have given I don't know how many presentations on headboat compliance for electronic reporting, and it's been over and over and over again, and the compliance is terrible, and it's below the level of compliance in the Gulf of Mexico, chronically.

It has improved over the years, since we put electronic reporting in place, but the only reason it has improved is the staff at the Beaufort Lab running the program are so persistent that they hound captains who are late until they get those reports, and when I ask them what does that mean, I mean what percentage of your workforce time goes to reminding people that they need to get those reports in, and the rough ballpark estimate is about 30 percent of their time. That is 30 percent of time that could be going to dealing with research needs from stock assessments, and it's 30 percent of time that could be refining QA/QC procedures. That is a huge sink, and so I won't weigh-in on the implications of the wording, and I won't weigh-in on any of that, but just for the notion of

having a tool that incentivizes people reporting honestly and people reporting on time, this could be a very valuable tool.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Bonnie.

MR. BOWEN: I was going to speak to Mel's point about the compliance. Yes, we do not have reporting requirements for the for-hire sector now, but it's definitely coming, and, if he wants to look at the Gulf compliance versus the South Atlantic right now, I think that would be an interesting look.

To Chester's comments about the fifty-three commenters, I would be curious to see how many of those are federal for-hire permit holders now, and I would think that it's probably not many. As far as the stakeholders, the majority of the stakeholders in my state want a moratorium and want a limited entry program, and I will stop with that for now.

MR. HARTIG: I come at this a little bit differently. I mean, observing what has happened in the South Atlantic over the years and the good old days when we had a lot of fish available and we had a certain productivity thought about how much we could actually harvest, over the recent years, we have found out that that productivity is very much less than what we thought about in the past.

In fact, it's so much to the point now that we started out with bag limits for the recreational fisheries, and now we're talking about vessel limits in the recreational fisheries, and now we're talking about a one per vessel limit for snowy grouper in the recreational fishery for one of our bag limits. The point I was trying to get at is I'm not interested in reducing, but I would like to cap the number of entrants, to try and match the effort needed to harvest the available resources in the South Atlantic, the available snapper grouper resources. That is how I'm coming at it. I would like to see us focus on that part of it.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Ben.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, we're sort of all over the place with this, it seems like, and we've come at this from a lot of places. You know, this has gotten politicized by things that have happened in the Gulf, but I think you have to acknowledge that the for-hire fleet is a commercial enterprise, and, while they fish in recreational quotas generally, they are commercial operations. They don't sell fish, but they sell trips, but they aren't that different from commercial fishing operations otherwise. The need to make a profit.

Reducing overcapacity in fishing fleets is virtually a universal fishery management objective, and it's been our objective in loads of fisheries, and it is not advantageous to have way more vessels than there is demand for. When I look at the South Atlantic for-hire fleet, there are more for-hire snapper grouper permits in the South Atlantic than there are reef fish for-hire permits in the Gulf of Mexico. The reef fish harvest in the Gulf of Mexico is ten-times what our snapper grouper harvest is, I suspect, and so I would not dismiss the issue of addressing overcapacity.

I believe it is inextricably linked to professionalizing the fishery, and, to have a professional fishery, you have to have profitable operations, and, as long as you have overcapacity, that's difficult to achieve consistently throughout, and so these things are related, and I can tell you, from

having watched the for-hire fleet over the last fifteen to twenty years in the Gulf of Mexico, I have seen huge progress towards professionalizing that fleet, and anyone who has been to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meetings has seen that, and it's just undeniable.

Chester brought up the Amendment 30B provision in the Gulf, and we have the same rule. It's in most all of our fisheries. If you have a federal permit, you have to abide by the federal regulations as a condition of the permit. We have that across our commercial fisheries and some of the for-hire fisheries. I won't say it's in everything, but that is a widespread, common requirement that we have with our permits.

Sector separation has come up, and sector separation came about in the Gulf of Mexico largely because the states in the Gulf of Mexico have nine-miles of jurisdiction and they put in place much more lenient red snapper seasons that led to a huge contraction of the fishing season, and it essentially cut fishermen who want to fish on for-hire vessels out of it, and we don't have that in the South Atlantic. We don't have any of the precursors that led to sector separation.

Now, we have had discussions of sector separation in the South Atlantic. We had them ten or fifteen years ago, because we had for-hire vessels that wanted to have their own rules and regulations and things, and so there are a lot of reasons that sector separation makes sense, but the situation in the Gulf is very different.

Now, I doubt that you're going to get much reduction in fishing pressure or catches by the for-hire fishery by doing this, because I suspect you have a tremendous number of latent permits and a lot of overcapacity in for-hire permits, and so I doubt that you're going to have real reductions in catch, and I don't buy that you're going to restrict people's choices. I think there are going to be plenty of charter boats around that somebody wants to book a trip with, but I do think it would, over time, reduce some of the capacity, and I think it would lead to better profitability on the for-hire businesses, and I think that's how you get to a more professional fleet, and I've seen that happen in the Gulf.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Roy. I have Dewey and then Monica, and then I'm going to make a few suggestions.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I tend to differ with Roy a little bit about the commercial and charter boats being commercial and commercial fishing, especially when it comes to reporting and being accountable with permit renewals and being able to see -- If a commercial fisherman unloads his catch at the fish house, there's a ticket sent in by them and one sent in by myself, and so the tracking of the logbook issue is a big thing, and so, if the headboats or if the charter boats had -- If each one of their permits had a number to it and the tracking -- Like right now, you don't know who is sending in logbooks and who hasn't fished and who is fishing.

That would probably go a long way, and, to Bonnie's point, if I thought that by this going forward as a moratorium that it would do a 30 percent increase in time to be able to do some sampling or something to help me out, I would probably be the first one, but I just simply don't believe that to be the case.

The second thing is the issue with headboats, and there is not that many headboats that is probably going to do reporting that's done in the Beaufort Lab, and so I would say -- I don't know the

magnitude, but it can't be that many headboats, because I just don't see them up and down the coast like it used to be, but it's an interesting thing, and I listened to the pros and cons of it, but one thing is the accountability of writing down your catch and what you're catching in the logbooks and some way of policing that. I can promise you if they told you that you wasn't going fishing, or you had a \$5,000 fine for not reporting, people would report, and it simply doesn't seem to be the will there to make them report until some program is done, whether it's reducing numbers or moratoriums.

DR. CRABTREE: I want to be clear that I am not saying that for-hire vessels are commercial fishermen or commercial fishing. They are not. The Magnuson Act defines that as selling fish, and that's not what they're doing. I am saying that they are commercial operations, and they are in this to make money and make a profit. They are businesses, and so they're not commercial fishing, but they are commercial ventures and commercial operations, and I don't think there's any question about that.

DR. DUVAL: I have Monica next on my list, and, Dewey, just one point, and I might have misheard you, but the entire Southeast Region Headboat Program is run out of the Beaufort Lab, and so these are all the headboats from North Carolina all the way through the Gulf Coast to Texas, and so it's everything.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just to bring us back to the law, because you know that's what I love to do, but the Magnuson Act says, when you establish a limited access system, you do that in order to achieve optimum yield, and then you have to take into account a number of things, present participation and historical participation, the economics of the fishery, the cultural and social framework relevant to the fishery, the capability of fishing vessels to be engaged in other fisheries, the fair and equitable distribution of access privileges in the fisheries, and then the National Standards, when you're looking at this kind of system, require you to look at fairness and equity issues and efficiency issues.

I don't know whether you are going to want to bring this back before you again or not, but, if you do, there is a lot of different things that you will be looking at when you try to make your decision as to whether, ultimately, you want to go forward with this or not and have a limited access system, but remember it's to achieve optimum yield, and then you have to look at a lot of things, different factors, that affect individuals.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. Mark, because I think Mark is one of the only people sitting around the table who hasn't had the opportunity to speak. Then I'm going to suggest a path forward.

MR. BROWN: Oh, boy. All right. Monica, I want to ask you a question. Is it possible for us to do a consensus or get some information from the permit holders on what they would like to see done?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: The permit holders, and any other member of the public, have an opportunity to contact you at any time on matters on your agenda, including this, and so you must be -- Chester has talked about the folks that he has heard from, and so maybe you need to tell me a little bit more of what you're thinking about.

MR. BROWN: I was talking about people that are already in the industry, people that are current participants. When John was talking about the amount of permits and that it has increased, it didn't seem like it had really skyrocketed. It just seemed like there was just a few more permits that has increased over a period of time, and so it's kind of at a stable amount, and so should we just go ahead and get some sort of a consensus from the ones from a period of time and just see what their idea is of what they would like to see done?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: You are not required to take a referendum or anything like that. It's not that sort of thing. You are asking really whether you want to take a survey and poll these individuals to see what they want?

MR. BROWN: Correct, yes.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I imagine that you could probably do that, and we could figure out how to get it done. We might have to jump through some hoops to get that done, and I'm not sure. You have asked me that question before, and I'm sorry that I haven't responded. It keeps popping up on my calendar to look at, and then other things take the place of it, but I think that you've asked me before about what are the requirements to basically survey or poll all the permit holders right now. We probably would have to go through the Paperwork Reduction Act requirements, but we could figure that out, if that's what you wanted to do.

MR. BROWN: Could we like set a period of time? Could we put out a notice and say we're going to do it in this period of time, and then whatever permit holders that respond to it, then it gives us a consensus of what they want to do?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I imagine you could do that, and so my question is I guess this council has been talking about this for a number of meetings, as Chester said, and you have a control date out there, and so you don't think that you have heard from all of your constituents yet? I mean, I think the council has been really transparent on putting out there to the public notification of waving flags of, hey, the council is thinking about doing this, and so you're concerned that there are still people out there who haven't responded or weighed-in?

MR. BROWN: No, it's not that. It's kind of like what Zack said though. You don't really know right now who is responding. I mean, we looked at some of the replies that we got back on the exempted fishing permit, and there was a good portion of them that weren't even permit holders.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I would be happy to figure out -- Work with staff and figure out what we could do. We would need to know what kind of questions you want to ask them. That would be very important, and so then that would determine what road we would have to go down to get the authorization, if that's needed, to ask them that question.

DR. DUVAL: I think we've had a very robust discussion here, and I wanted to give everybody the opportunity to speak. Chris, I think you are the only person who hasn't had a chance, and so go ahead, and then I'm going to make a suggestion.

MR. CONKLIN: To your point, Mark, if we did move forward with this document and move the amendment along a little bit, we could, at a later point, survey or poll the stakeholder and maybe reach out to them more, what you're wanting to do, and then we could make an informed decision,

or a more informed decision, and, just as a general statement, there's been a lot of support for this from our AP, and there's been a lot of support for this from fishermen's organizations.

No one has really talked about all the yes's that we've gotten, and all I've heard is no, no, no, but there has been a big outcry for this for years and years, and the charter fishermen have spoken mostly in favor of this, from what I understand, and, as a businessman, I would hate to be at the mercy of MRIP and grouped into a bunch of uncountable stakeholders and be at the mercy of closing down and not having a year-round fishery, and so it makes no sense to me, and I don't understand why somebody would want to continue to be at the mercy of MRIP.

DR. DUVAL: I think it's pretty clear to me that we're not going to come to some resolution here today with regard to moving forward with this right now, and I feel like there's more discussion that needs to occur before we would consider approving this for scoping, and I think this really boils down to what is the council's goal and having clearly-defined goals, and I think Kathy really hit on something with her comments about saying a real purpose statement would be to evaluate the current for-hire sector conditions. That would be, it seems like, a potentially worthy purpose for a moratorium.

I understand, and I know that Anna has made comments about supporting future, I think, data improvement efforts or future logbook compliance, and I think nobody is in disagreement that we don't have a logbook right now, but there is a proposed rule that is going to publish that will put that into effect.

I think the other thing that it seems like folks are getting a little bit wrapped around the axle on is that I feel like people think that any -- We're just considering this document for scoping, and, if we're not ready to move forward with scoping at this meeting, then we're not ready to move forward with scoping at this meeting. I mean, we just spent the last hour-and-nine-minutes on the purpose and need, and I'm pretty sure that you guys are not going to come to a vote on sending this forward for scoping at this meeting.

First of all, we have several other items on our agenda that we do actually need to get to, and we have thirty-two minutes before we get to public comment. Now, there is a couple of things that we can probably take up in Full Council, and there is a couple of things that I'm going to suggest jettisoning until March. I guess I would like to know if there is any further input on purpose and need, given what I have just said about evaluate the current for-hire sector conditions.

MR. BREWER: I don't want to comment on purpose and need. I would like to make a motion.

DR. DUVAL: Go ahead.

MR. BREWER: **I move that we direct staff to stop work on the moratorium proposal.**

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Chester to direct staff to stop work on -- I think it would be the moratorium amendment.

MR. BREWER: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Jim. Is there discussion? Do you want to just provide a little bit of rationale?

MR. BREWER: Certainly. This is contentious, and it's going to be contentious. I am not saying that we stop at all times, but the motion is made more with regard to the consideration of the time of staff, and I have had discussions with some, and apparently they are way more than overloaded to try to get ready for our next two meetings, and so I'm just saying that, for the time being, we stop on this, and we can come back to it at a later time, if there is a real reason that is shown to exist, i.e., the logbook thing goes into effect and we find out that we've got a compliance problem. Then we can come back to it. If we find out that in fact there is overcapacity, we can come back to it. Right now, we're sitting there saying a bunch of what-ifs, and, at the same time, we are spinning the wheels, essentially, of staff, and that's the reason for the motion.

DR. DUVAL: Certainly issues of timing and workload are always discussed in Executive Finance, and I think we have established a system, if you will, of selecting four major items that we would review at our upcoming meeting, and that seems to work pretty well, in terms of prioritizing staff workload. There is certainly a list of items that are in the queue.

MR. HARTIG: **Madam Chair, I would like to make a substitute motion that we table discussions on this amendment until we get a -- What Mark Brown wants. Until we get a survey of the for-hire license holders to get a sense of if they are in favor of moving forward with a for-hire moratorium.**

DR. DUVAL: There is a substitute motion by Ben to table discussion until a survey of snapper grouper for-hire permit holders can be conducted. There is a second by Charlie. Is there discussion on the substitute?

MR. HARTIG: I have been thinking about this for quite some time, because I think, in any limited action discussion, you should be able to get a sense of what the permit holders are actually wanting, and I think this is warranted to go out to them and figure out should we move forward with this or not, and I think that's a defining question for me in this amendment, and purposely to the permit holders, to see their specific positions.

MR. WAUGH: In terms of a survey, if we have to go through and try and get clearance to do a formal survey, that's a long process. We do have another tact we can take. We have a forum set up for our commercial permit holders now, and we can do the same thing for the for-hire permit holders, and that would give us a way to reach out to them. They sign-up on those forum, and then we can get their input through that process. We would set it up just like we did for the commercial permit holders. Only those holding a valid for-hire permit would be able to post, but it's a public forum, and anybody from the public can see the information there, and that would give the council input on what transpired there.

DR. DUVAL: How are you going to do that when there are no permit numbers associated with the for-hire permits?

MR. WAUGH: Well, we can get a list of whatever the Permits Office has. They have something in terms of a vessel name or some information, a mailing address, and we would use that to verify.

DR. DUVAL: I guess my point is just that we just want to make sure that it's information that only that permit holder knows that is not just publicly displayed on the permits site, because I could take that information and go log in as somebody on the forum, and that was just what I was getting to.

MR. WAUGH: Yes, and, Madam Chair, if I could just clarify one other point in terms of staff load. Yes, we have a full load, but that doesn't mean that we could not work on the for-hire amendment and keep that going, similar to what we have done, and I just want to clarify that. I don't want the impression to be that staff is saying that we can't do the for-hire amendment.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you, Gregg.

MS. BECKWITH: Just sort of two points. One, I think it's pretty clear that when our logbook reporting goes live that we are going to have a compliance problem. Assuming that we are not is maybe unrealistic. To Ben's motion specifically, I like the idea of surveying the charter guys, but, if we survey the charter guys right now, we're going to get an overwhelming no across-the-board, because they don't necessarily have anything to look at.

If we're going to survey the charter guys, I think it would be, to a certain extent, beneficial to flesh out a document that at least is coherent and has a range of alternatives that the industry recognizes or understands that this council is willing to consider and put that out to the charter guys. Right now, it's like, hey, do you want limited entry or not, and the answer is an overwhelming no, because they don't necessarily know what is the range of options that we would even be willing to consider, and so, again, if we're going to put this to bed, let's do it the right way. I think this is a little bit like the VMS amendments that we had to go through the process.

There is a lot of conflicting opinions, but bagging this completely without ever finishing the conversation, I just don't know that that does anybody justice and that there's not support from the charter guys, but I also wonder if it's a completely educated opinion and if it's worth this council fleshing something out so the guys can look at the options and say, with absolute clarity, no, we don't want this, but at least we understand what the range of options were.

MR. BELL: Actually, kind of following up on what Anna said, I was thinking the same thing. I am more interested, I think, in the substitute motion, in that it allows us to acquire some more data ourselves and explore this a little further, and it doesn't just shut staff completely down, but, in doing that, Anna has a good point there of let's try to do the survey in a way that it's not just a do you want it and yes or no, but that we actually show them something or engage them in some specific questions and get their concepts, perhaps, and so we need to learn a little bit more than just yes or no at this point, because she's right that -- Well, I don't know how it would go, honestly, but I would guess it -- We could do better than just asking them do you want this, yes or no. Thanks.

MR. HARTIG: Those are good comments. That does make some sense, although, in this case, limited access or not, or a moratorium or not, I'm not so sure that having a fleshed-out document is going to change that many opinions, but, to what Gregg said in particular about a forum, almost every amendment we do, there are people who don't get connected to the process and don't follow us and don't know what's going on, and, after we do an amendment, they go, what in the hell did you do to me? Almost every amendment, we have that happen, and so, to avoid that, if you

contacted all the permit holders, at least you had a chance, they had a chance, to comment on the issue.

DR. DUVAL: Just a point of clarification. If we were to do as Gregg has suggested, you might want to reword the motion a little bit to table discussion until online survey or online forum -- I think indicating that the mechanism through which we would undertake this -- I don't know, and maybe it's just, if this motion passes, there might need to be some additional direction to staff with regard to how this survey would be implemented, that's all, and I'm not suggesting that you have to do something right now.

MR. HARTIG: My point was that I do not want to do what Gregg was doing. That was my point.

DR. DUVAL: Okay. His point is that he does not want to do what Gregg has suggested via an online forum and that he would want to ensure, I guess, basically, that a survey is mailed to each and every permit holder, and that is what he is suggesting. Okay.

MS. KNOWLTON: One of the things that I think is quickly becoming -- Terminology is becoming interchanged that I think is not appropriate, and that is the difference between a request for a moratorium, and we're talking about a moratorium, or does somebody not want limited entry. They are two very different things, and I was very interested in this discussion and to participate in the shaping of the discussion about what components could possibly be in the discussion of the moratorium, because just because something is in a discussion about what you do, again, with that phrase, a time-limited moratorium to evaluate the current for-hire sector conditions.

I don't think we should be talking about whether or not the industry wants or doesn't want -- It's hard to refrain from that, understandably, but I don't think we should be focusing right now on whether the industry, who would be very much affected, of course, by yes or no for limited entry, and I think we should limit right now any direction to the staff based on the idea of components that would allow for that evaluation, either call it or a moratorium or call it proceeding or whatever you call it, but incorporate what Anna has brought in.

I also agree that it needs to be a survey and not a forum. This is a very delicate, political, tenuous discussion, and there are so many emotions related to -- As Roy brought out with your points that we would not have the conditions facing us that are present in the Gulf, and I don't know or where our constituents are on that fine delineation, and I would say take the components that were improved, in terms of putting information on the table to look at between the white paper and this document.

There was a very good consolidation of potential options, and put them just as options for discussion and not that they're going to be implemented, and not that they're going to be implemented potentially through a moratorium, in the survey. There's a lot of good work in this for asking people what they think they would like or not like, irrespective of the legal constraints of a survey, and I think you might meet with some success, in terms of getting a more accurate representation from the various members of this industry, at this point. Thank you very much.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for those comments, Kathy. I appreciate that. I guess that's what scoping is, is putting things out for discussion, and so I will just note that.

MR. CONKLIN: I agree with Kathy and Ben about the forum. We don't need the same three or four keyboard-cowboys out there messing up and spreading bad diseases around, plus anybody who wanted to get on it could just go and apply for a charter permit and get it issued and enter the forum. If we kicked them out, then they could also get another permit and get back on the forum.

I wish, if we were going to do this, a referendum is what I would call it, and it would need to be before the control date, or on the control date, that we have set currently, like Mark was suggesting. As far as that goes, I wish that the commercial guys could get surveyed and have a referendum for all the actions that the council has taken place in the past with us, and so that would be pretty nice, and so reaching out like this is unprecedented, and let's do it.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Two points. One is a comment to what Kathy was talking about. Maybe you don't want to call it limited access, but I think that you're restricting access when you have a moratorium on who can get a permit or not, and so I think that drives you into considering limited access concerns under the Magnuson Act.

The good news is that I have been told by one of our folks at the Regional Office who does PRA that an information collection consisting of one open-ended question to the public, such as what do you think about whatever it is that you're going to ask them, doesn't need OMB approval under the PRA, and so, if we could construct something like that, maybe with an information sheet to send out to the public, that's a possibility that you wouldn't have to go through the Paperwork Reduction Act process.

DR. DUVAL: Tony, very quickly, and then Anna, and then we're going to bring it to a vote.

MR. DILERNIA: You all run a meeting in each of your member states once a year, and why don't you, as part of your listening session, just have one of the questions you would like input on over the next year regarding whether or not you should have a limited access program in the for-hire fleet for snapper grouper and just take the comments there at your listening session? I know it puts things back a year, but, at the end of the year, people from all four of the states will have an opportunity to comment and you can make your decision from there. Thank you.

MS. BECKWITH: I actually don't like either of the motions on the table, because, if we're going to survey or ask for questions, tabling the discussion kind of doesn't let us give the guys something to consider, because, to Monica's point, I can see us hashing something out, because this was not ready for public scoping, but, if we would actually go through the trouble of hashing this out to a place that it was more complete, then the question, the one question, that we ask our charter guys, our permitted charter guys, is what do you think about options paper blah, blah, blah, and you send them a copy of the options paper with the one question, and then they can just review the range of options, and that sort of covers us, and so that is one idea.

I think, if we are going to go through the effort of surveying our guys and we table discussion, then we're doing them and us a complete disservice, and so I sincerely hope that we vote both of these motions down and move forward a different way.

MR. ESTES: This is more of a question, or it is a question. I think I must be thinking about this wrong. I understand that we need to engage the stakeholders that may be affected, and that makes sense. We need to know what they think, but how about the customers? Don't their customers,

the non-boating public -- It sounds to me like what we're going to do -- Maybe I am misunderstanding what we're going to do, but it sounds to me like we would have some kind of a referendum. If the federally-permitted for-hire people say, yes, let's do this, then we would do it, and that seems wrong to me, but maybe somebody could straighten me out, because I might be thinking about this wrong.

DR. CRABTREE: I think of the council as like a republic. It's that form of government. You are the representatives of the states, and you're here to vote and make the decision. We don't normally put things out to our constituents for a direct vote, and so we don't really do like ballot initiatives, like we do so much in Florida.

I am more inclined with what Tony said. If you want to find out what the public thinks, do some more hearings and scoping meetings and things and see what you hear, but the trouble with just putting this out to a direct vote is are people going to really be informed enough about the issues to make a measured decision or not at this point? I know, if you asked me to vote and I was a charter guy, my first question is going to be, well, do I qualify and is it transferable and how does all this work and what happens if I don't report? I mean, they're going to have a lot of questions, and we're not going to have any answers for it yet, and so I guess that I agree with Anna. I am not too crazy about either one of these motions.

MR. BOWEN: I agree with Anna. I don't like either one of these motions, and it sounds like the consensus around the table is maybe we do need to put some form of document out for scoping. I mean, it's not like this is going into law next week if we vote for it. We just want to get some more public input, and we want to have things on paper that we can go through at the next meeting, or the meeting after, and make adjustments and edits and things like that, after we get the comments, and this needs to go to the public so they can hear about it. I hope both of these motions fail, and I will not support either one of them, and I will make a motion after this, if it does, that this does need to go to scoping. Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Is everybody ready for a vote on the substitute motion? Okay. **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the substitute motion?** Wow.

MR. HARTIG: Great discussion.

DR. DUVAL: Great discussion. **No one is in favor of the substitute motion, and so I can assume that everyone is opposed to the substitute motion, but let's just go ahead. All those opposed to the substitute motion, twelve opposed; abstentions, one abstention. The motion fails.**

Then we're back to the main motion, which is to direct staff to stop work on the moratorium amendment, and could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of this main motion, five in favor; those opposed, six opposed; abstentions, two abstentions. The motion fails.

MR. BOWEN: **I would like to make a motion that the staff continue working on this options paper and that --** That would be it.

DR. DUVAL: Your motion is that staff continue working on the options paper.

MR. BOWEN: **Yes, and that we do prepare it to go to scoping.**

DR. DUVAL: Just some clarification on that. I think is it staff continues working on the options paper and that the committee would see this again in March, before voting to send it to scoping? Is that your motion? I am just trying to get clarity on the timing here.

MR. BOWEN: I am trying to incorporate some needs and wants around the table, and I understand that we haven't picked this document apart, because of lack of time, but I am probably pretty sure that everybody at this table has read it, and so I would adjust that motion to say that we take it to scoping, and then we can get some public input.

DR. CRABTREE: I think what we would normally do, Zack, is staff would prepare a scoping document and bring it back to us at the next meeting, and then we would approve it and send it out for scoping, and is that --

MR. BOWEN: That's exactly what I meant to say.

DR. DUVAL: That is the clarification that I was trying to get. You're not making a motion to send it out to scoping at this time, but that we would see it again in March and review it and then move to take it out to scoping?

MR. BOWEN: Correct. We would see it in March as a scoping document, correct.

DR. DUVAL: **The motion would read that staff continues working on the options paper and prepare a scoping document for the March 2018 meeting.** Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Ben. Do we need to have any further discussion on this motion? I think people need to just be prepared to vote, because it's 4:22, and I think there's been plenty of discussion.

MR. BREWER: One statement, Madam Chair. We haven't gone through these options. We haven't gone through a single one of these options, and we're still discussing purpose and need, and how can we possibly expect staff to come back to us with a scoping document when we have given them absolutely no direction?

DR. DUVAL: **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion, five in favor; those opposed, six opposed; abstentions, one abstention. The motion fails.**

I think let me try to help you all out here. I mean, clearly, we have not had the opportunity to go through the rest of the draft actions that might be considered in this options paper, and so I think we would -- I mean, my recommendation is that we come back to this document in March and spend additional time discussing it, and then the committee can make a decision at that point if there are any additional things that we want staff to modify or include, and then you can make a decision as to whether or not you want to take this out to scoping.

I mean, you all just spent an hour-and-a-half, more than an hour-and-a-half, talking about purpose and need and about whether or not you even want to do this and about surveying the stakeholders, and I think it would behoove you all to go through the remainder of the actions and determine if there's enough -- If there's a broad enough range in there that you would want to take out to

scoping, or at least enough questions that you would get the kind of feedback that you're looking for.

DR. CRABTREE: A scoping document can be more general. It can just lay out the nature of the problem and ask the public their views on what would be reasonable paths to address it, and you don't really have to have a whole bunch of specific alternatives. You could lay out that we're concerned about the for-hire fishery and potentially overcapacity and compliance and professionalizing, and we're considering some sort of moratorium or limited entry, and what do you think about that? Then lay out some pros and cons and get public opinion on it. It doesn't have to be as specific as we often make it.

DR. DUVAL: No, I absolutely agree, and I think this document is probably a little bit more specific than some of the ones that we have had, and so I think, if we can take another crack at this in March and say is it too specific for the committee's needs or is it not quite specific enough or are there any additional issues that we would want the public to comment on and refine that, and refining it may mean making it less specific and broader. Okay.

MS. BECKWITH: I just wanted the opportunity to give direction to staff to see if they might include in the range of options some of those ideas that I had kind of placed around, so those can be part of the discussion in March.

DR. DUVAL: I think you're welcome to email staff with any ideas that you would like to see included.

MR. CONKLIN: So we're going to come to a gentlemen's agreement that when we come back in March that we're not going to come right out of the gate with a this-isn't-going-to-fly motion and we can have an informed discussion, instead of wasting tax dollars arguing whether we should do it or not and bring a sound, deliverable document to the public and the stakeholders, which they deserve?

DR. DUVAL: I think the way I would like to structure the discussion in March is similar to how we tried to walk through this right now, but having a review of all of the actions. Are all of the possible things that you would want stakeholder input on included in the document, and I think we should focus on that and then take it from there.

Mr. Chairman, we are just about at the end of our time, and I think I have three minutes, and so I just want to suggest how we might deal with the remainder of the items that we did not get to today, and so strap in. We do have red grouper, and I think this is going to be a fairly quick thing that we can cover at Full Council, because this is the expedited framework to modify the ACL, and so that should, hopefully, take about fifteen minutes.

Golden tilefish, we've already received a little bit of input from our SSC Chair with regard to the updated assessment that we had requested that they received, and the SSC has indicated that they have fallen back to their original ABC recommendations. I think we might need just a few minutes of discussion with regard to where to schedule moving forward with an amendment that would adjust the annual catch limits, based on what we heard yesterday about legal action being filed, and that might influence that, and so I'm suggesting that the golden tilefish discussion could probably be fairly short.

The wreckfish ITQ review, I think that should be super short, and I don't even know if we need to go through that, because, really, not much has changed, and, because of some data confidentiality issues, there is going to need to be -- It's taking a little bit longer than we thought, and so I know that Brian had a short presentation, but we're not going to do that today, and so we'll punt on wreckfish until March.

Then yellowtail snapper, I am suggesting punting on that until March as well. There is a pretty extensive decision document in there, and I think the only thing that John might have wanted to bring up was the possibility of including a commercial trip limit in the commercial vision blueprint regulatory amendment, and so I think maybe we can talk about that at Full Council, if you have specifics that could be included in that document, and I don't want to have to spend a whole lot of time debating what a commercial trip limit action would look like for yellowtail, and does that sound good? Okay. That's what I am suggesting moving forward at Full Council, Mr. Chairman, and I turn the floor back over to you, with one minute left.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 6, 2017.)

- - -

December 7, 2017

THURSDAY EVENING 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 evening, December 7, 2017, and was called to order by Chairman Michelle Duval.

DR. DUVAL: We will go ahead and reconvene the Snapper Grouper Committee, and I would like to pick up with Agenda Item Number 9, Red Grouper, and this is Attachments 8a through 8c in your briefing book, and I am going to turn things over to Brian to walk us through this.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Like everybody else, I've got a real short presentation to explain to you what's in the amendment, but, before we get going too far in this, I just wanted to give everybody a reminder of what abbreviated framework amendments are about. This is the first time the council has had one that they've been able to use this vehicle for, and abbreviated framework amendments in snapper grouper can be used basically to change the ABC, ACL, and the ACT, and that's about it, and so it's a very, very limited usage.

What happened was that you have to give us a very defined plan of exactly what you want to do to be able to use this approach. If you had wanted to consider other kinds of alternatives and all that, then you would have had to go through a regular framework type of amendment, and you would have had actions and alternatives and all that, but you were very clear to us in September in telling us exactly what you wanted us to do, and so that is why we were able to use this approach, because of the clarity in the direction that you gave us as well as the type of action that you wanted included.

The other thing about abbreviated framework amendments is they can go very quickly, like this one did, because, when NEPA reviewed this, it was a categorical exclusion, meaning that we really didn't have to do a whole lot for NEPA other than write a letter explaining that this is okay to do this, and you'll see, if you've looked at the document, Appendix A is a copy of that letter that was the categorical exclusion declaration.

Now, I am not a NEPA guy, and so I'm not involved in calculating those determinations, and there are specific criteria that they have to use, I do know, to help them determine what kind of a NEPA analysis needs to be done, and this one actually got the easiest kind of analysis. We can still use this abbreviated framework amendment approach even with other types of NEPA analyses, but, in general, they would just take longer.

Now that we've done that, here is the background. SEDAR 53 showed that red grouper was still overfished and overfishing was still occurring and not making adequate rebuilding progress. Now, Snapper Grouper Amendment 42 will address methods to get rebuilding back on track, and we're not quite sure how that's going to happen yet. We've talked about that briefly, a little while ago, but that's what we would be doing.

At the September meeting, like I had said, the council gave staff a very explicit instruction to develop an abbreviated framework amendment based on the SSC's ABC estimate using the low-recruitment scenario. What happened was we took all this to the SSC in October, and we got the numbers and everything confirmed, and there's just a couple of tables that are in that document that I wanted to point out to you that are very helpful in understanding what's going on, and to remind you that the sector allocations are 56 percent recreational and 44 percent commercial.

The current total ACL is 780,000 pounds, but, for 2018, it's going to drop to 139,000, and it will go up slightly. You can see how that translates into pounds for both of the sectors, and you can see that it's actually quite a significant drop, in terms of numbers. However, when we looked at the expected effects of the new ACL, based on recent landings history and what was happening in the last three full fishing years, the commercial sector has actually been landing fewer pounds than the new sector ACL that they will be getting under even the lowered overall ACL, and so we don't really expect that there is going to be any kind of a significant economic effect or social effect for the commercial fishery.

That's not exactly the case, or it isn't the case, for the recreational fishery, and measuring the consumer surplus for the recreational fishery -- Now, remember, consumer surplus is what the fishers are willing to pay versus what they actually have to pay, and, in this case, it turns out this is what they're willing to pay, but what they're not getting, and so it's sort of -- In a sense, it's a loss. They are willing to pay this money, but they're not going to get it.

Now, one of the things that I want you to understand though here is that the willingness to pay figures that we're showing you here is as if they wanted to go fishing and they wanted to catch red grouper, but now they can't catch red grouper and so they're not going to fish for anything, and that's not likely to happen in most every case, I would think, and so keep that in mind, and so the numbers that you're seeing for the reduced consumer surplus is basically the absolute worst-case scenario that we can come up with.

Now, it's fortunate that the Science Center folks have calculated out consumer surplus for grouper species for the South Atlantic, and so we actually have a pretty good estimate of what that value is, and so these numbers that I'm going to show you are actually based on science that we have, and so here on this slide you can see that we translated the number of pounds that the recreational sector was going to get into numbers of fish, and the conversion factor is roughly 7.11 pounds per fish, on average.

In 2018, they will be allowed to catch about almost 11,000 fish, and that is over 17,000 fewer fish than they caught, on average, in the previous years. When you multiply that out by the consumer surplus, it comes out to \$1.7 million. As that recreational ACL goes up in subsequent years, the size of that loss gets smaller.

That is, in a nutshell, what the analysis showed. Plus, I also have information in here based on the recreational allocation. This shows what the expected closure date for 2018, 2019, and 2020 would be. It would basically be late July into August is when we would expect those closures to occur for the recreational fishery, or at least that they would reach their ACL, but there is not going to be a closure.

MR. HARTIG: Chris just reminded me, and that's a question I had, and was that analysis done under a three-fish bag limit, or how was that done in the grouper aggregate?

DR. CHEUVRONT: I believe it was. John, did you do the closure date? I know you worked with the closure date analysis, and I don't know if you can answer that question.

MR. HADLEY: I didn't do the analysis. SERO provided that analysis, but I believe it was looking at -- I could be corrected, but I believe it was looking at how the landings have come in, and so looking at historic landings and then projecting that forward.

DR. CHEUVRONT: It was only based on the last three years, and so it should be the three-grouper bag limit.

MR. BREWER: Brian, I was looking at the -- We know that the ACL has had to drop substantially, but, in past years, it looks like both the commercial and the recreational were landing numbers of fish substantially below the ACL, from what I saw, and maybe you can correct me, but I'm pretty sure that's what I saw. Something else, other than fishing, is causing this drop, and I guess it started out with a drop in the ABC, and any idea what that is, because there may be another problem, or other problems, out there that are affecting these fish that's not going to get solved by reducing fishing pressure.

DR. CHEUVRONT: You're right that it could be anything from lionfish predation on young fish, and I don't know, but I don't know that we do know what that is, but all we can control is fishing effort, but I don't know what is causing that.

MR. BREWER: I am not arguing for trying to change the numbers that we have to deal with. We have to deal with them, but I was just curious if we knew of something else that was going on out there that caused a very significant drop in the ABC.

DR. DUVAL: Chester, there has been speculation, and we received -- At the September meeting, we actually received the red grouper -- We received the red grouper stock assessment, and so there was speculation about hurricanes that had potentially pushed fish up further north, and so that led to greater harvest by both commercial and recreational fishermen, particularly off the Carolinas over a few years, and there could be any number of factors that are resulting in these significantly lower levels of harvest.

Now, you heard a few folks say at public comment last night that they're starting to see small red grouper around here again, which is a good thing, and it's going to take a while for that to translate into something that people can catch, but, at this point, I don't think that there was necessarily information included in the assessment that might have looked at -- Other than what is usually done for indices of abundance that incorporates temperature and latitude and things like that. I don't think there was anything else included in the assessment that might be related to major changes in environmental conditions or the Atlantic multidecadal oscillation or anything like that.

DR. CRABTREE: As I recall, it was poor recruitment, and the projections showed that, even if you reduced fishing mortality to zero, it still can't recover in time. If the recruitment remains at recent levels, I don't think the stock can ever recover, and so we've seen really poor recruitment in recent years, and the question is when is it going to go back up? Maybe what we've heard indicates that it's starting to tick back up some, but I don't think we know.

DR. DUVAL: I apologize. I should have said that all those things were leading to the poor recruitment that we've seen.

MR. BOWEN: Also, with this analysis, that was with a May 1 start date, correct? Then I know it's Thursday late and our brains are fried, but, yesterday or the day before, in Amendment 26, we made some adjustments to the length of the spawning closure for specifically red grouper.

DR. DUVAL: We haven't made any adjustments. We've put together some alternatives that, if approved and they move forward, would, yes, make some adjustments, and so I think you could expect those projected closure dates to change should those changes go into effect.

MR. BOWEN: Thank you.

MR. BROWN: Whenever we get to this point about catch limits on this fishery, Monica actually asked a question the other day, and it made me think about it a little bit, and I was talking to Ben, but this fishery -- We don't catch hardly any in South Carolina, very, very few. I haven't caught one in forever. In my opinion, with the decline with the way the stock assessment is reading, this fish should be like one fish per boat per day, and maybe that would help a little bit, but I can't see really having it any bigger than that.

DR. DUVAL: I certainly think that's something that we can take into consideration. We're going to have to put together a document for modification to the rebuilding plan, and we could take it into consideration there. We could -- It really makes me cringe to say this, but we could find a way to modify the bag limit in Amendment 26. There are a number of ways to deal with that, I think.

Then Myra just reminded me that you can look at the fishery performance report for red grouper and see what the advisory panel members had to say, in terms of additional information. Chester, I think we got those in the June briefing book, and so they would have been included in our June briefing book, if you want to go back and take a look at those for some additional information.

MR. HARTIG: Thanks for that. If you go back and look, there is one table, and I don't remember what number it was, but it's pretty instructive to look at. If you look at red grouper, it goes along at a really low level for a long time, and, in the early 2000s, it peaks up, and then it drops off after about an eight-year period, but it drops off to where we were way back here, and so it's at about what the average catch was way back in time, and so hopefully we'll have some additional information in the next year to try and figure out what actually happened in the 2000s, and it's going to take some time to get at all that, but hopefully we'll have some information that sheds some light on what really happened in that time series.

DR. CRABTREE: I would like to make a motion, if I could, to approve the abbreviated framework for red grouper and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Madam Chair, I actually have a draft motion for that, if we would like to project it.

DR. CRABTREE: **I would like to make that draft motion.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Roy and second by Zack.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Let me catch up to you here.

DR. DUVAL: While Brian is catching up, Myra reminded me that we did, in committee yesterday, so many years ago, approve a motion to look at one per person per day for red grouper in Regulatory Amendment 26.

DR. CRABTREE: **I move that we approve the Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework Amendment 1 for formal secretarial review and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate. Give staff editorial license to make any necessary editorial changes to the document and the codified text and give the Council Chair authority to approve the revisions and re-deem the codified text.**

DR. DUVAL: Is there discussion on the motion? I think we've had some pretty robust discussion already. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.** Mr. Chairman, it is 5:37 p.m. I had hoped that maybe we could get to golden tilefish.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Just one more thing about this. One of the things that is not currently in the document is the council conclusions, because the council had never seen the document until today, or until this meeting, and so what we will probably add to it is a very short section on council conclusions.

The reason why we wanted to do that is that, normally, we would be sending a letter in with this document explaining what the council was doing and why, and Gregg brought up a good point to me the other day of that, should that cover letter get separated from the document, you don't have

the council conclusion in the document, and so, even though that cover letter would have some redundant material with what's in the document, we thought it would be a good thing to do to include that, and so I just wanted to let everybody know that that will probably be added. It will be included before the Council Chair reads the document and gives final approval, and I just wanted to let you all know upfront that that was going to happen.

DR. DUVAL: Two thumbs-up. Okay, Mr. Chairman, and so I guess just putting folks on notice that during the committee report tomorrow that we do have a couple other minor items to deal with that might take more than our allotted fifteen minutes.

MR. PHILLIPS: I guess a quick question. My inclination is, yes, go ahead and do golden tile, and I'm guessing that it's not going to take long, and I would rather work a few minutes today and get out earlier tomorrow, especially considering that it's going to be raining tomorrow.

DR. DUVAL: I told you guys not to expect anything easier with Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: She trained me. I don't want to hear it.

DR. DUVAL: We are going to give Myra just a little bit of time to get the yellowtail snapper attachments up, but you have three attachments in the briefing book. It's Attachments 10a through 10c.

Just to bring folks back up to speed, we have already mentioned earlier today that we have an interim rule that we requested back in June to decrease the annual catch limit for golden tilefish, and the public comment period on that just closed, I believe, on that interim rule, but that interim rule is only good for 180 days, and so we do have to take additional action to adjust the golden tilefish annual catch limit, as per the SSC's advice. I think you heard yesterday from Dr. Reichert that, given the second update assessment for golden tilefish and the issues that were associated with it, they fell back to their original ABC recommendation, and so, Myra, I'm going to turn it over to you. I noted the wrong attachments. I completely apologize. I don't think there are any attachments for this, are there?

MS. BROUWER: That is correct. It was a little confusing. I think you started off talking about yellowtail, but we are in fact talking golden tilefish, and so there is no attachment. There is a little blurb in your overview that explains a little bit of the background, and Michelle just summarized that, and so what we need, in terms of guidance from you, is how to proceed as far as an amendment goes and give us a little bit of guidance on the timing.

DR. DUVAL: It sounds like there's already an amendment number, Amendment 42, that would be slated for adjusting the ACL, and is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: The interim rule environmental assessment document that the Regional Office prepared makes reference to Amendment 45, which was the amendment, if you recall, that had changes to the ABC control rule in addition to changes to golden tilefish, because you were intending to adopt some of the guidelines from the National Standard 1 to phase out overfishing, and so it was all together in an amendment.

Now, if you are only going to be adjusting catch levels, you don't need a full plan amendment, and that's what Brian alluded to earlier. This could be accomplished through either a regular framework or an abbreviated framework, if you don't intend to have any changes to management measures.

DR. DUVAL: From what I heard from Ben, it sounded like, Ben, you might have received some input from fishermen or would like to get some input from fishermen regarding trip limits and they might want some modifications to the trip limits.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, I did, but I am thinking maybe we do that when we address what we do after the interim rule.

DR. DUVAL: That's what this is. This is guidance on timing for an amendment to do so, and so I think, if folks are interested in trip limit changes, then we would need to proceed along our regular framework to do so. We could modify the ACL and consider adjustments to trip limits. It seems like maybe that would be the way to go.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, I agree.

DR. DUVAL: Then the only other question I have is for maybe Monica and Roy. Given the news we received the other day about the legal action, which sounds like it would not actually be served until the rule is actually published, the interim rule is actually published, how does that affect our business here?

DR. CRABTREE: I am going to say that it does not affect your business here. I will see if Monica disagrees.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I agree with that. I mean, you should take into account -- You let Shaun Gehan talk, and so you are aware of his comments, and he is likely, he told us, to file an amended complaint once the final interim rule is put out, and so I don't think that -- I mean, that action will proceed on its own little track, but it doesn't affect this amendment, or framework, other than you should take into account the comment letters you received on the golden tilefish interim rule and all that sort of stuff, and so you do what you usually do. You take into account public comment, and then you make your decision.

DR. DUVAL: We received our letter in January of 2017 that overfishing was occurring, and so we need other measures in place by January of 2019.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: No, because it's not overfished, right? That two-year time period in the Act under Section 304(e) is really tied to when you have a species that is overfished and undergoing overfishing, and so what you should do is deal with the overfishing as soon as possible.

DR. DUVAL: Right, and I get that, but I think the Act also says that you need to have some regulations in place to address overfishing at that point.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: You certainly are supposed to address the overfishing, and you should do that as soon as possible. The Act is full of many mentions all over the place -- Many mentions. Sorry. It's late in the day. The Act is full of language all over the place that you should prevent

overfishing, end overfishing, not let overfishing occur, but that two-year time period that you're talking about is specifically tied to when you have a species that is undergoing overfishing and it's overfished.

DR. CRABTREE: I think, Michelle, we need to get this done by the time the interim rule expires. It can be extended.

DR. DUVAL: That is my second question, is can we extend it for another some period of time?

DR. CRABTREE: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: Because, if it publishes before the beginning of the year, then I'm assuming it's going to expire sometime before our June meeting, which means that we would probably need to take action in March to extend it if we don't think that we can get this done.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Roy is right, and you're right. I should have thought about that. You would get an extension period if you took public comment on the interim rule, and the public comment was taken, and so it's likely that you would be able to extend it, and so I agree that the best thing to do, if you want to put in place those permanent measures, is to take action and get those measures going down the road so that they can be implemented before the one-year time period on the interim rule ends.

DR. DUVAL: What's your pleasure? It sounds like we would probably need to see a draft framework document in March, right?

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, I think that's what we need, is a draft framework that adjusts the ACLs and looks at some adjustments to the trip limit, lowering it below what it is now.

MR. PHILLIPS: I know they are talking about lowering the trip limit, but that would be to extend the season, but they're still staying under their catch limits, aren't they? I'm a little confused.

DR. DUVAL: Ben wanted to have some conversation with the fishermen about do they want to make any adjustments to the trip limit, and so we've got two different trip limits. We've got 4,000 pounds for the longline guys and then 500 pounds for the hook-and-line guys. I think, if there is a trip limit, people will fish to meet that limit, and so do they want to continue to fish that way? It just means a really short season, or do they not? I think it would be better to be prepared to adjust those limits through our normal framework. Then, if we don't, we can move forward.

Myra has -- I think this would be a draft motion to direct staff to prepare a draft framework document for the March 2018 meeting to adjust the golden tilefish ACL and consider modification to the trip limits.

MR. ESTES: My thirtieth ignorant question is we can adjust the trip limits through a framework? Okay. I told you that it was ignorant.

DR. DUVAL: That is not an ignorant question at all. I think the confusing thing is we have two different types of frameworks. Is somebody willing to make this draft motion?

MR. HARTIG: I move to direct staff to prepare a draft framework document for the March 2018 meeting to adjust the golden tilefish ACL and consider modification to the trip limits.

DR. DUVAL: Seconded by a lot of people. Chris was the first one that I saw. Is there any other discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

Mr. Chairman, I think that's all the business that I am going to squeeze out of these people today, and so I -- Except my staff member is saying time-out.

MS. BROUWER: Just some clarifying questions. If we do a framework, I suppose we still have to go through scoping, and this is directed towards, I guess, Monica and Roy. Is your intent for us to have prepared a scoping document for this framework amendment by the March meeting, because, if you want a full-blown framework that's all polished and pretty for you to approve, I don't think we can make that happen by March.

DR. DUVAL: Can we not scope at the March council meeting?

DR. CRABTREE: I think you can, and I think, if you vote to bring in the document to review and choose preferreds in March and take public comment on it, then we could come back in June and vote it up, and we should be able to get it done on time.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so the intent would be for this to be approved at the June meeting?

DR. DUVAL: Final approval at the June meeting.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you.

DR. DUVAL: Anything else on golden tilefish? All right. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I yield the floor back to you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 7, 2017.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Amanda Thomas
December 21, 2017

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2017 COMMITTEES (continued)

SNAPPER GROUPER

✓ 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
LCDR Jeremy Montes
✓ 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
Jessica McCawley
Staff contact: Gregg Waugh

SPINY LOBSTER

Jessica McCawley, Chair
Ben Hartig, Vice-Chair
Chester Brewer
Chris Conklin
Roy Crabtree
LCDR Jeremy Montes
Staff contact: Christina Wiegand

[Go to Top](#)

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2017 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

COUNCIL CHAIR

Charlie Phillips
Phillips Seafood/Sapelo Sea Farms
1418 Sapelo Avenue, N.E.
Townsend, GA 31331
912/832-4423 (ph); 912/832-6228 (f)
Ga_capt@yahoo.com

VICE-CHAIR

Mark Brown
3642 Pandora Drive
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29466
843/881-9735 (ph); 843/881-4446 (f)
capt.markbrown101@gmail.com

✓ Robert E. Beal
Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission
1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 20001
703/842-0740 (ph); 703/842-0741 (f)
rbeal@asmfc.org

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)
zackbowensafmc@gmail.com

W. Chester Brewer
250 Australian Ave. South
Suite 1400
West Palm Beach, FL 33408
561/655-4777 (ph)
wcbsafmc@gmail.com

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

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

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

2017 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP (continued)

Doug Haymans
Coastal Resources Division
GA Dept. of Natural Resources
One Conservation Way, Suite 300
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687
912/264-7218 (ph); 912/262-2318 (f)
haymanssafmc@gmail.com

Dr. Wilson Laney
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Atlantic Fisheries Coordinator
P.O. Box 33683
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617
(110 Brooks Ave
237 David Clark Laboratories,
NCSU Campus
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617)
919/515-5019 (ph)
919/515-4415 (f)
Wilson.Laney@fws.gov

Jessica McCawley
Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
2590 Executive Center Circle E.,
Suite 201
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850/487-0554 (ph); 850/487-4847(f)
jessica.mccawley@myfwc.com

U.S. Coast Guard
Seventh Coast Guard District
Enforcement Branch (DRE)
305/415-6788(ph); 305/710-4569(c)
Jeremy.J.Montes@uscg.mil

Deirdre Warner-Kramer
Office of Marine Conservation
OES/OMC
2201 C Street, N.W.
Department of State, Room 5806
Washington, DC 20520
202/647-3228 (ph); 202/736-7350 (f)
Warner-KramerDM@state.gov

[Go to Top](#)

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
COUNCIL STAFF

Executive Director

✓ Gregg T. Waugh
gregg.waugh@safmc.net

Deputy Director – Science & Statistics

✓ John Carmichael
john.carmichael@safmc.net

Deputy Director - Management

✓ Dr. Brian Cheuvront
brian.cheuvront@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist

✓ Myra Brouwer
myra.brouwer@safmc.net

Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator

Cindy Chaya
cindy.chaya@safmc.net

Purchasing & Grants

✓ Kimberly Cole
kimberly.cole@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist

✓ Dr. Chip Collier
chip.collier@safmc.net

Administrative Officer

✓ Mike Collins
mike.collins@safmc.net

Outreach Specialist

✓ Kelsey Dick
Kelsey.dick@safmc.net

Fishery Biologist

✓ Dr. Mike Errigo
mike.errigo@safmc.net

Fishery Economist

✓ John Hadley
john.hadley@safmc.net

Outreach Specialist

✓ Kathleen Howington
Kathleen.howington@safmc.net

Public Information Officer

✓ Kim Iverson
kim.iverson@safmc.net

Senior Fishery Biologist

✓ Roger Pugliese
roger.pugliese@safmc.net

Outreach Specialist

✓ Cameron Rhodes
Cameron.rhodes@safmc.net

Financial Secretary

Suzanna Thomas
suzanna.thomas@safmc.net

Fishery Citizen Science Program Manager

✓ Amber Von Harten
amber.vonharten@safmc.net

Fisheries Social Scientist

✓ Christina Wiegand
Christina.wiegand@safmc.net

SEDAR Coordinators

Dr. Julie Neer - julie.neer@safmc.net
Julia Byrd - julia.byrd@safmc.net

[Go to Top](#)

CDR Trish Bennett
Dr. Jack McGovern
Monica Smit-Brunello
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Jim Estes
Erica Burgess
Kathy Knowlton
Rick DeVactor
Dr. Marcel Reichert
Vikhi Mantel
Dr. Erik Williams
Dr. Mike Larkin
David Moss
Sean Degan
Nikolai Klabanski

Attendee Report: SAFMC Council Meeting - Day 2 (Tuesday 12/5/17)

Last Name	First Name	Email Address
Abeels	Holly	holly.abeels@gmail.com
Bell	Mel	bellm@dnr.sc.gov
Bennett	Patricia	patricia.m.bennett@uscg.mil
Bianchi	Alan	Alan.Bianchi@ncdenr.gov
Blow	Wes	wesamy2000@cox.net
Bonura	Vincent	SailRaiser25C@aol.com
Bowen	Zack	fishzack@comcast.net
Brown	Mark	capt.markbrown@comcast.net
Buckson	Bruce	bruce@buckson.net
Burgess	Erika	erika.burgess@myfwc.com
Burton	Michael	michael.burton@noaa.gov
Byrd	Julia	julia.byrd@safmc.net
Byrd	Julia	juliabyrd@safmc.net
Cheshire	Rob	rob.cheshire@noaa.gov
Christophoe	Michael	mchristopher@elementalmethods.com
Clarke	Lora	lclarke@pewtrusts.org
Conklin	Chris	conklincc@gmail.com
Cross	Tiffanie	tahtg6@gmail.com
DeVictor	Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov
DiLeone	Alisha	alisha.dileone@noaa.gov
Diaz	Dale	Saltwaterlife@live.com
Erwin	Gwen	gwen.erwin@myfwc.com
Ezzard	Anne	annie.ezzard@myfwc.com
Foss	Kristin	kristin.foss@myfwc.com
Foster	Dean	dfoster@pewtrusts.org
Geer	Pat	pat.geer@dnr.ga.gov
Germeroth	Rachel	rachel.germeroth@myfwc.com
Godwin	Joelle	joelle.godwin@noaa.gov
Gore	Karla	karla.gore@noaa.gov
Griffin	Aimee	aimee.griffin@myfwc.com
Hadley	John	john.hadley@safmc.net
Haymans	Doug	haymanssafmc@gmail.com
Helies	Frank	frank.helies@noaa.gov
Hemilright	Dewey	fvtarbaby@embarqmail.com
Hildreth	Delaine	delaine.hildreth@dnr.ga.gov
Hudson	Rusty	DSF2009@aol.com
Iverson	Kim	kim.iverson@safmc.net
Jennings	Gary	gjennings@asafishing.org
Johnson	Denise	denise.johnson@noaa.gov

Laks	Ira	captainira@att.net
Larkin	Michael	Michael.Larkin@noaa.gov
Lazarre	Dominique	dominique.lazarre@myfwc.com
Levy	Mara	mara.levy@noaa.gov
McLemore	Mike	Michael.McLemore@noaa.gov
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov
Mishra	Abhishek	abhishekmishra@constonline.com
Moore	Tina	tina.moore@ncdenr.gov
Neahr	Todd	todd.neahr@myfwc.com
Neer	Julie	julie.neer@safmc.net
Package-Ward	Christina	christina.package-ward@noaa.gov
Petersen	Andrew	andrew@bluefindata.com
Player	David	playerd@dnr.sc.gov
Pugliese	Roger	roger.pugliese@safmc.net
Pulver	Jeff	Jeff.Pulver@noaa.gov
Ralston	Kellie	kralston@asafishing.org
Records	David	david.records@noaa.gov
Reichert	Marcel	Reichertm@dnr.sc.gov
Sauls	Beverly	Beverly.Sauls@myfwc.com
Schwaab	Alexandra	alexandra.schwaab@accsp.org
Sedberry	George	george.sedberry@noaa.gov
Seward	McLean	mclean.seward@ncdenr.gov
Shipman	Susan	susanshipman@att.net
Smith	Nicole	nsmith@wlf.la.gov
Stillman	Karolyn	Karolyn.stillman@noaa.gov
Takade-Heumacher	Helen	htakade@edf.org
Topping	Tara	tara.topping@tamucc.edu
Waters	James	jwaters8@gmail.com
West	Katy	Katy.west@ncdenr.gov
Wunderlich	Mary	mary.wunderlich@noaa.gov
Wyatt	Elizabeth	elizabeth.wyatt@accsp.org
brennan	ken	kenneth.brennan@noaa.gov
brewer	chester	wcbsafmc@gmail.com
brouwer	myra	myra.brouwer@safmc.net
knowlton	kathy	kathy.knowlton@dnr.ga.gov
moss	david	david@smoss.com
sandorf	scott	scott.sandorf@noaa.gov
vara	mary	mary.vara@noaa.gov
Bailey	Adam	adam.bailey@noaa.gov
Howington	Kathleen	kathleen.howington@safmc.com
Tong	Amanda	amanda.tong@ncdenr.gov
Walker	Jesse	walkerjesse203@gmail.com

cardin

bobby

finchaser357@aol.com

Tuesday Sign-in sheet 12/5/17

Name	Last	Email	How do you participate in fisheries in the South Atlantic? (Check all that apply)						If Other, please provide more information:
Rusty	Hudson		rec						Fisheries Consultant
Dean	Foster						NGO		
Lora	Clarke						NGO		
David	Bush							Other	NCFA
Robert	Lorenz		rec						
Alan	Bianchi							Other	NC Division of Marine Fisheries
Stephanie	McInerny								
Gary	Jennings		rec				NGO	Other	NC Division of Marine Fisheries
Andrew	Cathey	andrew.cathey@ncdenr.gov							NC Division of Marine Fisheries
Amy	Dukes	andrew.cathey@ncdenr.gov						Other	SCDNR
Bill	Gorham		rec					Other	Lure Manu

Attendee Report: SAFMC Council Meeting Day 3 (Wednesday 12/6/17)

Last Name	First Name	Email Address
Abeels	Holly	holly.abeels@gmail.com
Bailey	Adam	adam.bailey@noaa.gov
Bell	Mel	bellm@dnr.sc.gov
Bennett	Patricia	patricia.m.bennett@uscg.mil
Bianchi	Alan	Alan.Bianchi@ncdenr.gov
Blow	Wes	wesamy2000@cox.net
Bonura	Vincent	SailRaiser25C@aol.com
Bowen	Zack	fishzack@comcast.net
Brown	Mark	capt.markbrown@comcast.net
Buckson	Bruce	bruce@buckson.net
Burgess	Erika	erika.burgess@myfwc.com
Burton	Michael	michael.burton@noaa.gov
Byrd	Julia	juliabyrd@safmc.net
Byrd	Julia	julia.byrd@safmc.net
Clarke	Lora	lclarke@pewtrusts.org
Conklin	Chris	conklincc@gmail.com
Cunningham	Leda	lcunningham@pewtrusts.org
DeVictor	Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov
Diaz	Dale	Saltwaterlife@live.com
Foss	Kristin	kristin.foss@myfwc.com
Foster	Dean	dfoster@pewtrusts.org
Gibson	Shane	shanegibson24@yahoo.com
Godwin	Joelle	joelle.godwin@noaa.gov
Gore	Karla	karla.gore@noaa.gov
Greene	Karen	karen.e.greene@noaa.gov
Hadley	John	john.hadley@safmc.net
Haymans	Doug	doug.haymans@dnr.ga.gov
Helies	Frank	frank.helies@noaa.gov
Hemilright	Dewey	fvtarbaby@embarqmail.com
Hildreth	Delaine	delaine.hildreth@dnr.ga.gov
Hudson	Rusty	DSF2009@aol.com
Hunt	Stephanie	stephanie.hunt@noaa.gov
Iverson	Kim	kim.iverson@safmc.net
Jennings	Gary	gjennings@asafishing.org
Jepson	Michael	michael.jepson@noaa.gov
Johnson	Denise	denise.johnson@noaa.gov
Klibansky	Nikolai	nikolai.klibansky@noaa.gov
Laks	Ira	captainira@att.net
Lambert	Deb	deb.lambert@noaa.gov

Lazarre	Dominique	dominique.lazarre@myfwc.com
Levy	Mara	mara.levy@noaa.gov
MacLauchlin	Kari	kari.maclauchlin@gmail.com
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov
Neer	Julie	julie.neer@safmc.net
PUGLIESE	ROGER	ROGER.PUGLIESE@SAFMC.NET
Pulver	Jeff	Jeff.Pulver@noaa.gov
Ralston	Kellie	kralston@asafishing.org
Reichert	Marcel	Reichertm@dnr.sc.gov
Schmidtke	Michael	mschmidtke@asmfc.org
Sedberry	George	george.sedberry@noaa.gov
Seward	McLean	mclean.seward@ncdenr.gov
Shipman	Susan	susanshipman@att.net
Takade-Heumacher	Helen	htakade@edf.org
Travis	Michael	mike.travis@noaa.gov
Waters	James	jwaters8@gmail.com
Wyanski	David	wyanskid@dnr.sc.gov
brennan	ken	kenneth.brennan@noaa.gov
brewer	chester	wcbsafmc@gmail.com
knowlton	kathy	kathy.knowlton@dnr.ga.gov
malinowski	rich	rich.malinowski@noaa.gov
sandorf	scott	scott.sandorf@noaa.gov
vara	mary	mary.vara@noaa.gov
Howington	Kathleen	kathleen.howington@safmc.com
McGovern	John	John.McGovern@noaa.gov
Tong	Amanda	amanda.tong@ncdenr.gov

Wednesday Sign-in sheet 12/6/17

Name	Last	Email	Mailing Address	How do you participate in fisheries in the South Atlantic?					If Other, please provide more information:
Rusty	Hudson			Rec	Charter/H eadboat/F or-Hire	Commercial Fisherman	Seafood Dealer/ Wholesaler	Other	Fisheries Consultant
David	Bush							Other	NCFA
Lora	Clarke							NGO	
Amy	Dukes							Other	SCDNR
Robert	Lorenz			Rec					
Dean	Foster							NGO	
Alan	Bianchi							Other	NC Division of Marine Fisheries
Leda	Cunningha							NGO	
Sonny	Davis				Charter/H eadboat/F or-Hire	Commercial Fisherman			
Jim	Waters							Other	
BILL	GORHAM			Rec				Other	LURES
CHRIS	MCCAFFIT Y					Commercial Fisherman			
Bill	Kelly							Other	Commercial Fshing Representative

Public Comment Sign-in 12/6/17

Name	Last	Will you make a public comment tonight? (If you are unsure and check 'Not Sure', your name will be called at the end of the session if you would like to speak.)
Rusty	Hudson	Yes
David	Bush	Not Sure
Gary	Jennings	Yes
Sonny	Davis	Yes
BILL	GORHAM	Not Sure
CHRIS	MCCAFFITY	Yes
JAMES	HOLDEN	Yes
Jack	cox	Yes