

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SHRIMP COMMITTEE**

**The Shores Resort & Spa  
Daytona Beach Shores, Florida**

**June 11, 2024**

### **Transcript**

#### **Shrimp Committee**

Laurilee Thompson, Chair  
Trish Murphey, Vice Chair  
Dr. Carolyn Belcher  
Andy Strelcheck

Gary Borland  
Amy Dukes  
Jessica McCawley  
Spud Woodward

#### **Council**

Tim Griner  
Judy Helmey  
Kerry Marhefka

Tom Roller  
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Dr. Julie Neer  
Dr. Mike Schmidtke  
Nick Smillie  
Suzanna Thomas  
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#### **Attendees and Invited Participants**

Dr. Clay Porch  
Shepherd Grimes  
Dr. Kelsy Banks  
Monica Smit-Brunello  
Sonny Gwin

Rick DeVictor  
Nikhil Mehta  
Mike Merrifield  
Jennifer Lee  
Dr. Carissa Gervasi

#### **Observers and Participants**

Other observers and participants attached.

The Shrimp Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at The Shores Resort & Spa, Daytona Beach Shores, Florida, on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Laurilee Thompson.

MS. THOMPSON: We'll start out with the approval of the agenda. It's in your packet, and does anybody have any changes that they want to make to the agenda? If not, can I have a motion for approval of the agenda?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Who is on the committee? Can you say who is on the committee?

MS. THOMPSON: Who is on the Shrimp Committee? The whole council is.

DR. BELCHER: No, it's not, and so committee members are Laurilee Thompson, who is chair, and Trish Murphey is vice chair, Carolyn Belcher, Gary Borland, Lieutenant Marisa Kraiss, Amy Dukes, Jessica McCawley, Andy Strelcheck, and Spud Woodward.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay. Those people. Do you guys -- Are you okay with the agenda? Okay. No problems with the agenda? Okay. Moving on, we'll go ahead and let Mike Merrifield, who is the chair of the Deepwater Shrimp AP, give the AP report.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay. First of all, thank you for letting me give you the report on the advisory panel for the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp, which I am the chair of the Deepwater Shrimp AP, and have been for a lot of years. The first thing that we covered in the meeting was the citizen science update. We had a presentation given by Julia Byrd, and she was -- She is collecting a lot of information through pictures and different historical items, and the shrimp committee actually -- They said they do have some historical pictures of some catch, and things like that, that might be of assistance to her in the area of shrimp, and so I don't know if anybody submitted any at the end of that meeting, but they offered that up. The fish, which was part of the FISHstory, the volunteers are analyzing historical photos.

Updates for Coral Amendment 10, here we are again. We went over the history of Coral Amendment 10, and basically what happened there is that it was submitted, and then it was approved at the December 2021 meeting, and then it was sent to NOAA and rejected, for various reasons, and so it went back to the council, and they agreed to resubmit with some missing information, and it was adding some information that was requested for that to be resubmitted, and I think that's -- I don't know if that's going to be looked at again here today.

Let's see. The regular use of area would -- Okay, and so the area that we're talking about in Coral Amendment 10 is the southeast edge of the northern expansion of the Oculina Coral HAPC, and this area -- Let me go back and just kind of give you an idea of where this came from, and so, basically, VMS became mandatory in 2003, and there was a lot of concern about -- The fishermen had a lot of concern about being tracked and the resistance to the additional cost that was put on them for this, but they were told that this would identify where they were fishing, and it would prevent further restrictions on the areas that they were utilizing.

The initial area that was proposed in Coral Amendment 8 was like twice the size of what it currently is today, and it turns out that the VMS was actually a great tool to be able to show where

they fished, so that we could actually hone down the size of the northern expansion to not include as much of the area where they were fishing as possible.

If you look at the VMS plots on some of the charts, you will see that there are -- There is -- So in 2003 is when the VMS went into place, and, for over ten years, they had been fishing in that area with VMS, and you can see that they indeed were fishing around the coral bank that was there, and not in it, and so the VMS, in that regard, was a blessing for them, to reduce down the size to what -- To not include where they were fishing. Most of the places that were taken away by the existence of the new HAPC were not of concern to the fishermen.

However, in 2014, in the council meeting in Jacksonville, many of the rock shrimpers came to make a plea for this one specific area that we're talking about in Coral Amendment 10. The reason I'm kind of giving this history is because there's a lot of new faces, mostly new faces, here that don't really understand how we got to where we are today, and so this is a long history, of which I've been involved in for about ten or twelve years now, but a lot of people do not know this background.

They were told the amendment could not be delayed at the time, but that it would be brought up at a later time, and reviewed and addressed at that time. Thanks to council member Charlie Phillips in 2015, and he made sure that it was put on the schedule to be reviewed.

Then there's a series of events that occurred from there to where we got to, and we put together the coordinates for what we're looking at today for Coral Amendment 10, and we've presented those twice, and it was approved twice, but the second time it was -- It was rejected, or the first time it was rejected, and now it's reviewed again and voted on and approved, and it was approved to be resubmitted. There is probably -- I'm kind of paraphrasing a lot there, but there's a lot of history involved in this.

In Coral Amendment 10, we were asked about how much that area -- How important that area was to us in the meeting, and, basically, it says here that regular use of the area would be variable, due to the nature of the fishery, and so you have an inshore and offshore fishery for rock shrimp on both sides of the Oculina Bank, and that depends primarily on water temperature. There is actually a few factors involved in it, but, early in the season, it typically happens inshore, whereas, later in the season, and after hurricanes and water temperatures change, you'll see it more on the offshore side, and so, depending on the year, you may have an incredibly productive season offshore, or you may not, and you really don't know, but, if you don't have an inshore season, typically you'll have an offshore season, and that becomes incredibly important to the fishery.

It says shrimpers noted that they did not interact with the coral when the area was previously open, and so, like I said, for the ten years prior to this expansion of the northern HAPC, the VMS show specifically where it is that they operated this fishery, and it's on the offshore side or on the inshore side of where the boundary ended up being, except for in a few places, and this particular place is the place that was of most concern to the rock shrimp fishermen.

Due to sea conditions and currents, only experienced fishermen tend to trawl within the area, and so the offshore side is a -- It's deeper, and it has a lot more complexity to it, and so there's not as many fishermen that will actually fish the offshore side, and, typically, it's more experienced fishermen, and they know how to handle their gear in that environment, and they know how to

approach the boundaries without crossing over the boundaries and getting into any areas they're not supposed to be, and so it's a subset of the total fishermen.

Typical trawls tend to take place roughly 1,200 yards away from the pinnacles, and roughly about 300 yards, or I think it's greater than 300 yards, away from the base of the pinnacles, and so there's a lot of -- If you look at the previous minutes of our meetings with the Coral AP, there's a lot of discussion about buffer zones and sediment suspension and things like that, and so there's a lot of talk about the gear, and how much the gear touches the bottom, and this is not a dredging effort. This is an effort where the gear skims the bottom with tickler chain, which causes the shrimp to jump up and go back into the net, but dragging the cod end of the net on the bottom is not -- That tears the gear. That just tears the gear up, and getting anywhere close to obstructions also puts your gear, and your vessel, at risk, and so they have always been very careful about how close they get to the pinnacles, or near the pinnacles, and they always leave a buffer zone, to allow extra space. I think that's pretty much everything that we talked about for Coral Amendment 10. Any questions, or go on?

One more thing before we go on to fishery disaster, although this kind of plays into the fishery disaster, is that the white shrimp, brown shrimp, pink shrimp, and red shrimp fisheries are being impacted incredibly by imports, and so they're proportionally impacted by the amount of shrimp product that is being farmed or caught around the world, and so white shrimp is farmed just about everywhere, and the world is producing so much white shrimp, and we are ground-zero for importing white shrimp.

White shrimp prices are impacted the most, and pink shrimp is less, because it's not farmed, but, because of the glut of white shrimp, it is impacting the pink shrimp price as well. Reds are not farmed either, but they are produced out of Argentina, at a very low cost, shipped to China, processed, and then shipped back into this country. I saw them yesterday in Publix, or a local grocery store, and you can strike the world "Publix".

White shrimp, today, the sixteen-to-eighteen price, unbelievably, is less than half of what the current published rock shrimp price is going to be. That's unheard of. Rock shrimp prices started out at twenty-five cents, fifty cents, if it was even kept, and now it's more than double the price of a sixteen-to-eighteen white shrimp, and so the white shrimp price is probably in the -- That goes back to the 1970s, or maybe earlier, when fuel was less than fifty-cents a gallon. Today, the fuel price is greater than \$3 a gallon. Grocery prices are up, gear prices are up, insurance is up, maintenance is up, and crew share is down, and so this is survival mode for a lot of the vessels.

A lot of the vessels are tied up. There is a less effort today, because there is no price. You cannot pay for a trip, and so, when we talk about some of the information we're going to talk about later, I think there's less effort that needs to play into that as well. Okay.

We can go on to fisheries disaster, which we have happening right now, but the problem that we have right now is this is a financial, or economic, disaster, and it's not a resource disaster, and so we have plenty of resource, but we don't have market. We don't have the economic ability to finish, and so there's a lot that we don't qualify for, and so the shrimp fishery is facing many challenges, including low prices and foreign product.

Shrimp annual consumption is 1.6 billion pounds in this country, and, last year, we imported 1.9 billion pounds. That leaves little place for a domestic product, and so we're not protecting our domestic production in our markets. While imports of shrimp from certain countries already have tariffs, they do not directly aid domestic fishermen, and so a lot of the tariff money is not trickling down to the industry.

The AP recommended that the council aid in making the connections between fishermen, the industry, and the agencies, or legislators, and have the ability to provide support. We know that this is not in the council's purview, but we are asking for more cross-agency interactions, and so these are the fisheries that you manage, and they're being impacted incredibly, and there are other agencies that could be brought into the picture to try to make some remedies to the situation that we're in, whether that's tariff rate quotas, which the Department of Agriculture uses for sugar, and for dairy products, for a number of products, and the whole reason for a tariff rate quota is to protect the domestic production, so we do have some domestic food production in some areas. I mean, if we don't have any domestic food production, we are leaving ourselves completely vulnerable to the rest of the world that we're importing from. I think that's it for that.

We talked about -- Chip gave us a presentation on the white and rock shrimp fishery performance report, and I've kind of hit a lot of those things already, but the -- It's been developed for several years in the South Atlantic species, and the intent of the report is to assemble information from AP members experienced in observations on the water, and in the marketplace, to complement scientific and landings data.

Additional input was received from Pat Geer and Sonny Gwin on the development of shrimp fisheries off of Virginia and Maryland, which I thought was interesting, and so this just points to the fact that we are seeing some northern movement of the white shrimp population, and so you're seeing a lot more production out of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and now up into Virginia, and so we're seeing a lot more production north.

We received an overview of the draft white and rock shrimp Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation, the SAFE report, and the SAFE report included information on life history, stock criteria and population abundance, and economic and social trends for both species. We suggested some of the following, to include the diesel prices comparatively, so that you can kind of see how that impacts production, because, if the diesel price is too high, it definitely limits when someone can go out. You can't go out on a whim, what they used to call scrapping, where you go out and just scrap and try to find what you can find, and you can't afford to do that today.

Socioeconomic factors drive the fishery, which is what I talked about earlier, all the cost increases and imports. I can't stress enough that the amount of imports are impacting the fishery. The emergence of niche, or alternative, markets, the number of rock shrimp peelers, and so we have processors that process shrimp, and some of those are closing their doors, or they're switching more to an imported shrimp, and we have also --

On the rock shrimp specifically, the Lake Okeechobee discharges have had a tremendous effect, and I've been saying this for years, that the lower half -- The bottom part of the Oculina Bank is being hit hard by the discharges from the Okeechobee waterway that's coming out of Port St. Lucie. We used to -- South of the Oculina Bank, where it starts at its most southern end off of Fort Pierce, it was a very productive bottom for years, and it's been dead for quite a few years now.

Southern Shrimp Collaborative, there was an excellent presentation by Dr. Robert Dunn on some research that they're doing in the estuaries, and where they were comparing the white shrimp, brown shrimp, and pink shrimp from their early stages in the estuaries, and how different ones were surviving based on climate, which is very interesting, and so we had the -- They had analysis of long-term surveys and historic samples, stakeholder interviews, density-dependent growth and mortality, and field samples, and the AP discussed the following.

It would be great if we could have predictions of abundance on a year basis, and that would be beneficial, but it's probably very difficult to do. Predictions could be used to help support domestic product, predicting when there would be more domestic product available, lowering the amount of import product in those years, and the so the point for that is that the way a tariff rate quota works is that we look at the total amount of consumption of shrimp in the country in a year, and we look at what we can produce in a year, and the amount that we can -- Any of the shrimp that's imported above the amount that we can produce, up to the amount that we can consume in this country, is low tariff, but anything that is imported above that, which would be dumping into our markets, would be tariffed at a very high rate, and so we're trying to discourage cheap shrimp dumping into this country.

AP members stressed the importance of fishermen knowledge and to continue to pair this knowledge with the research of fishermen. They tend to be the first ones to notice the changes, and so they're the first ones on the water that know when something is moving, or when something is changing, and so it would be helpful to be a part of that process.

We were then given a presentation by Jennifer Lee on the manta ray and smalltooth sawfish biological opinion, and everybody knows there's an event going on down in the Keys right now with the smalltooth sawfish, and so we're especially and particularly concerned about that, because that will have an impact, most likely, on the fishery. We don't -- It wasn't really discussed, as to what that might be, but so the -- So we have those two issues to deal with in the fishery, and I guess the biological opinion will determine what those alternatives might be down the road, but I do think that the reduced effort that's taking place because of -- I know a lot of vessels that are tied up right now, not fishing, because they can't afford to, and that should play a role in that.

Shrimp Futures Project, we were given -- Dr. Carissa Gervasi gave us a presentation, an overview of NOAA and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's Shrimp Futures Project, and this project aims to characterize the current state of the fishery, in the Gulf and the South Atlantic, to determine short-term, medium, and long-term goals for the fishery and to identify and address major pathways, impediments, and uncertainties moving forward to achieve goals.

Again, I think the imports need to play into this, and we need to figure out -- The industry needs to know who is our advocate and how do we get assistance in the governmental process. Let me just go with the AP noted the following would be valuable for the project, and understanding the grant process, and the criteria for application, would be helpful for those seeking grant funding, and so there's a lot of grant money out there that is very hard for the industry to get, and either it's a very long process, or the requirements are too incredible to apply for or receive.

Scenario planning should include some of the following important points, like promoting domestically-harvested shrimp, and we've been working for years on how to differentiate

domestically-produced shrimp, how to promote it, and I think that needs to continue. Fuel prices, and fuel prices are probably one of the biggest impediments, and graying of the fleet. There's a lot of us that are getting old. I see a lot of younger faces around here, but some of us that have been around here for a long time are getting old, and especially out on the water. These guys are -- It's harder and harder to get captains and then crew, and then, again, identifying which governmental organizations can take which actions with regard to imports and disaster response. Again, who is the advocate, and who is -- In the farming world, we have the Department of Ag, and they are very good about making sure that funding is available when there's a disaster, that funding is available to help either promote our product or to reduce, or whatever needs to be done, and they're very active in that, and I don't think we have that in the fisheries.

Other business, we talked about submarine cables, which is a pretty interesting network of cables that are underground. Most of the shrimpers have not had a problem with that, and their gear is not the problem, because it skips right over any buried cables. The problem is with anchoring, and so it's just -- We wanted to bring it to everybody's attention, and I think I've done it before, but I wanted to bring it to their attention, so they knew where not to anchor and where to be careful of those.

We talked about the Coast Guard proposal for a merchant mariner card requirement, but I think that has kind of gone away. I don't think that was approved, and so that won't impact the industry. Resources and programs, the AP discussed several programs that are beneficial for the southeastern shrimp industry, including the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Young Fishermen's Initiative Workshop, the U.S. Department of Transportation Marine Maritime Administration's Core Infrastructure Development Program, and there is some funding available there for docks and working waterfronts, but the qualifications are pretty intense. The Stan Mayfield Working Waterfronts Grant Program in the State of Florida -- Debbie Mayfield has done a great job of bringing that legislation forward. Then the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and Marine Resources Education Program, which is a great program to educate people on this process. I got through it.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mike. Does anybody have any questions for Mike, before we move on with the presentations? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's not so much a question as I just wanted to react to a couple of things that were in there, and so, on the fishery disaster stuff, and really more on the tariff component of it, I guess I was just curious if this committee, the council, wanted to send some letter, and I'm not even sure who the letter would go to, and like does it go to Congress, or does it go to the USDA, but the discussion that the AP had about the tariffs, and, as I understand it, it would be implementing a program for shrimp, or seafood in this case, that is similar to a program that USDA already has, and is that right, Mike? Can you talk about that just a little bit more?

MR. MERRIFIELD: I looked at the -- If you do the research, you will see that sugar has -- USDA has done a great job in managing sugar imports into this country, so that our domestic production can survive, and so it looks at protecting that, so that those tariffs are -- It's too easy to dump product into this country, and I don't know where the regulations are that are monitoring the amount of product that's being imported into this country, but there don't seem to be any restrictions. I mean, we have regulations about inspecting product, and less than 2 percent of the product that comes into this country is inspected, and there are rejections.

Every month, there are rejections of containers of shrimp, and they're trying to make changes now to where those rejections will be destroyed. Right now, what happens is they get sent back, moved to another country, and then come back in from another door, and so there's this shell game that you can't control what's going on in other countries, I mean, and there's been this huge push for farming of shrimp around the world, which is great, and we're producing food, but we need to protect our domestic industries. We can't be completely reliant on imported product, and so a tariff rate quota looks at what we can produce, protects it, and then it manages what is being imported, which we're not doing right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then I guess the question is for you, Laurilee. Are you thinking that -- Because, in the Gulf states, including FWC, we were at the table, and we met with some of the tariff folks about the existing tariff laws, and their -- It didn't fall under dumping, and it didn't fall under some of the existing laws, and I think that laws would have to be changed, relative to tariffs, in order for shrimp to kind of be brought into this process. Laurilee, are you thinking that the committee, the council, should send a letter about this, requesting a change, in order to try to help the fishery, and is that what you're hoping comes from that discussion? I am just trying to help move this along and, you know, help understand how this council can help here.

MS. THOMPSON: Well, I am like you, and I don't know who you would send it to, and I think Congress. I think Congress is the body that controls tariffs and things like that, and I think Mike's example of the sugar corporations, and how the farmers and I guess the USDA, and I'm not sure, but somebody has very successfully crafted a way to help U.S. sugar farmers survive, and that's what we're talking about. We're talking about the survival of this industry, and I think, you know, Mike's suggestion of, you know, a cap -- I mean, we can figure out how much the U.S. fleet can produce, and then allow enough imports over and above what the U.S. fleet can produce, because the U.S. fleet can't produce enough seafood for all the seafood restaurants, and there has to be some imports, but we've got to get past this situation where other countries are just dumping product into our country.

That has to be stopped, and I think the only way that it can be done is through Congress, and I don't think there's any organization -- I don't think NOAA can help us, and I don't -- It's got to be done through Congress, and we need maybe some leadership in Congress that is willing to take on and craft a bill, like they did with the shark fins, and see if they can get some traction on it.

DR. COLLIER: When it comes to Congress, you know, we're not allowed to lobby Congress, and so what we could potentially do is put together a white paper on some information that can indicate how much can be produced, at least in the South Atlantic region, and maybe work with the Gulf region to figure out what they're catching over there, in order to develop a document that would be informative, that whoever wants to use it can use it to inform other potential lawmakers.

MS. THOMPSON: Yes, and I think that's a great idea, and we would need it from the Gulf region too, and we need it from the whole southern part of the United States. Then, once we identify how much production our industry is capable of, then we've got something to take to Washington and start lobbying, ourselves as an industry, and not the South Atlantic Council. Mike.

MR. MERRIFIELD: One of the issues with tariffs has been that, because it's such a shell game, the minute you say I'm going to tariff white shrimp head-on, then it comes in as white shrimp

head-off. The minute you say, okay, white shrimp head-on and white shrimp head-off, then it comes in as white shrimp no-shell. The minute you say that -- So it's a shell game, and it's country-specific, and so what I've seen in like the dairy industry, where they have tariff rate quotas -- The advantage of doing it this way is you get to pick the countries that produce the best product.

Right now, we're getting product from whomever, whenever, whatever, and like, from what I understand of the way that dairy does it, is they have specific -- They set up specific quotas for specific countries, like New Zealand or some of the dairy-producing countries, that we would prefer to import from, and they set those quotas based on what can be produced domestically, and so I think there's a way to do it, and I think somehow it has to roll up -- We are under the Department of Commerce, and you would think that this does affect the commerce of the United States, and there should be some clout there to push into some of these other areas, but this is the -- We talked about this in our meeting, this whole of government, and so we need to figure out this whole government and get some cross-communication between some of these areas.

MS. THOMPSON: Trish and then Jessica.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to say that I like Chip's idea of putting together a paper, and it might be good, and to work with the Gulf, because I know they're dealing with the same issue, and it might be good to look at these different, like sugar and milk, and see how they handled it, so we're not reinventing the wheel, and then hopefully maybe we can come up with some solutions, or recommendations, so that we're not just saying, hey, we've got a problem, and help us, and we've got some solutions to come forward with to the Department of Commerce, or whomever, but I think it would be good to do that and to bring some solutions in-hand that we think would work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, and I like the idea of the white paper that explores this. I do think we would need to talk to the Gulf about this as well, but, yes, I like that path forward, and then, on another AP item, and so, on Coral Amendment 10, I saw that it wasn't on the agenda for the Shrimp Committee, and it's on the agenda for the Habitat and Ecosystem Committee, but the Shrimp AP talked about it. Are you wanting some discussion on Coral Amendment 10 here, Laurilee?

MS. THOMPSON: Yes, I think it would be very productive to have some discussion here, while Mike is at the table, but I would, you know, defer to Trish, and I don't want to steal your thunder. Do you want to try to ride-herd on the Coral 10 discussion or --

MS. MURPHEY: I think it would be good to -- I mean, you all had -- I mean, he did present what, you know, they talked about, and I think it would be beneficial to the Habitat AP, or to the Habitat Committee, to hear more discussion here during Shrimp.

MS. THOMPSON: Well, I think we would have to bring Kathleen in too, because she has been working on it, and I'm sure she has her presentation, and I don't know. Is that -- Are we allowed to move an agenda item from one committee to another?

MS. MURPHEY: I don't think we're moving an agenda item as much as we're just having this discussion here, and I don't know -- Carolyn, do you have a feel for this? I just thought, if we're going to have some discussion here, we can carry it over to Habitat.

DR. BELCHER: I'm going to look to groups, to folks, who have had more history with this. I think my main thing would be the clean cut of talking about it within the Shrimp AP. If we need Mike to come up to the table, to help facilitate the conversations in Habitat, it probably would be better there, as opposed to trying to blend Kathleen into Allie's current docket, because, again, I don't -- It could get a little bit farther afield than what we're trying to do with the Shrimp AP right now. It's not that -- We're not kicking it down the line, and we're just bringing -- Mike can come back to the table to talk about it with Habitat, and it just doesn't need to be derailed at this point.

MS. THOMPSON: Mike, then Kerry, and then Jessica. Mike.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I just would say that I don't think the Habitat -- We've met with the Coral AP, and I don't think that we actually got to meet with the Habitat AP, to field any questions or concerns that they might have, and I'm sure they have them, and so I would like -- It would just be nice to be able to respond to any issues that they might have, or questions that they might have.

MS. THOMPSON: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Madam Chair. I am not on your committee, and so forgive me for butting-in here, but I think it may be appropriate -- There's two different contexts, right, and there is the context of this closure and it's impacts on the shrimp fishery, and it's within the purview of the Shrimp Committee to come forward with -- Say if the Shrimp Committee felt strongly that it was important to have a motion to continue Coral Amendment 10, it would be appropriate for this committee -- To come out of committee with that motion, and then have a whole separate discussion under Habitat, where that's a different motion.

Again, I'm not on your committee, and so I can't participate in that way, but, when it comes to Full Council, you know, I feel strongly in moving forward with this amendment, and helping these guys out, and so I think it's really important that what this committee does is talk about the impacts of that area to these people, and then we'll deal with habitat in Habitat.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to kind of start that Coral Amendment 10 discussion, so I'm the last remaining council member that was here during that previous discussion. It was just me and Mel, and now it's just me, and so I believe that Laurilee handed each of you a folder that had some information in it, and one of the documents that was in there was kind of a history that FWC had put together, because our staff spent a lot of time going through the transcripts of the meetings, whether the discussions happened in the Habitat and Ecosystem Committee, in the Shrimp Committee, at the APs, in Full Council, et cetera, but it's really important to me, and we've submitted a number of letters from our FWC Commission chairman about the importance of reopening this area to -- It's a historic fishing area for rock shrimping, and my take, as I've sat through all of these discussions, is the closure of that area was inadvertent.

It was kind of a technical issue, as the industry came forward at the last minute, when this HAPC was being created, and Crabtree was very adamant that we were going to start another amendment, and we were going to fix this issue, especially based on the economics of that little sliver of an area and how important it was to historic rock shrimping.

Mike can get into this more, but, as I understand it, just like any fishery, they're moving around, into different areas a little bit, and so that little sliver is more important in some years than others,

but the council spent a lot of time meeting with the fishermen, pulling together those APs, bringing in all of the folks to talk about this. We did ultimately submit Coral Amendment 10, and then a letter came back that it needed additional information, bycatch, et cetera.

Yes, I agree with Kerry, and I think that it's in the purview of the Shrimp Committee to talk about the importance of that area, which I think is even more important now, because of everything that's happening with imports, and just the state of the shrimp industry in general, and I would love to see this committee maybe end with a motion, you know over to the Habitat Committee, about what we would like to do here on Coral Amendment 10.

I guess another thing that I think is going to come up in the Habitat Committee, and, if you go back through this extensive history, you can see that the council wrestled with this in the past as well, and it was that to try to submit Coral Amendment 10, which is the reopening of the shrimping area, as a coral amendment -- It doesn't really fall within the objectives of the coral plan.

It falls more within the objectives of the shrimp plan, and so, procedurally, there were debates about this in the past, and the council did debate moving this forward for the correction of the area as under the Shrimp Committee, as a shrimp amendment, and I do believe it fits with the objectives of the Shrimp FMP, and so I will just put that out there for discussion in thinking about procedurally how to move this item forward, because I agree that it is challenging to try to make a correction and reopen a HAPC to shrimping, and it seems to go against the objectives for the Coral FMP, and that's why I think it's better maybe under the Shrimp FMP, and so I'm just putting that out there.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Honestly, I've never really understood why we did these shrimp access areas within a Coral HAPC, but Coral Amendment 8 actually created shrimp access areas within the lophelia coral, the Stetson Miami Terrace HAPC, and so I never understood why we didn't just change the boundaries, but that was never an option, and, likewise, when we started talking about Coral Amendment 10, I was confused as to whether we were talking about we're changing the boundaries or we're creating an access area within, but it never got really addressed, and we just went with this is an access area within, and so that seems to be the way this proceeds, and so that's where we are, and we've spent a lot of time trying to come up with this area of importance, and I know it may seem inconsistent, but that's kind of just the way that it progressed, and how we got to where we are today.

MS. THOMPSON: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I hate to keep belaboring this, and I feel like Mike is kind of -- He's being kind, and kind of tiptoeing around this issue, and so, I mean, I feel strongly about this, because I feel like Crabtree and the council, the sitting council at the time, made a commitment to the deepwater shrimpers, who have VMS and all these things, and who came forward with this information at the last minute, and Mike said that Roy was saying that it had something to do with timing, and maybe, but he did say let's go ahead and move forward with this closure, knowing that this one boundary on one side needs to be fixed, and then we'll restart an amendment.

I feel like this council made a promise to fix that, and we haven't been able to carry it out, and I feel like the shrimp industry has been patient with the council, but it's been years, and this isn't fixed yet, and I feel like it was really closed inadvertently, right there at the last minute, when we

had the information, we had the economics, and we had all of the pieces of the puzzle there, but Crabtree begged the council to move forward, and said we will turn right back around, and I will make a commitment to you to look into this, and to fix this, and it's still not fixed.

MS. THOMPSON: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So I'm just going to offer the suggestion that we continue the conversation in the Habitat, because there's nothing that we can do in the Shrimp Committee about this, because it's the Coral FMP, and so the question becomes does coral -- Does it stay as coral, and we work forward, and we do what we need to do to get it through to pass it, and that's the big question, about the things that we need to modify to get it there, and, if it's not the right place, do we need to change where it is and talk about whether or not it comes under Shrimp, but I think the problem is that, until you release it from Habitat, there's nothing that we can really do in the Shrimp Committee relative to that.

MS. THOMPSON: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm fine with that. I agree with all that. We heard the history here from Shrimp, and one thing that Mike said, that, you know, may be something that the Habitat Committee -- It would be this boundary versus access area, and that may be something to discuss in Habitat, you know, as option, and, you know, that may be something -- An additional way to try to move forward, balancing the management of coral and the management of the rock shrimp fishery, and so, if everybody is good with that, we can have that conversation in Habitat.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I don't think the fishermen care whether it's a boundary move or a fishery access area. To them, it's just a --

MS. MURPHEY: That seems to be -- That might be the easiest option to go, is maybe discuss this boundary versus access area, if you guys are in agreement.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I would just hope that we don't kick the can down the road again.

MS. THOMPSON: If we have to do another amendment, and take it out to public comment, it could be years, and, you know, they need to know what's going on now. I mean, it's been -- This conversation started in 2011, and so it's been thirteen years, and it's a long time to wait, and we don't want to wait another four or five years.

DR. BELCHER: Just to that, I don't think that that's -- Again, it's looking at Coral 10 and what can we do to see if we can't make the modifications that were requested to get it back through the pipe to get it passed, or what we need -- How it needs to be addressed, and that's -- Like I said, we need to crack that in Habitat, and see what we can do, and I don't think anybody feels that we're looking to punt it down the road, or do a new amendment, and the question is what do we do about the current amendment, to make sure that it's sufficient to pass.

MS. MURPHEY: That was my thinking as well, and I just figured this was just a modification to 10.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay. Is the rest of the Shrimp Committee okay with that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MS. THOMPSON: All right. Let's move on then. Next on the agenda, we have the Updates to the Giant Manta Ray and Smalltooth Sawfish Section 7 Consultation with Jennifer Lee from the Southeast Regional Office.

MS. LEE: Good morning, everyone. I know you're running really late, and so I'm going to try to make this quick. The good news is it is an update. I'm not going to be sharing everything I did recently at the AP meeting, because I was really catching them up on a lot of what was presented to you last September, and so, here, I'm just highlighting a little bit of the basic information, for the fact that there's a couple of new council members, make sure you remember what's going on, and then highlighting the new information that the AP actually did see before you.

The background here, and a biological opinion, hopefully you all know, is the end product of a formal Section 7 consultation process that summarizes the effects of a federal action on ESA listed species or designated critical habitat that may be affected. The opinion identifies NOAA Fisheries' conclusion of whether or not the action is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of any critical habitat of such species, and it represents the opinion of NOAA Fisheries. It considers technical and legal and policy issues relative to the proposed action, and it is based on the best available information.

The last time we did this process, it concluded with a 2021 shrimp biological opinion that analyzed the effects of our TED regs and the authorization of the Southeast U.S. shrimp fisheries managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. We determined the proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of sea turtles, sturgeon, giant manta ray, and smalltooth sawfish, and then we issued an incidental take statement that specified the amount of anticipated incidental take for listed species, and we did that over five-year monitoring periods, and I'm highlighting, on your slide, just the giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish take numbers.

The key point is that they were highly uncertain estimates, and the manta ray were based on only one year of data. Twelve interactions were documented during that time, and smalltooth sawfish had seventeen captures over twelve years, but, again, it was a pretty small amount of data when we made those estimates.

These are the reasons why we reinitiate, and essentially have to look at the process again. It can be because the amount, or extent, of the take has been exceeded, or we can have new information revealing effects that weren't considered in the last biological opinion. The action can change in a way that causes effects to listed species or critical habitat that wasn't considered, and we can also have a new species listed that may be affected that wasn't previously looked at.

This is the recap on why we reinitiated in this case. We have the amount, or extent, of the taking specified has been exceeded, specifically, since the 2021 shrimp opinion. Giant manta ray mortalities have been observed, and the last biological opinion did not expect any lethal take. Lethal takes have only been confirmed in the Gulf of Mexico, but we do have take records in the South Atlantic, in your region, and we do have some that the disposition was unknown, and so we are looking at both the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.

We also have new information revealing effects of the action. Recent take data, in itself, may constitute new information, but we have some new publications that also contain information that reveals the effects of shrimp fisheries on both giant manta rays and then also smalltooth sawfish that we didn't consider in our 2021 opinion, and so that's why we reinitiated. At this time, we don't have any triggers met for any of the other species, and so we are looking at addressing only the giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish at this time.

Before I update you on the bycatch data, this is just a quick slide showing you what the effects of trawl captures on giant manta rays are. Essentially, they are obligate ram feeders, meaning they have to constantly swim forward to pass water through the mouth and over the gills, and so, when they're caught in the trawls, they are, obviously, severely restricted in movement, and therefore respiration. Essentially, they get compacted, like right against the TED, often, and they can get abrasions, and cuts as well, from the netting. In terms of post-release mortality information, we don't have any post-release mortality studies, but species similar to giant manta rays do have a high post-release mortality.

Here, I'm updating the bycatch data for you. This is all based on roughly 2 percent coverage over the Gulf and South Atlantic, but the coverage in the South Atlantic is less than that, and so that might impact some of our data here. Last time we spoke, I think I had -- Let's see. Well, it doesn't really matter. The bottom line is that we now are up to forty-three total takes, thirty-five in the Gulf of Mexico and eight in the South Atlantic, based on our most recent data. We do have six mortalities, and seven unknown. If you just do kind of some basic, simple math there, you can see that we have an immediate mortality estimate of around almost 14 percent. If you factor in the unknowns, then it could be a bit more.

The Gulf of Mexico interactions, the Gulf of Mexico interactions are occurring offshore of Louisiana the most, and you can see we've got thirty-two off of that area, and then Alabama and Texas. In your region, we have six offshore of Georgia, and then a couple off the east coast of Florida, and, again, most of these interactions are spring and fall. We do have multiple interactions on a single trip, and at night, and the majority are in depths less than 100, and so, just this past May, we've had five, and then one in June, and so that's why the data there is updated just up until last week, basically.

This is just a picture for you, to show you roughly where we're talking about in the Gulf of Mexico, and then this is the South Atlantic region information, and so, in this case, the points look the same, and, as you saw before, the ones off of Georgia were in 2019, and the ones off of Florida are 2021. A seasonal aggregation of adult manta rays visits the Atlantic coast of central Florida each spring, and, while this aggregation has been largely overlooked by scientists until recently, I'm sure your anglers have been aware of manta rays in this area, and they actually use them to find cobia.

The offshore and nearshore Georgia and north-central Florida area is an important area for giant manta rays. Manta rays migrate in large numbers throughout the northeast Florida waters, from March to May, but they can be found throughout the year. Recent surveys have documented courtship behavior and mating scars, suggesting this area could be used for reproduction and foraging or both. I share a little about this information just to kind of highlight that this area actually can be quite important for manta rays. The nearshore waters along Florida's southeast

coast have been described as a nursery habitat for manta rays, and that's based on frequent observations in the area.

Like I said, we don't have a lot of takes in this area, but we also have -- This could be a function of our low observer coverage, and, last year, I think there were only two observed trips off this area, and so I just wanted to share that.

I have already presented a couple of -- Or at least two or three of the papers that are new relative to sawfish, and so the one update for you, really, is just that we do now have our population viability analysis out for smalltooth sawfish. Dr. Carlson relied on several of the recent studies that I had shared with you before, and he reran the PVA that was originally published in 2015. It considers multiple scenarios of population response to bycatch threats. There is high uncertainty in the scenario outcomes, but they highlight the importance of improving our understanding of the life history, captures in fisheries, and associated post-release mortality.

I put a website there, because a full presentation on the PVA was given by Dr. Carlson to the Gulf AP in March, and so, if you want more information on that, check it out, and I also, as you see on the slide, just shared what a PVA is. It's basically a modeling tool that estimates future size and risk of extinction for populations, and it predicts the probability of the populations persisting into the future, and so John Carlson basically updated the last model, which was the Leslie matrix.

I know this was brought up, and so I did point out, with the AP, and you have probably tracked the news, on the smalltooth sawfish mortality event in the Florida Keys, where sawfish were exhibiting strange behavior, and dying in the lower Florida Keys, since late January. They were swimming erratically and thrashing around. The affected sawfish were larger juveniles and adults, generally ranging from ten to fourteen feet.

We are unsure how the unprecedented loss of sawfish since late January will affect the health of the population as a whole, but, if we say even half of the mortalities that we've seen are mature females, that could be a pretty substantial portion of those reproducing females, and so this is, as I think someone mentioned before -- It's certainly a concern. It could have some serious implications for the population and its ability to recover.

I guess the good news is that, you know, the event seems to be waning off, and, you know, we're only getting like a couple of reports in recent weeks. The cause is still under investigation, but the leading theory is a toxin, or mixture of toxins, and, because of this event, we launched an unprecedented emergency response, in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, trying to rescue sawfish. We learned a lot, despite an unfortunate outcome of the animal did die in rehab.

Wrapping up here, where are we in this process? The initial target of having all the information needed for the Protected Resources Division to have what we call a complete initiation package, where we have what we need to really conduct the consultation, we thought we would have that by April, and I'm sure you're familiar with difficulties with shrimp effort data, and availability, and so we didn't really fully factor in the timing of when that shrimp effort data would be available.

The center is working to complete bycatch estimates, and additional analyses, right now, based on effort through 2022. They anticipate having that done by the end of July, and then, once 2023 data

is available, we'll also look at that, but we will, you know, sort of continue forward, once we get the bycatch estimates through 2022.

We'll evaluate that information, and we'll share it with both you and the Gulf Council, and so I figure that your next meeting in September would be when we would actually have that bycatch information to report to you, and then we'll also need to consider any proposed Shrimp-FMP-driven actions that are going on, because, you know, we're looking at the fishery, and how it operates, and then any shrimp action that may be considered in response to some of this key data that we've been presenting and as it still becomes available.

We do still anticipate completing the consultation probably by the end of 2024, or early 2025, but we're -- As I'm here today, we're keeping you informed of any changes, and we'll let you know if our timing changes, and we're just really trying to bring you along, so that you have all the information and are able to understand this ongoing consultation, and the last slide is just a little public reminder here that we do have release guidance for giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish. We did also get them translated. They're in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, and you can see, on this slide here, also how you can report sawfish and manta ray. Our coordinator for giant manta ray is Calusa Horn, and our coordinator for sawfish is Adam Brame, and the next slide is just a photo of that guidance, and so I tried to make that quick, or just talk fast.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you, Jennifer. That was great. Does anybody have any questions? I see that Jessica has her hand up. Okay. We've got a line here, and so let's go with Jessica, Carolyn, and then Judy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Laurilee. Thank you, Jenny. Great presentation, and thanks so much for coming to give us this. I guess I just wanted to understand a little bit more how that mortality event in the Keys would factor into the consultation, or if it would, and then how you make a determination kind of about the shrimp fishery here, in light of that new information, and can you share anything on that?

MS. LEE: Sure. Well, the population viability analysis that we did did not, obviously, include this mortality event, and so I think -- I know us in the region, we have some ideas on getting a few additional runs, basically taking that population viability analysis and having Dr. Carlson run it with a few different scenarios, based on what we've seen, and so that's the answer to that. Then I am blanking out on your second question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So that information that you get from the model, then that factors into kind of what the report-out will be relative to the shrimp fishery in the next step, and so it's like this mortality event from toxins, or this mixture of toxins, ultimately affects the shrimp fishery, and I'm just trying to figure out kind of how you link those two things together, or if you do.

MS. LEE: Thank you. When you're working on a consultation, you know, you're looking at the proposed action in the context of the status of the species, and the baseline, and so that sort of information -- In fact, the PVA also is looking at -- You know, it considers mortality, like the shrimp fishery and things, in that, and so, when we're doing a consultation, we're considering that action relative to sort of everything that is affecting the species going on, and so there is a connection, for sure.

MS. THOMPSON: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Jenny, It's more of a process question. I know, in years past, when we've had observers onboard, obviously we know when there is interactions like that, but the interactions off of Georgia -- Has there been any discussions, either with Protected Resources in the State of Georgia, to let them know that manta rays are being encountered there, because this is the first that I've heard anything about giant manta rays being encountered off of our coast, and so like, from the fisheries standpoint, we have not documented them, in any time that we've done observer work, or fishery-independent work, and so it would be good for us to know, because, when we're asked to comment, we're working off of what knowledge is available to us, and so, if Protected Resources has it, that's great, but I just kind of want to know if there is that two-way flow. I know we report-up when we have our incidental takes, and so it would be kind of good for us to have that information, if it's not accounted for.

MS. LEE: Sure. I can see what communication has occurred with that. I know those observed takes off of Georgia were in 2019, and so I know, when we presented this last September, that was part of our public information that we were sharing, but I will be happy to check, as far as the coordinator talking to DNR specifically.

MS. THOMPSON: Captain Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you very much for the presentation. I have more of a statement. In 1950, and 1960, my father -- We used to catch sawfish, and I remember him bringing them home every day, and this is horrible, but to cut the bill off, and we used to have them in our house, and I don't know whatever happened to them, but we used to have a bunch of them, and then, all of a sudden, he started fishing further offshore, and we never saw them, and do you think -- There was a big shrimping industry in Savannah at that time, and there also -- Not that any of this has to do with the sawfish, but there also was a virus that killed all the catfish, and they were close to shore, and I'm just wondering if there was anything that had to do with -- Because I've never seen a sawfish since 1960.

MS. LEE: So if you actually -- Dr. Carlson, when he presented his PVA, he included some background on sort of why we listed them in the first place, and it shows maps about how their range contracted to, you know, kind of shrinking down, and, originally, there were more reports along the Atlantic coast, as far as like North Carolina even, and then the range contracted. I mean, initially, they were -- You know, nets were a big factor in their decline, and a bunch of other reasons too, related to incidental take.

Then so, really, for a while now, we've had them more off of peninsular Florida, and then, you know, then we started seeing some records that were off of Georgia, and I think, initially, they used to have more of like a summertime flow up, like some species do, but I would be happy to talk to you offline and share some information about the listing.

MS. HELMEY: The manta rays, we used to have manta rays come through, and they would -- It was just amaze us. They would come through on the surface, and now this was in the 1970s, and then they would come through, and then we noticed them again in 2020 and 2021, somewhere along in there, where they come and -- In the 1970s, they would like stay on the surface and feed,

but the ones in the 2020s, early 2020s, they would flip upside downwards and stay under the surface, and I have pictures of them, where all I could see is the white bottom of them.

MS. LEE: They have some really cool behavior, and we did go into that a little bit in the Shrimp AP presentation, if you want to look back at that, but, yes, they use a lot of the water column, and they have a variety of interesting feeding techniques.

MS. THOMPSON: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I know I'm not on the committee, but thank you. I was just going to say thank you for mentioning the historic range of sawfish, because I was about to ask, and I have seen them documented in North Carolina, in historic documents, that they used to be present, and we do have some extensive net fisheries that, back in the day, probably had an impact on them, but, as far as giant manta rays, I mean, I see them routinely in North Carolina. I see several dozen a year, actually.

MS. THOMPSON: I don't see any more questions, but I have some. Would you mind going back to the slide, and it was near the beginning, where it showed the -- It showed the catches over the years. Those captures, to me, just seem outrageously large, and I know that -- You know, you did a good job of presenting this at the Shrimp Committee meeting, and Ms. Marilyn was there, and she made a comment, and, since none of the rest of you guys were there, I'm going to read you what Marilyn said, and, you know, her whole family runs shrimp boats, and they've been doing it for generations.

So she took one boat, and she said, fishing for thirty years, with an average of 182 days at sea, and that equals 5,460, times three sets a day, and so that gives you a figure of 16,380 rig sets, and there is four nets per set, and so you multiply that times four, and you get 65,520 nets that were trawled, with zero sawfish captures, and then so I look at that, you know, and I look at these numbers here, and I also -- What years did this take, for the last five years, and so, at the beginning of the five years ago, there was a lot more shrimp boats that were fishing than there are now.

I mean, we're in a catastrophic decline in the number of boats that are participating in the shrimping industry, and so, in your modeling, are you taking into account the dramatic decline in the number of shrimp boats that are still operating? Thank you.

MS. LEE: Yes, we are looking at recent effort, and let me back up and just first explain that this slide is showing the incidental take statement estimates, and you can see the highly uncertain estimates right under the table, sharing what this was based on, and so this is when we did the consultation last, and we only had one year of giant manta ray captures that we could use, because of some identification problems and other things, and then so this is not -- This is not what we've seen, and this is just where our estimate is based on, that what we had for information for the last biological opinion, which is, again, also why we are reinitiating, because we do have some better data now.

For giant manta rays, and, you know, I have that other slide, later in the presentation, that shows what we have for more recent information, and I did not include sawfish, because that sort of wasn't the theme for this part, so much, but, yes, we're -- I recognize that, anytime with protected species, and rare-event species, you know, on the individual level, people have different

experiences, right, and these are -- You know, the people that fish in the areas, and have that overlap, may have a different experience, and so I appreciate the information you're sharing.

Shrimp effort data, like I said, for the bycatch estimates, we're working on now, and that will update this all, and that will include through 2022, and then, as soon as we have 2023 data, we'll include that, and so we are looking at that recent effort.

MS. THOMPSON: Are there any more questions for Jennifer, before we move on? Go ahead, Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Jennifer, for a great presentation. Just from a logistic question from me. The observer coverage you said was about 2 percent, and is there a standard effort that you guys are trying to get, and is that effort, from an observer coverage, equally split amongst the Gulf and the South Atlantic?

DR. PORCH: I appreciate that question. Our observer coverage is commensurate with the amount of funding that we get, which is a congressional appropriation, and so, yes, generally, it's between 1 and 2 percent. We focus more in the Gulf than in the South Atlantic, simply because there is more monitoring requirements in the Gulf, but, yes, that's generally about it, 1 to 2 percent, depending on how many trips are taken and exactly how much funding we get.

It's the same thing, by the way, for -- We just started getting 1 to 2 percent coverage for the South Atlantic reef fish fishery, and we did that by taking -- By becoming a little more efficient, but also taking some resources from other fisheries, trying to kind of spread the peanut butter a little more evenly.

MS. THOMPSON: Thanks, Clay. Does anybody else have any more questions? Mike.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I'm just wondering, Jennifer, if you're aware of any efforts that are being made for gear modifications, to try to prevent some of this interaction.

MS. LEE: With giant manta ray, I don't believe at this time. You know, certainly they're very large, and so it's going to really take some thinking to think of a gear-based solution. I know, for sawfish, some people have been wondering about some flapless TED work going on, and whether that would help at all for sawfish. It's a little tricky, because some of the studies I think are in areas where there are smaller sawfish, like off of Australia, and so it's uncertain there, but, you know, it's certainly something that folks are thinking about.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Just as an anecdote, I saw, when I was in Baton Rouge for a meeting -- I saw, for the first time, a shrimp net that had a zipper in it, that was specifically for releasing sawfish. You unzip it, and it falls out, and I had never seen that before.

MS. THOMPSON: Anybody else? Okay. Thank you very much, Jennifer. Moving on to the Overview of the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan and Current Regulations. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: So I'm going to be pretty quick. I was planning on diving into a little bit more detail, but I think this is something that you all can do, and hopefully this will be a little bit more readily available for you, and so Mike mentioned new faces around shrimp, and mine is one of

them, and so, as I was learning -- As I was going through this FMP, and really familiarizing myself with it, one of my processes is summarizing amendments and putting that information kind of into, you know, one centralized place for me, so it's -- You know, you're not reading hundreds-of-pages documents to find information.

I thought it would be kind of useful, especially since, you know, we have some new council members, that haven't been around since we've had a Shrimp Committee, and so I compiled this Shrimp Fishery Management Plan overview, and, essentially, it's -- Right now, it's a timeline of each amendment, including the creation of the FMP, with just like a bulleted list, really high points of each action, and then, even from there, bolded and underlined, so you could just read the bolded and underlined statements and kind of get the gist of what that action accomplished.

Hopefully, you know, we'll have this go on the website, and we may tweak it into something that's a little bit more like interactive, where, you know, it's set up more like a timeline, and less like a book report, but I just wanted to make this available to the council, and then, obviously, I put an update date on there, as things change, but we have every action in here listed, out to the most recent one, which was the transit provision amendment in 2020, which was Shrimp Amendment 11.

Again, I will let you guys review this on your own time, just because of time restrictions that we've got right now, but I just wanted to let you guys know that this is now available, and it might be helpful for discussions in the future. If it's been a while since we've had committee, we can kind of reference this, and then, obviously, you know, dig into the actual amendment for more detail, but this is just a tool for you guys, and so that's pretty much all I had.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you, Allie. Okay. Going onto the SAFE Report. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right. As you know, we've been trying to develop SAFE reports for each of our fishery management plans, and so this is going to be the backbone for the shrimp fishery management plan. In future updates for this, what I would like to include is an executive summary, similar to what we had for the snapper grouper, if you remember back to that, where it's basically a list of maybe ten different items, one of them looking at whether or not the stock is overfished, whether or not the stock is experiencing overfishing, looking at trends in the fishery, basically looking at pounds, or dollars, being landed, based on the species, and also information regarding effort in the fishery.

During the discussion with the Shrimp AP, they also recommended adding diesel fuel, and so I have tracked down a source for getting diesel fuel, and that's now been converted over into 2022 or 2023 dollars, and so that can be incorporated into it, but what I want to get from the council is something that was brought up today, and Robert brought it up today, as well as the AP brought it up, and whether or not we should be looking at ten-year time periods or five-year time periods, as far as looking at a trend.

When I developed this draft report, I was looking at ten-year time periods, and it doesn't make a lot of sense for a fishery that is based on a -- Or an individual that only lives for around a year, and so, as we've noticed with COVID, I think we are much more sensitive to what's going on around the fishery, and so I don't think going back for this fishery -- This SAFE report going back to 2014 is very fruitful for describing what's going on in the fishery.

I think trying to go to a five-year time period is what we should be doing for this SAFE report, and so, if you all are good with that, because that's going to be deviating from some of the other fishery management plans that we have, that are looking at a ten-year time series, and I think we have enough landings data, and we have a pretty good fishery-independent index, through the coastal trawl survey, at least for the white shrimp, brown shrimp, and pink shrimp.

We are a little bit more limited for rock shrimp, but we developed a catch per unit effort for that, based on the commercial fishery, and so we have some index of abundance that we can provide to it, and then we would be throwing a five-year time series in there, looking at the five-year time series as the recent trend, and then looking at the overall time period, just to see how things have changed relative to an average, and so, when we evaluate the fishery, we bring it to you.

That's what we'll be looking at. If everyone is okay with that, we'll move forward, and we're going to be bringing it to the SSC in October, and then to the council in December, once again remembering that these SAFE reports are informational, and you don't necessarily have to use them for management, and it's just here to provide you how the fisheries are doing, whether it's the species or the fishery. For the white shrimp, you'll be seeing that the species seems to be doing very well. It's the fishery that is not doing very well. With that, that's all my presentation, and I'm just giving a quick one on that.

MS. THOMPSON: All right. Any questions for Chip?

DR. BELCHER: Just a comment. I mean, I agree with you. Just because of the annual nature of this, that it may not fit the same boxes that we see for finfish species.

MS. MURPHEY: Actually, since it's an annual crop, it kind of crosses my mind that should it be maybe every three years, or is that too much?

DR. COLLIER: I thought about a three-year, and then it made me look into some of the fishery-independent data, and here is the graph for the coastal trawl survey, and you can see it's really variable at the three-year level, going from the -- It's bouncing from three-times the average to three-and-a-half-times the average to below the average in a three-year time period. To say we could detect a trend in there I think would be difficult. Then, if you go to the commercial landings data, total pounds, it's similar, where it seems to be pretty variable.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, I'm cool with five.

MS. THOMPSON: Anyone else? I just -- You've collected the data going back ten years, and so hopefully you can stick that somewhere, so that someday we can go back and look at it and say, oh, wow, look how many shrimp boats, and how much they were catching in 2014, versus what we're doing now, and so don't throw that data out, but I agree that a five-year frequency is better than ten.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so what we're going to include in the graphs will be the full time series, and so going back to the start of the FMP, and then we'll have an additional line on there describing the most recent trends.

MS. THOMPSON: Sounds great. Okay. Moving on to the Shrimp Futures presentation with Carissa Gervasi, from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

DR. GERVASI: Hello, everyone. Thank you for having me. I'm going to give a quick overview of a project we're calling Shrimp Futures. I gave a similar presentation to the Shrimp AP meeting, and so some of this is review for some of you, but we have some updates, and more specific project objectives, to go through, and so this is a partnership between the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, as of now. We're trying to sort of work with everybody from the Gulf and the South Atlantic on this project.

I don't have to tell you all here, and I think you're all well aware of the current state of the fishery, and the shrimp industry is both culturally and economically important, but its future existence is being challenged, due to a myriad of different factors, and Mike went through, in detail, many of those, and so the industry is currently facing both economic and environmental uncertainties, and a traditional management strategy objective is not going to really tackle all of these issues, and so we're taking a little bit of a different approach for this project.

The Shrimp Futures Project aligns with several ongoing shrimp-related projects in the region, including the SEDAR 87 Gulf of Mexico research track stock assessment. NOAA Fisheries' Equity and Environmental Justice team recently conducted several focus groups, throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic, and many of these communities were shrimp communities that they worked with, and so we are working with that team to ensure that we include participation from those underrepresented entities, and then this project also aligns with the Climate, Ecosystems, and Fisheries Initiative, which is going to provide climate models that we can link to impacts on fishing communities.

This project is split into two components. The first is supporting the shrimp industry's present needs. We realize that there are several issues that the industry is facing now that need immediate action, and so the first step to identify what we can do in the short-term is to characterize the current state of the fishery, and what all of the major challenges are, and we're working to build connections with key partners and agencies that may be able to have some effect on these particular issues.

Alongside that, we want to identify some immediate actions and opportunities, such as funding opportunities, that shrimp industry members can take advantage of, and then the second component of this project is supporting the shrimp industry into the future, and that's where we'll work with stakeholders, in a workshop setting, to develop a 2050 vision for the industry, identify strategies to support a resilient industry for the next twenty-five years, and also create action items that are robust to both the economic and ecological uncertainty that exists.

Just a little bit more specifics about the first part of this project, and we're beginning with a stakeholder mapping exercise, where we aim to identify all the players in the shrimp industry, how they're related, and what their values are, and this includes the shrimpers, dealers, regulatory agencies, consumers, the entire supply chain, and, as part of this, we aim to identify resources and activities that the different players indicate they can contribute to help solve the different issues in the fishery.

Secondly, we're working on a market and economic analysis, where we're compiling information about the shrimp markets, supply chains, price drivers, et cetera, and we hope to have this information all available and compiled into a document, or some other user-friendly format, so that industry members can use that to make informed economic decisions or bring that information to whoever they need to to get changes implemented.

Third, we're going to be going to consulting with select shrimp industry members who are reportedly doing very well, despite the current challenges, and there are some individuals who are -- I don't know if I would say thriving, but they're doing well compared to other industry members, and so we hope to analyze their stories for common themes and see if we can come up with some specific strategies for success, and then, finally, as I mentioned, develop a centralized list of grant programs that can provide relief to shrimping businesses and communities, and kind of compile all that information, how to apply, what the terms are, et cetera, into one centralized document.

Then part two, and, again, this is looking into the future, and we're going to start with a conceptual modeling workshop, or a series of workshops, where we'll work to develop a model encompassing all of the different factors that impact the southeastern U.S. shrimp fishery, and, from there, we'll do a vision identification exercise, and so what do stakeholders want the industry to look like over the next twenty-five years, and it's really important to figure out how we're going to get there, and we need to first take that step towards what do we want the industry to look like, and, from there, we'll pull in a lot of information from climate models, economic models, et cetera, to identify the critical factors that are influencing the fishery and related critical uncertainties that will shape the future.

Then we'll do some scenario planning, and, for this component, this is where we'll develop long-term scenarios of what the future might look like, and so taking all those projections into account, taking all the information from stakeholders into account, and what might the future look like, both from an economic standpoint and an environmental standpoint, and then can we identify actions that are robust to all of these uncertainties.

That's kind of an overview of the project. In terms of our process timeline, right now, we are presenting this overview to the councils and agencies, and we've talked to the Gulf Council, as well as the South Atlantic here, and we're working on identifying and engaging project partners, and so we've already spoken with Sea Grant, Gulf States, and we're also trying to identify other partner agencies, like USDA, DOT, and figure out how they can be involved in this, and we're working on the stakeholder mapping.

We're going to be attending some stakeholder, or industry, meetings in Texas next month, and so, if there are any other ongoing industry meetings, throughout this year, that anybody is aware of, we would love to also attend those and start talking with some industry members, and we're working on the economic analysis, and compiling opportunities and resources, and so next steps, and we don't really have a set timeline for when we do sort of the second component of the project, the scenario planning workshops, and that's going to depend a little bit on who our partner agencies are, and how much support we can get, but that's kind of our next step, is to put together those workshops, and the end goal is to provide support for the industry in the near-term, while also collaboratively developing a resilience plan for the future.

I will just quickly mention, like Mike said before, we just really need the whole-of-government approach. NOAA Fisheries can't do everything to solve all of these problems, and we need partners, and that's something that we're really working on, developing a list of who can do what, and that's something I think we're missing, and so this is a regional partnership under the National Seafood Strategy, and so we're working with partners there, and it's aligned with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's Future of Gulf Seafood Initiative.

We need council support, and so we would love your feedback on this project, the different components of it, and if there's anything specific that you think we should consider as we move forward, and then also, again, those contacts with industry members, and we want to make sure that we're including everyone involved in the industry in this project.

Here is my last slide, and this is just a couple of examples of some key opportunities that we can identify and help to communicate, and so the DOT has a Port Infrastructure Development Program, and Sea Grant has some funding opportunities, and so we want to compile a list of these opportunities, figure out how stakeholder can apply, if there are ever any roadblocks to applying, things along those lines, and we've already given this presentation to the Louisiana Shrimp Taskforce, and the Gulf and South Atlantic Shrimp AP meetings, and so we're trying to, you know, kind of get everybody involved, and I think that is all I have, and so thank you.

MS. THOMPSON: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So I'm going to sound -- I guess I'm not trying to sound negative on it, but I'm disappointed that the states have not been engaged on this. There's at least two states that have gotten fishery disaster monies, that we have things invested in socioeconomic studies, that the data will be coming out in -- Like, for us, it's 2027 is when that terminates. We've been engaged with our industry, and Florida just did their commercial fishing summit, you know, and South Carolina has got their stuff going on, and it's just disappointing to know that there's been conversations, and yet we've not been at the table to have those conversations, and, yet, that's a big chunk of what is occurring in our state, is shrimp fisheries, and so just, again, expressing my disappointment with us not being involved from that level.

MS. THOMPSON: Thanks for that comment. Anybody else?

MS. MURPHEY: So you're doing this in the Gulf. Is there -- Are you all going to expand to the South Atlantic, or is this just Gulf right now?

DR. GERVASI: It's both, yes, and so we have partnered with the Gulf States, but we also are going to be doing all of these workshops, and engaging with stakeholders, throughout the Southeast region.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, because I agree with Carolyn that you definitely need to contact the state agencies. All four of our states have big shrimp fisheries, and are suffering the same problems that the Gulf is, and so, you know, please consider that.

MS. THOMPSON: Mike.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I just wanted to make a comment that I like the economic component, because you're seeing not just ex-vessel price value of the fishery, but, as it goes through the food chain, you will see the exponential increase.

MS. THOMPSON: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you again for the presentation, and I'm going to kind of echo my state partners to the north and south, and so I'm from South Carolina, and, as Carolyn suggested, we are still in the middle of a shrimp disaster, that we are allocating funds to, and so being involved in this process will be important, from our perspective as well, and I guess I was just curious about the funding that is currently tied to this, to give us a better understanding of your next steps.

You said you're going to identify locations to have those workshops, and can you provide any sort of content on how many workshops you're considering, specifically in our region, and then perhaps some sort of timing of when those might be, just so that we can kind of be thinking, and as we continue to talk and work through this together, but just kind of give us an idea of a timeline. Thanks.

DR. GERVASI: Yes, and so the timeline is going to be a little dependent on the project partnerships and support that we get. We don't have sort of a specific pot of money slated towards this project in particular, and we're kind of using funds from IRA, like the CEFI climate initiatives, and so it's a little -- The timeline is a little wishy-washy at this point.

I know we've spoken with Sea Grant members in the Gulf, and, from their conversations, we're thinking workshops in sort of the winter, when it's a slower season for fishermen, would be the best, but, in terms of how many workshops we would be able to do, where we would have them, and when, we still need to sort of hammer out those logistics, but definitely I think a first step of reaching out to state partners -- We will plan on doing that, for sure. We want to make sure that everybody is involved in this and that we can sort of get the input on where those workshops should be held, and that's something we need states, and other agencies, to give input on, and when we should hold them, and so it's still a little up in the air.

MS. THOMPSON: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Just to chime-in on this, and I hear your disappointment, but this is a relatively new effort, and it's something that people who just wanted to help initiate it, with no dedicated funding, and so it's really just trying to scrape funds together and make something happen, and so we certainly are happy to engage our state partners, but the success of this is going to depend very much on the engagement of all the partners, because, you know, we're almost more a catalyst to this than anything else.

MS. THOMPSON: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I totally understand where you're coming from, Clay, but what was disappointing is we're hearing about it through our Sea Grant folks. As state people, we heard about it through our Sea Grant folks, that the initiations were being made, and people were brought to the table in the Gulf, and we did have a couple of people that attended over there, but the states were never informed that it was happening.

DR. PORCH: No, and that's good. I mean, we're engaging with Sea Grant, and this is a partnership, and it's not just the Southeast Center is running everything, and that's the whole thing, is, you know, it's a partnership with multiple people, and so I'm glad that you heard from Sea Grant about this, and I hope that more and more people will pick up the ball. Like I said, as much as anything, you know, we're catalysts in this, and we're just trying to make something happen.

MS. THOMPSON: Mike.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I went to one of the meetings over in the Gulf, and I think, as this progresses, you're going to see, more and more, who those partners are going to be, because, at that meeting, a lot of the people that needed to be at that meeting, some of the governmental agencies that needed to be at the meeting, were not, or at least the right departments within those agencies, and so we've got to start honing-in on who those people need to be that can drive solutions, and that's the main thing. We can talk about this all day long, but we've got to figure out solutions.

MS. THOMPSON: Anyone else have any questions or comments? If not, thank you very much. That was good, Carissa, and we look forward to participating in the future. We've got one more thing here on the agenda, and we talked about -- On Monday, we talked about the possibility of adding some seats to the Shrimp AP, so that we would have representation from the states to our north, and so do we want to acknowledge that here? Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so you guys had talked about that in Full Council, and so this kind of arose as we completed the fishery performance report for white and rock shrimp, and, obviously, we included Sonny and Pat, from Maryland and Virginia, and they were really helpful in providing input on the shrimp fishery that's kind of emerging in those areas, and so we kind of discussed how a seat on the AP might be beneficial, as they continue to provide their input on the industry in those areas.

MS. THOMPSON: Do we need to vote on that right now, as a committee?

DR. BELCHER: I think it's a holdover from the closed session, and so that would come forward out of the closed session that we had on Monday, and so it would come into Council II on Friday.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay, and so we're just acknowledging it now, for the webinar?

DR. BELCHER: Yes.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay. Thank you, and so that concludes the Shrimp Committee report, and I'm going to turn the mic back over to Carolyn. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 11, 2024.)

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Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
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July 31, 2024

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# SAFMC June 2024 Council Meeting

## Attendee Report: (6/10/24 - 6/14/24)

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Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

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Iberle	Allie
Johnson	Denise

Kaalstad	Simen
Karneckas	Mandy
Kean	Samantha
Keener	Paula
Kellison	Todd
Kent	Russell
Kittle	Christine
Klasnick	01Kelly
Knowlton	Kathy
Kraiss	Marisa
Krug	Stephanie
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Lee	Max
Levy	Mara
Locascio	James
Lombardi	Michael
Lovell	Sabrina
M	Amanda
M Borland	Gary
MCCLAIR	GENINE
Malinowski	Richard
Mallory	Ryan
Marhefka	00Kerry
Masi	Michelle
McGirl	Maria
McGovern	Jack
Mehta	Nikhil
Mendez Ferrer	Natasha
Merrifield	Mike
Meyers	Steve
Montañez	José
Moore (NC)	Jeff
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
O'Shaughnessy	Patrick
Oliver	Ashley
Ostroff	Jenny
Owens	Marina
Package-Ward	Christina
Pate	Jessica
Petersen	Andrew
Poholek	ariel

Potter	Caroline
Puglise	Kimberly
Putman	Nathan
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reeder	Kelly
Riley	Rick
Robbins	Megan
Robertson	Captain B F
Roller	00Tom
Rose	Tyler
Runde	Brendan
Sauls	Beverly
Scerbo	Sabrina
Sedberry	George
Seward	McLean
Shertzer	Kyle
Silvas	Rachael
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Spurgin	Kali
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Sweetman	CJ
Townsend	Maddie
Travis	Michael
Treece	Andrea
Walia	Matt
Wamer III	David
Wiegand	Christina
Williams	Travis
Williams	Erik
Williams	John
Wilms	Sean
Withers	Meg
Wolfe	Wes
Woodward	00 Spud
Yandle	Tracy
carvalho	avelino
colby	barrett
collier	chip
foss	kristin
gloeckner	david
hallett	fletcher

laks  
lavine  
moss  
oden  
sandorf  
sica  
thomas  
thompson  
vara  
wilber

Ira  
craig  
david  
jeff  
scott  
Xavier  
suz  
laurilee  
mary  
pace