

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
SNAPPER GROUPER COMMERCIAL SUBCOMMITTEE

Crowne Plaza Hotel Charleston
North Charleston, South Carolina
April 20-21, 2026

Transcript

Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee

Jessica McCawley, Chair	James G. Hull, Jr.
Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair	Charlie Phillips
Trish Murphey	Dewey Hemilright
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Council Staff

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Dr. Chip Collier	Dr. Mike Schmidtke
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Attendees and Invited Participants

Rick DeVitor	Dominique Lazarre
Dr. Jessica Stephen	Kevin Mitchell

Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, on Monday, April 20, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to go ahead and get started. Okay. This is calling to order the Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee. Let me go through the committee members. It's myself, Kerry, Amy, Jimmy, Trish, Charlie, Andy, and Dewey. Sitting in for Andy is Rick, and Trish is online.

All right, and the first order of business is Approval of the Agenda. Does anybody know, at this point, of any other business that we need? Okay. Any objections to approval of the agenda? All right. Seeing none, the agenda is approved. The next order of business is Approval of the Minutes from March 2026, and so from the last council meeting. Any substantive changes to those minutes? Any objection to approval of the minutes? All right. Seeing none, we'll consider the minutes approved. The next order of business is Public Comment. Mike, are there any hands or anything online for public comment?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I am not seeing any hands raised online for public comment at the moment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Since we don't see any public comment yet, we're going to keep moving through the agenda, and so now we're going to dive into Amendment 60, which is our commercial permits and trip efficiency. I'm going to turn it over to Mike, and it looks like we're going to start back with the purpose and need statement.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I'm pulling up the discussion document, and that is Attachment 1a in your briefing book, and we'll go ahead and scroll down, and so we're working through Amendment 60 within this meeting. Some of the objectives that we have for the meeting today are to review some of the preliminary analyses and information, and you'll see a couple of presentations from Jessica and Dominique as we go through the meeting, with some information regarding the actions that are being considered here.

We will take a moment initially to review the purpose and need statements, and then we'll be looking for any direction that you all can provide in preparation for the June 2026 meeting. Essentially, what this meeting is looking to do is we're trying to work through several of these actions and try to get -- Especially some of these have some tricky wording that goes along with them, and we want to make sure that the words on the page are reflective of what you all in the subcommittee want to have considered, as this is scheduled to go out for public hearing consideration following the June council meeting, and so we're going to take some time and have potentially some of the longer conversations within each of these actions today.

We'll start by looking at the purpose and need statements. This is kind of where we left off coming out of the last council meeting, and we've included some of the suggested edits that were recommended in March, and I know one of those was including some language related to EO 14276, and so that's been kind of integrated into the need statement, and I will pause here so folks can look that over, and, if you have any recommended changes, we can go ahead and get those recorded, so these can be adjusted ahead of June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: The only thing I've been thinking about is should we address not just the stability of the commercial participants and those other things after, but sort of the size of the commercial fleet, and, in other words, we've had conversations, I believe around this table, where our goal is not to necessarily increase the number of commercial fishermen, outside of the number of permits that are out there now, but we also don't want to see a contraction.

We want to stabilize the size of the fleet, it's my understanding, as we've spoken about it before, and so I don't know if that -- One, I don't know if that is addressed enough in any of these actions that it makes sense to add it, or if we can find a way to word it, but I would like to see if my recollection -- Is that something we're all on the same page about, or at least that's our intent, is to keep the commercial fishery the size it is now?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and I agree with that we at least want to do that, and I would say that the statement for purpose -- The purpose of the amendment is to increase the long-term stability, and so a stable fleet in number, and so I think you pretty much said it there, and so, yes, I agree with you that we at least want to keep what we have, and make it stable, so that, as guys fade out, it's easy enough for new participants to get in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think it's twofold. I look at stability as just what Jimmy said, and what Kerry said, and it's the stability is allowing the amount of permits to be used that are there. If it's chosen, allow people to get into the fishery, if they so choose, and, you know, for twenty-six years, that really hasn't been allowed, to the extent practical, and so I would -- You know, I think we're on the same page with the stability part.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we captured that, that we need to clarify that stability means referring to the number, maintaining the number of commercial participants, and so we feel like, with the actions in the document, like the removal of the two-for-one, that that is going to do this? Okay. Heads nodding yes. All right. Yes, and that's -- Okay. Anything else we need to capture here? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Something I've been thinking about is how do we keep these commercial permits in commercial hands, meaning -- I'm not looking for tax paperwork, and I'm not looking for this, but how do we, at the best we can -- Non-commercial entities have an ability to utilize these permits, for whatever various reasons they decide to, and I want to make sure that, the best we can, that, if a commercial entity is buying a permit, or an individual, that they are commercial fishing, where they have to have all the Coast Guard regulations, and they have to have the numbers on their boats, and they have to have all the different things or tools that are there.

You can only do so much in that, but I just see, with the opportunity of what we're doing here, of letting the commercial entities use the permits and different things to maintain themselves, and that there's also the possibility of outside non-commercial entities of capitalizing on this, and so that's something I asked of Jessica this morning, and I'm just curious what other people's thoughts are, or how that works, or how -- You know, you can only do so much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey. Charlie, then Jimmy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and Jimmy and I have kind of touched on this this morning, or yesterday, while he was driving up, and we already know that some of the SG 1s are being bought by not fully commercial people, and so -- I don't know how you stop that, because what's the difference of some lawyer just buying a permit and putting it on a boat, whether it be a Donzi or a McCoy or something, and what's to stop him from saying I'm tired of being a lawyer, and I want to start doing this, but I'm going to start doing it slowly, and still -- Like Dewey says, you've still got to have all the life rafts, and you've got to have all of the numbers on your boat, and I -- How do you -- I don't know how you tighten up the regs so it's only commercial guys, but you stop recreational guys, or a recreational guy that wants to work into being a commercial guy, or thinks he wants to work into being a commercial guy, and I don't know how to get there from here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I see more hands up. Is it -- Are you guys thinking something like annual reporting requirements or something, because that could come back and bite you, too. Like if somebody's vessel goes down, but that's just a thing to think about, and so I've got Jimmy, then Dewey, then Kerry.

MR. HULL: Thank you. The first thing that came to my mind was -- So I can use Florida as an example. In our state fisheries, you have to have a saltwater products license, and you have to qualify for a restricted species endorsement, which is -- You've got to have that if you're going to really produce anything, and you have to qualify by showing sales, and I believe it's \$5,000 in a year.

That would be a prequalifying item, and you would have to have at least something like that to qualify, which relates back to sales, and I see you guys looking at me talking, and so I don't know where I went wrong, but okay. Usually I do when you guys are looking at me, and so -- But, to me, that's like an idea that we could maybe toss around, and I don't know what the other states, how their licensing is, but Florida has a good system, and even if -- Like you're saying, the concern of somebody just wanting to get into it, and they've got to start somewhere, and so you would start at that level, you know, an SPL and an RS.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm trying to think here, and I'm not trying to be more cumbersome. I'm trying to be what Charlie is saying. That's fine, and it will do it, and I'm not trying to stop that, but, if you possess, or go to buy that permit, these are the things that you have to do, possibly report annually, and I don't want the person buying that permit that's not a commercial fisherman to fall through the cracks, and so that allows you that you're going to have to take, I mean, an observer if you're landing fish, and so that's what I'm looking at.

I'm not looking to make it more intrusive to the state, or different things, but, if you're going to go do this, then here's the five or six things that you're going to have to do, what mostly we already do right now, and have a checks and balance, so that it doesn't, well, that got slipped through or something.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, I mean, I don't think there's a practical way to do this without it being intrusive, and so I think, really, what it comes down to is the concept of a use-it-or-lose-it kind of situation, which the AP has said several times that they're not fans of, for like reasons Jessica mentioned, which is there's plenty of examples of, you know, a fishermen being ill, or the boat is on the hill, or -- They've talked about it a lot.

I mean, the concept of it, I wholeheartedly support. You know, I feel very strongly that I want -- I want it to be a professional commercial fishery. I wish, more than anything, we could do what we used to do when we had to get our mackerel permits, and you had to have 10 percent of your income had to be from commercial fishing, and you had to submit the top page of your tax return, and I would do that in a second. I have a feeling that's not the world we live in now, and we can't make that happen.

I think the other thing that concerns me going down this path, again as much as I support it, is that we are trying to get this through fairly quickly, and adding a provision like this would be a big change, and so that's just my thought. If anyone has an idea of how we can do that -- Amy and I, for the record, were smiling and laughing because I was like can we do what Florida does, and that's why. We don't right now, but Amy just said that, for one fishery in South Carolina, they do do that.

I'm also pretty sure in North Carolina -- If I remember from when Mark left North Carolina, you had to have the North Carolina commercial fishery permit, and those were limited access, and becoming quite --

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, a landings.

MS. MARHEFKA: A landings, and they were quite expensive, like twelve grand or something or like that, the last I heard, and I don't know if that's still true.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know.

MS. MARHEFKA: So, anyway, maybe there's something there we can start talking to our states, too.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and you can also do a use-it-or-lose-it type thing over a multi-year timeframe, and so, that way, if your boat is down or something, and so I think there's a way to do it that it's not extremely cumbersome. Okay. All right, and so I'm going to let Trish respond to that, and then back to Charlie and Jimmy.

MS. MURPHEY: Hi guys. Thanks. I was just going to add, you know, Jimmy had talked about what you all have in Florida, and North Carolina has an eligibility board, and then you apply to get a license, and, basically you have to have -- You need to show that you have participated in the fishery, be it a crew member or something, and there's no transfer. The only transfer is like immediate family, so that you can't buy them for \$1,200 anymore or whatever, and it's totally through the eligibility board.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you. Yes, and I don't think we've got anything in Georgia. Zilch. Thank you. All you need is a commercial license, for just about thirty bucks or something, and I don't really see Georgia changing. I mean, it's just the snapper grouper in Georgia is just so small, and I don't see it changing, and then there's just so many loopholes. I mean, so many loopholes, and I get it. I wish we could, but I'm afraid, if we try it, one, it's going to slow down the amendment, and, two, I don't think -- We would need lawyers to be sitting around the table, and it would just be so cumbersome for the people that are trying to work. I've got an observer offshore right now. If we made sure all of these boats had to have safety decals, and everybody knew they were going to have to safety decals, that alone would make people think twice.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy, then Kerry.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I agree with what he just stated, and Dewey was on point on that too, and so if I'm -- I just had to have two rafts repacked, okay, and it goes on and on and on, all the hoops that we jumped through, and, if some recreational angler is able to obtain an SG 1 just to circumvent his trip limits, and he doesn't have to have all, do all of the same things that I'm doing, and, if they had to have their vessel safety inspected, and have it marked properly, and insurance and this and that and the other, they would think about it again, but that doesn't stop somebody obtaining permits just to take them out of the -- I mean, but I don't want to slow this amendment down either, and so this is something -- We should already have requirements in place that, if you have an SG 1, I believe you are required to have a Coast Guard safety inspection. I think you -- I mean, you can't get your permit renewed, or issued, without -- You're saying, no, that's not true.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, you can get -- You don't need, necessarily, to have -- When you get your permit, you don't necessarily need to have your documentation or your Coast Guard safety inspection, but you then, if you're landing fish, go in the pool of possible vessels for observer coverage, and, once you get called for an observer, you need to have those things for sure, and so the boats that wouldn't be in the observer pool are the boats who aren't -- Who are speculating and not landing.

Once they land some fish, in theory, they're just as much -- Well, not as much as people who do it full-time, because there is some sort of -- They do some sort of stratification that means we get chosen like every other month, but what I was going to say, and, to reporting, once you have a permit, you have to report, and you have to fill in your -- At least a no-fishing report monthly, and so it is not that you're -- So annual reporting would not solve that problem. In theory, you're already supposed to be at least reporting a no-fishing report every month, and so there are some things. There are some loopholes, but there are some backstops.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and how about if you're buying a permit, and, on there, it asks are you a recreational fisherman or are you a charter fisherman, and there's a box there to check? I mean, we could go along around here as long as we wanted, but, at the end of the day, it's we need to get

this moving on, but, also, I'm asking the question of how do we identify -- If somebody is not checking that box, and like I would just check commercial fishing.

Somebody else that might want to speculate, or do something different, you know, do they got a charter permit, or are they a recreational fisherman, and so I'm just trying to think about just -- You're identifying what you are by what boxes you check, and I'm wondering if that's too much or whatever like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that that's the way to go. I would do some type of use-it-or-lose-it, but I also feel like some of what Dewey is saying is kind of like we're saying outreach, or like here's a list of things that you need to know before you buy a permit. It's almost like we're saying here's a list of things we want to make sure you understand that, as you're getting into this fishery, and here's the requirements for the vessel, and here's all these different things, and there is a reporting requirement, and all this other stuff, and so I wonder if some part of this is outreach, but I think you all are saying something more than that. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: There's a few things popping around my head, but I go back to Florida, and I'll go back to a closed fishery, the blue crab fishery. So, for somebody to get a blue crab endorsement, they have to do an apprenticeship, okay, and they have to have a signed form from somebody that holds it, that they worked on it, and they learned something about the fishery, and that they're on their way, and so I don't know. There's other ways of -- It sounded like Trish said that, in North Carolina, they actually have to apply to a board to vet them, and I mean --

MR. HEMILRIGHT: That's to get a commercial fishing license that they have an eligibility pool. They have an eligibility pool that you can fill out and go through, like the apprenticeship, to get chosen for a license. I did that twenty-five years ago. I had been fishing all the time, and didn't have a license, and I used the eligibility pool, but that's just to get a North Carolina commercial fishing license.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, then Charlie, then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I don't want to shut down this discussion, but I think what are the realities? We're going to add a whole new action to this document right now, which it would be, and a very complicated action, the way I see us talking about it here, and I'll just throw out the suggestion that we don't add that to this document, but we do have other -- I forget where we're at with our short-term, medium-term, long-term snapper grouper plan, but there are other things coming down the pike, and I think this would take a lot of discussion from the advisory panel, based on what they've talked about before.

I think there are options to do use-it-or-lose-it, like multiple years, like Jessica said, but I think to craft it, and not come into any unwitting potholes, I don't think we should rush it, and so I would suggest that we, maybe at the end of this meeting, have a discussion about, you know, where this action could fit in in the future, and that we don't include it in this document, but that's just my suggestion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Charlie, then Amy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and, Madam Chair, I like your idea on outreach, because I think some people may be buying these permits that don't understand exactly what we have to do, and I 100 percent agree with Kerry, and we're just talking about the stuff you have to do with a state license. Somebody can buy a snapper grouper, you know, and be from Louisiana, and so, you know, what you -- The hoops you jump through at the state are totally different ballgames. You don't necessarily have to go to have state stuff, and so I think this is going to be good discussion, but I think I agree. I think we just need to kind of table this one and do what we need to do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we have it on the list to come back to at the end. I have Amy, then Jimmy, then Dewey.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, honestly, Kerry sort of wrapped up my thought process for me very nicely, and so thank you for reading my brain. I do agree that this conversation about approve of use, or use-it-or-lose-it type capacity, is something that we should be considering in order to ensure that we've got that stability within this fleet, and, just on the record, so South Carolina does have one fishery that has an eligibility, and it is brand new, and it just came into law last year, and it is for the blue crab fishery, and so it is a -- You are required to show that you have landings associated with this particular eligibility to keep that license. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I was just going to make one more statement on the long-term stability and the idea of keeping the permits that we have and keeping seafood production. As I can tell you in the real world, last week I didn't have any fish in my cooler. We are really in trouble, and we need guys commercial fishing. We need food production, and so what we do here is really important with this, and we need to get it through fast. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I agree with what Kerry and others said. Let's get on with this, and we can look at the -- Maybe what possible stipulations of the use-it-lose-it under different scenarios into the future. I'm fine with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. To that point, Amy?

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, Dewey, I think maybe this is something that we can think about in our continuing conversations with this idea of the permit pool, and perhaps, if you were to be in a permit pool, coming out of it, it could have some additional requirements at that point too, and so just kind of put that --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I looked through the document, and it looked like we said no to the permit pool, and so I just want to put that out there. I think we said no completely for this document. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Just one last note. You know, a lot of the reason these permits aren't being fished is because we can't find anybody to fish them, and so we wouldn't need, you know, a lot of -- You know, people wouldn't be sitting on permits. I've got a boat sitting at the dock right now, and I'm waiting on a guy, and he tells me he's going to get his act together and get clean. I said, when you

show me you're clean, then I will finish rigging the boat up, and it's been sitting there for a year, and so I don't want to have a boat and a permit tied up there when it's, you know, for X amount more money I can send it fishing.

I need to find guys that can fish, that are able and willing to fish, and so that to me is a huge thing, and that's not even counting the fact that our captains and crews are getting over and over all the time, and we need to, you know, while we're looking at all the options, how to get more blood into the industry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I feel like we've come full circle there, and so I put this down as an item that we would come back to maybe tomorrow, once we talk through the document more. Also, on the purpose and need, we have some discussion about the word "stability", and so that -- Maybe that needs to be clarified, about what we mean by stability, and so we are referring to maintaining the number of commercial participants. Okay. Are we good with that? All right. Nothing else on the purpose and need? All right. I'm going to pass it back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, and so now we're going to be moving into the actions. The first action we'll be addressing is Action 2, removing the two-for-one policy for the snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit, and, for this one, you all discussed there are two alternatives. There's either keep the two-for-one or remove the two-for-one, and the removal of the two-for-one would just change the transfer process to being a one-for-one exchange.

You've had some discussion about any potential additional requirements, and you haven't talked about putting in -- You haven't directed any of those to be put into the alternative at this point, and you've also had some discussion about permit pools, and you've decided not to consider a permit pool at this time, and so that's kind of where that action stands. We do have some additional information before you get into your discussion. Jessica can come up now, and we can pull up her presentation, and she'll go through the first part of her slides that gives some additional information on the SG 1 permit related to this action, and so just give us one second to switch over.

DR. STEPHEN: All right, and so the first thing I want to do is give some more updates on permits, because I know everyone has been eager to hear how it's been going, and so I have some new information on the permit system. I've also been asked a couple of questions about the language we used at the last meeting, and how to clarify that, and so I'm going to go over that as well here first.

Just to let you know, we launched the new permit system on Friday the 13th in March. Despite the dubious date, it actually went fairly well, and so we do now have the new permit system open and running. We also took some feedback, and I believe it was either Amy or Kerry, who mentioned that the voicemail messages for permits was difficult, and so we have updated that voicemail message that people are receiving when they call the permits office.

We've shortened the first portion of it, so it's not so long to listen to. We're eventually going to remove Option 1, because that seemed confusing to a lot of the permit holders, and, just to let everyone know, at any point in time, you can hit Number 6 and automatically get to a voicemail, and so we have heard some problems that the phone system has hung up on people after they have been waiting, and so we want to get that message out that, when you dial in, if you just hit 6, it will automatically send you to the voicemail.

We also have some enhancements coming up for the users with the online portion of this system. One of them is we are building a way for you to see what your password is as you're typing it in. It's really helpful, and so we've had this problem in some of the other systems, because sometimes you might not know you're on caps lock or something like that, and so that is coming up in one of the next releases, and so you will be able to see that.

We also are working on the forgot password, and so what we do is we have a lot of calls of people that forget their passwords, and this is understandable. You're only logging-in typically once a year, and so now we've kind of updated that feature. You'll enter your username, and then the email will be sent to the account that that username is associated with. If you forget your username, which is also likely, they are provided in your initial email for your account registration, and your reminders for renewal will also have your user IDs. Currently, that's just for individuals, versus businesses on the permits, and so we're working on changing that for that as well.

Everything said and done, if you've forgotten your username, you can also try to call the permits, and leave a message, and we'll get back to it. Quite a few of us are helping them answer the phones, and I believe we have the ability to tell you what your username is.

On to the more exciting side of note, we've now released what we call our Freedom of Information Act page. This is a page that shows what the current permits are that are both valid and renewable, and so we haven't had that page up and running for quite some time under the older system, and so what we've done is created this system, and you see an image of it here. You can get a lot of different information out of this. You can sort and filter, and so you can just look for the permits that you're interested in.

You can see, at the top, we have tabs for the vessel, for dealer, operator cards, and then a specific one for the wreckfish fishery, and, when you're in here, you can type anything in the search, and so the very first search page is what we call fuzzy logic, and so it will search across all the fields, to help find what you're looking for, and so you can use a hailing port city, if you're interested, or a certain area, or a vessel name, and it will help find what you're looking for.

You can also subset it by the fishery type, and so I encourage you guys to use this. It's live and current, and so, every time you hit it, it's hitting the database, and giving you the most updated data that's out there, and, in order to get there, here is the site of the FOIA page, so we can have that available, and, as I mentioned before, it has the different ways in which you can search.

If you have any problems in the technical side in operating in the permit system when you're doing your application, our contact for that is Christopher Bohlman, and I put his email address here. If you have general permits questions, we do suggest you use the permits email or the voicemail line. Remember, hit Option 6, so you can bypass all the different options for you available before then.

All right, and so now we're going to get into some of the questions that were asked about the permits, and I just wanted to clarify these from the last meeting, and so one of the questions we were asked is if leasing is considered a transfer, because that's the terminology we use within the permit system, and the SG 2 permits were not supposed to be transferable, and how then can we have leased vessels under an SG 2 permit.

I did work with General Counsel to go through this answer, to help you understand how it works. In general, I'll start with our regulations under the 622 do say that there are types of transfers that are allowed for the SG 2 permit. In particular, it does allow a permit to be transferred to another vessel owned by the same entity, and I say owned in that manner because there is a very specific definition of a vessel owner that is found in the general regulations under the 600 clause.

Based on 600.110, anyone, someone who leases or otherwise controls a vessel operation could be considered the owner in the sense of how we're looking at regulations and permits, and so that can be any person who owns a vessel in whole or in part. It could be what we call a charterer of the vessel or any person who acts in the capacity of a charterer, including, but not limited to, management agreements, operating agreements, or any kind of other similar agreement that would have control over the destination, function, or operation of the vessel.

Also, any agent designated by the person described in the above languages. Typically, a leased vessel is captured under, I believe, the charterer of the vessel, and so how that works in the long run is therefore, using that owner definition that we have under the 600 clause, a vessel lessee is considered the owner of the vessel. Therefore, they're allowed to transfer that SG 2 permit as long as they're transferring to another vessel that's under their name, whether it's directly owned or leased to their name, and that does allow the transfer. I'm going to stop there and see if there's any questions on anything I've presented. This one in particular was a little bit complicated when you had to go through the legalese to get to everything.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Questions on leasing? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes and so I have an SG 2 permit on my vessel. If somebody wants to lease my vessel, that's not me, and so I lease my vessel with that SG permit to them, and is that allowed?

DR. STEPHEN: No, and so the permit holder name, which is the name of the person who owns the vessel, or, if it's leased, it's the lessee as the permit holder, and so the permit holder name has to stay the same for the SG 2. Flip it around. If you had a vessel with your SG 2 that was inoperable, you could lease a vessel from someone else. It's leased to you, and you're the permit holder. Then you can transfer your SG 2 to that vessel.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: All right, and so I see that under -- When you get further in the section, I see leased vessel, SG 2, and what scenario is that happening under?

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and so that's the one I just described, and so they have the permit in their name, and, for whatever reason, they no longer have a vessel they own, or don't desire to put it on a vessel they own, and they would lease a vessel from someone else. When they lease the vessel, and so it's being leased to them, and sorry, and I want to be clear to leasing is bad language, because it implies both directions.

The vessel is being leased to them. In our permit system, when a vessel is leased to someone, that person is considered the permit holder, the vessel owner under the 600 regulations, and, therefore, they can transfer a vessel to another vessel they own.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thanks. It's good to see you again and have your explanations. I remember this from a long, long time ago, and, when it was set up, my recollections were it was for people like that were lobster fishermen primarily, and they needed to go catch, you know, a little bit of yellowtails or something, just to keep some income going, or they caught them while they were lobster fishing, and so they never were catching a lot of fish, and it was to stay in that family or that business, and not to be transferred out of that family or business. That was the original intent, and so what I'm hearing is nothing has really changed.

DR. STEPHEN: Correct.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay. Just to put it in a nutshell.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and that's all correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other questions on this? Okay.

DR. STEPHEN: All right, and so the next thing was I am going to move into some more preliminary analysis that we've been doing on both the SG 1 and SG 2, and so this is limited in the amount of time I had between the last council meeting and this, but I tried to get some information for you based on the things we heard at the council meeting and questions that were asked to us.

Again, this is the same preliminary analysis data caveats that we have. The data is still considered preliminary, and we're only matching to the logbook data from 2024 backwards, and some of the information still might need further clarity before we get it ready for the amendment, and so what were the questions we were asked?

There were a lot of questions about leased vessels, and so we were asked how many leased vessels have either an SG 1 or an SG 2 permit, and how do the leased vessels in the SG 1 and SG 2 compare to other SERO-permitted vessels and fisheries? What proportion of the trips and landings are completed by those under a leased vessel, versus those under owned vessels for the SG 1 and SG 2? When you have vessels that are latent, and that means they have not been fishing, and has it been for multiple years in a row, or are they just kind of one-off years, and so how many years are a vessel potentially latent, and then what other permits might be held along with an SG 1 permit?

The information that we're still analyzing is we are looking at how many permits are held by the same entity, and, in that case, we're not just saying at the business level, but taking down who owns a business, and so you could have someone who owns multiple businesses, but it's 100 percent owned by the same individual, and so we're still digging into that analysis, and we'll come back to you with that, just to get a feel for, you know, where the control of the permits is sitting. Then we'll look at that and understand how many of those are leased, versus owned, and so that will provide more clarity into those questions.

Let's start with the leased vessels. On this graph here, I've taken a couple different time periods, and so I've taken about every four years, just to give you snapshots of how the SG 1 and SG 2 permits have been leased, versus owned, over time, and what you can see from this is that, for the most part, we're fairly stable, with somewhere around eighty-ish percent of the SG 1 are typically owned outright by the permit holders, and the remainder fluctuated between 17 to maybe 24 percent over time has been a leased vessel to that SG 1 permit holder.

When we're looking at the SG 2, we see a little bit of a different story, and so a higher proportion of the SG 2 are owned directly by the SG 2 permit holders, and a much smaller component has typically been leased, and we want to look at how that compares overall.

What I did is grabbed a bunch of other permits through the Southeast region. I took both commercial and for-hire and a mixture of limited versus open access permits and did a comparison. There is definitely a difference with the SG 1 and SG 2 compared to the other permits, and so it does have a higher percentage of leased vessels compared to the others. We're at 22 and 15 percent, whereas most of our other fisheries are at 5 percent, or maybe up to 10 and 11 percent of the vessels leased.

Most likely, this is due to the more difficult transfer provisions that are occurring within it, and it could possibly be due to people leasing vessels in essence to lease a permit instead, and, again, the agency does not recognize permit leasing, but there definitely is a distinct difference between this fishery and the other fisheries, and it doesn't seem to matter whether it's commercial or for-hire or open access versus limited access.

Let's look at how landings are occurring by the status of whether the vessels leased or owned. I broke this out both by the SG 1 and SG 2. What we see is primarily the majority of the trips for the SG 1 are on vessels that are owned by the permit holder, and so 87 percent of the trips and 85 percent of the landings. I want to mention this was taken from the 2024 data, and so that was the most recent year of landings data we had to compare to the permits.

In the end, most of those are being taken by vessels that are owned by the permit holders. In 2024, we had eighty-seven of the SG 1 permits that were leased. Of those, only fifty of that eighty-seven were actively fishing and have landings. When we look into the SG 2, we see a similar pattern, where the majority of trips and pounds landed are through vessels that are owned directly, and, in this case, in 2024, we only had nine SG 1 permits that were leased vessels. Seven of those were actively fishing.

We also wanted to talk about how many other permits co-occur with the SG 1 permits, and so, as you all know, typically someone has permits in multiple fisheries in order to make a living, and so this is the commercial permits that co-occur with the SG 1 permit, and I just organized it by the greatest number to the least number, and so you can see that, in general, dolphin wahoo and Spanish mackerel and king mackerel highly overlap the SG 1 in the number of joint permits held on the same vessel, and the caution there is, if you change any of the requirements for leasing for the SG 1, you will be affecting these other permits as well, and so that would have to be taken into consideration moving forward. Go ahead.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can you go back one slide?

DR. STEPHEN: This one?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes. With the Atlantic bluefin tuna, there is no permit for the tuna commercially, unless it's a general category.

DR. STEPHEN: It's the ATL permit.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay, but -- All right.

DR. STEPHEN: That goes with the tripack.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Right, but bluefin tuna is not -- It's just under the tuna part. It ain't specified out Atlantic bluefin tuna.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and so that might be how we named it in our system.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay. All right. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A couple more questions before I go to Amy, and so can you explain that statement that you just said again, Jessica, the statement that, if we changed how you dealt with leasing for SG 1, it affects all these other permits, and can you explain that?

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and so, at the last council meeting, I think there was some discussion at one point that maybe they wanted to prevent the leasing of the vessels for people who had an SG 1 permit, and so, if you prevented that, because all the permits on a vessel must be under the same permit holder, you would in essence then be preventing leasing for all those other permits as well, at least in regards to if they have an SG 1, and so your impact is greater than just the SG 1 fleet.

Let's take an example, and so let's say they have the dolphin wahoo and the SG 1. Because all the names have to be the same on that, if they were leasing the vessel in order to fish the dolphin wahoo and put their snapper grouper on it, and you said snapper grouper permits cannot be on leased vessels, then they would also have to move their dolphin wahoo permit to another vessel, because -- Well, they could separate the two permits, but, if they wanted to keep them together, and they were leasing the vessel, it impacts their dolphin wahoo as well, and so they would either have to get another vessel to put the SG 1 on, or, if they want to capture them together, they would have to both move them to a vessel that they owned.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip came to the table. Do you want me to go to Chip first, and then to Kerry? Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Okay. Dolphin wahoo and Spanish mackerel are open access.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right.

MS. MARHEFKA: In theory, they could just change the name, because they're open access, and get a different permit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right.

MS. MARHEFKA: But the ones that are limited access would be really where the issue --

DR. STEPHEN: So I would say, yes, that it would be a greater issue for the limited access, but your issue probably is that they don't currently own a vessel, and so they would need to -- If they wanted to fish those permits together, they would have to transfer them all then to a vessel. They

would have to obtain a vessel, right, that they owned, and then they would do the transfer of all of them to it. Until they could do that, they would have to take their SG 1 off that permit, which would mean, depending on what different fisheries they were used to fishing in, they could no longer fish the SG 1 on there.

MS. MARHEFKA: I believe you, but I don't understand.

DR. STEPHEN: I will work, for the next council meeting, for a graphic to help show you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I mean, I believe you too, but I don't know that I understand either. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, and I think we're all trying to wrap our heads around this. So, Jessica, again, thank you for being here, and the presentation, and so, when looking at this slide, you say nearly all SG 1 permits also hold other permits, and so you looked at vessel registration numbers to see which permit they have, but did you actually look at vessel -- Did you look at permit holder names, and so are you telling me that an SG 1 permit on this vessel might belong to Charlie, but then that same vessel has dolphin and wahoo permits that's in Jimmy's name?

DR. STEPHEN: So, when I looked at it, I looked by -- So, again, for permits, any vessel that has permits on it have all the same permit holder names, and so, whether I looked by permit holder name or by vessel registration -- I looked by the vessel registration, and I said this vessel, Coast Guard Documentation 123456, has all of these permits on it, and I will say this was just the commercial. I did not do this with the for-hire component, and this is how many showed up.

When I was looking at all the SG 1, there are very few vessels that solely had just the SG 1 commercial and nothing else on it, which makes sense, right? You're typically fishing across the different fisheries within here, and then these are the ones that they have the most of those other permits on, and this is literally the number, and so 460 of the SG 1 vessels also had a dolphin wahoo.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Amy.

MS. DUKES: I'm still wrapping my head around this, but you made a statement a second ago, and so, in this particular case, the SG 1 permit holders were -- All the names are the same, and there's not an instance where a vessel registration might have two different people's names on two different types of permits.

DR. STEPHEN: Correct. That's not allowed in our system.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm going to go to more hands. Charlie, then Kerry.

MR. PHILLIPS: I can very easily see why you can't do it any other way. It would be a nightmare to have one boat with a snapper grouper that's owned by one person and then a king mackerel owned by another person, you know, trying to put all that on one boat.

That would be a nightmare. I don't think there's any way in the world you could make it work, other than how you're doing it, and I've got multiple boats, and multiple corporations, and had to lease boats to the different corporations, just because it was so much easier than trying to actually

change the ownership of the boats, and going through all that and I see that, once we get through this, and it becomes a one-for-one, I'm going to get rid of some corporations, and I'm going to get rid of some out-of-state corporations, and I'm going to make things simpler for me, which in turn is going to make it simpler for you all, and it's going to be easier for people to buy and transfer stuff. That's what I see coming.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Jessica, can you explain -- I don't have either of these endorsements, and so I don't know, but the golden tilefish longline and black sea bass pots are both more endorsements than permits, correct, and so, in the case that you're leasing -- Say if you lease a Snapper Grouper 1 that has a golden tile longline thing, you get them together, or are we creating -- Is that also an issue?

DR. STEPHEN: So, when you think about the endorsements, we think of them as permits in the system for functionality, right, and so, even though they're called endorsements, and a lot of times an endorsement means you need to have something else. I'm more familiar with the Gulf longline endorsement. You can't have it without having a reef fish permit as well, but the case where all the permit holder names for that vessel have to be the same remains even with endorsements. They are just sometimes, with the different endorsements, different stipulations on what you need in order to transfer it.

MS. MARHEFKA: Could someone -- If I had a Snapper Grouper 1 permit with a golden tile longline permit/endorsement, could I lease out the SG 1 and hold back the -- Not lease out the longline portion of it?

DR. STEPHEN: So you can't lease permits.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry. You're right.

DR. STEPHEN: But, if you were trying to do the vessel leasing, and like, right now, if that vessel you have was leased to you, again, all the permit holder names must be the same on it. Now, you can transfer your permits separately, but you would need to follow under whatever extra stipulations the endorsement might have. Sorry, and I haven't touched the golden longline endorsement in a while, and so it's not at the top of my head.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey, did you have your hand up?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: (Mr. Hemilright's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Charlie, then Jimmy, then Chip.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay, and I've got both. I've got black sea bass pots and golden tile, and I was always of the understanding I could sell the endorsement, but I could not, quote, unquote, lease the endorsement.

DR. STEPHEN: Correct.

MR. PHILLIPS: If I wanted that endorsement on permit ABC that had the golden tile, if I wanted to get rid of the golden tile, I either had to sell it or sell the whole snapper grouper endorsement with it. And I couldn't separate them, short of selling that endorsement.

DR. STEPHEN: Correct. Right, and so, because of the restrictions on what you need to have that endorsement -- I mean, you could sell it separately, and they would have to have probably an SG 1 in order to obtain it, right, and you could sell your SG 1 separately, but then your endorsement' is kind of in this limbo area, because you can't fish with it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I kind of understand your statement, but, you know, it's the nightmare of leasing, and this is an example of it. It's just -- I mean, I think we need leasing, because it's an inexpensive way for people to get into the fishery, but, the way leasing is set up, I think we can do a better job. Charlie thinks it's the only way that we can go. I would like to -- Not on this amendment, but, in the future, we need to make it something a little different than this, because every -- I have to lease my own vessels to transfer stuff, just like other people, to different entities, and then I have to lease from another holder to get another permit, and then they get every other limited entry permit that I own into their name. It's terrible, and then you have to have separate documents to protect yourself, if they die and then their kids take over and they say we're not giving them back, you know, and so it's just -- It's a mess. I don't like it at all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So, looking at the number of permits up there, we see black sea bass and golden tilefish exceed the number of permits that are allowed, and so is that representative?

DR. STEPHEN: Well, it's preliminary information.

DR. COLLIER: Well, I'm just wondering, and could that represent some sales of some --

DR. STEPHEN: No, and that's most likely that a permit was counted twice, because it should have been moved out of mail to an expired status within the permit system, and so, as I mentioned, we were still having problems when we were generating the permit data on preliminary, and so, if you see numbers that are greater than it, it's just a problem that we need to get through and fix in there, and so permit status is one of the problems we're having.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so those are two you definitely want to check on.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and that's totally technical. It's preliminary. When I get time to really dig through it, I'll probably get with the Permits Office and get all those corrected, so my code works correctly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on this slide? All right. Back to Jessica.

DR. STEPHEN: All right, and so let's now dig into the latent permits moving forward, and so I grabbed the last five years, from 2020 to 2024, the data we had with landings, and what you can

see here, the SG 1 permits, we show the total number of permits, how many of those vessels had landings, and how many were latent, and so you have the active and latent percentages.

I took it one step further, based on some questions asked at the last council meeting, is that are these latent permits that we're seeing one off, and maybe it's a year because it was in dry dock, and then the next year they're fishing, or is it someone who's consistently a latent permit holder, and so, when we looked at that over a two year period, 53 percent of latent permits were latent for at least two years. Now, that could be indicative of major repairs being done, or time being taken to fix a vessel.

As we go back and increase the years, we do see a lower percentage each year, and so, at five years, from 2020 to 2024, thirty-five of the latent permits were latent in all of those years, and that represented about 20 percent of the latent permits that were out there, and so it's just some information to keep in mind, is that your latent permits do probably come up under two different scenarios, the one where something's happening either health wise or with the boat, that it gets out of the fishery for a while, and the second would be where there's someone who is just holding onto a permit. Some of this could be due to the two-for-one transfers, where someone is done fishing, has kind of a buyer on hand, but they're looking for another SG 1, in order to make the transfer.

Then we did the same analysis for the SG 2, and you see a little bit different of a picture here. Here, when we're looking over two years, we still see that high percentage. 90 percent of the permits were latent for at least two years, but, when we go back in time, we have a much higher percentage of permits that have remained latent.

This is most likely due to the different transfer restrictions on it, and keeping these SG 2 permits within the family members of it, and it might indicate that there are permits that maybe should be -- Are no longer being fished, and maybe we should consider different rules for it, or they just don't have a family member who is trained up who would qualify for that SG 2 permit transfer at that point in time. All right. That was the end of the permits discussion. Any additional questions?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: This is a little bit off topic, but, while you're here, and while it's top of mind, I just wanted to make sure that everyone was aware of the fact that, while VHS is shut down, are you all aware of the fact that there is a temporary provision regarding renewing your permit and needing updated documentation? Can you explain it better than me?

DR. STEPHEN: I can.

MS. MARHEFKA: I want these guys to know, so that, if they talk to members of the community who are having issues -- I didn't learn about it until I was at the Mid last week, and it's very useful information.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and so I know about it because I was helping Dewey through it, and so, yes, we have, nationwide as a policy for fisheries, as long as the furlough is ongoing for the U.S. Coast Guard, as you know, your documentation is not getting renewed, or it's very slow and delayed at this point, and so we were able to work with our lawyers and have certain provisions, and these are provisions you do need to meet in order to have the stipulation.

The first is you need to have your renewal application in before your permit expires, and so, if you currently have a permit that's coming up for expiration, get your renewal application into the system. The second point is you will not have the updated Coast Guard documentation, and you must upload your old Coast Guard documentation, and then the third point, which is the one that Dewey and I struggled with, until we found the answer, is that, when it asks for you in the permit application to give the date of the Coast Guard documentation, it must be one day greater than today's date, and so, whatever date you're doing it, make it one day greater.

That's what allows the system -- Because there's a validation that's in there that, under normal circumstances, would prevent you from putting an expired documentation in. This is what gets you past that, and that was the nuance I did not understand, and I've been helping numerous permit holders work through this. When you go through it, you'll see that your status of your application changes, and so then you know it's in the review phase, and I can look up the official language. I don't know it off the top of my head, but, once it's in there, that means that the permit processors will start looking at it and processing that application.

As we get more information, we'll let more out, and so this is kind of flying as we're going with it, but this is the way that we're working with ours, and, again, if you have any questions, definitely contact the Permits Office, and let them know exactly what's going on, or what stage you're in, but I found that part about the date was the helpful part that helped me get a lot of fishermen past where we kept getting stopped at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any other hands.

DR. STEPHEN: Do you want me to go into the -- Or do you want to switch to talk about the gear first?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so, coming back to our discussion document, you've gotten some additional information on Action 1. As far as what we're including in the amendment, a lot of the information, similar to what Jessica presented in March, as well as what she's presented today, we're going to be incorporating a lot of that into the discussion of the discussion, or the expected effects, related to Action 1, and so a lot of that will be there.

The main question for this is are you all satisfied at this point with the alternatives as listed, and is there anything that you have not seen that you still would hope to see before a public hearing draft would be put together and go out, anything else that we need to prepare for you for the June meeting?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and Mike should know this answer, but how about the SG 2 permits in our discussion? Is that going to be here further along?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So we were not planning to hit the SG 2 permits within today's -- Or within this meeting, because the SG 2 permits aren't included in this amendment at this point. There isn't any action that's addressing any changes to the SG 2 permits., and so we do have that on schedule for the advisory panel that will be meeting tomorrow through Thursday. They'll be discussing the

question that we got from you all in March towards them, was what do they want the SG 2 permits to look like moving forward.

That was kind of what I gleaned that you all had requested of them, and so we do have a planned discussion there, where I'll give them some of the breakdowns that Jessica put together in March of the different, you know, active versus latent, and I believe there's a state breakdown, and so a few different pieces of information to kind of frame the discussion for them, but then the big question is what should the SG 2 -- What role should they play in the fishery in the long-term future for commercial?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, then Dewey.

MS. MARHEFKA: I know I'm fine dealing with SG 2 later, just because it is such a small -- It's much smaller than I thought it was, but what I would like to suggest -- Mike, the answer to your question is personally, for me, I'm comfortable with what we have in here, but I would like to suggest to the committee that somehow we make a note. I'm very concerned about that percentage of latent effort, and not that it's going to come into the fishery, because I actually wish it would come into the fishery. It would get us closer to our ACL, and solve Jimmy's problems, but more to our discussion earlier, where that effort that's never going to enter the fishery, and therefore it's holding us back from achieving, you know, you could argue a certain percentage of our ACL.

I think what would be interesting, if we can make some sort of note, after this goes through, maybe two or three years after this amendment goes through, that we look at the same data again and see where that has shifted, because 30 percent of the permits are latent. That's a tremendous amount of our fishery, and that's where I think we have to continue that discussion about, if you're not using it, someone else needs to be, because I was very surprised to see that number.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You're talking about SG 1 latent effort, right?

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm sorry, and I wasn't clear. Correct. SG 1 latent effort was like 30 or 33 percent, I believe, and so a third of the fisheries is not being operated, and then we're going to -- In a minute, we're going to be looking at all these ACL graphs, and you add 30 percent onto that, and I'm not saying everyone is going to catch the -- It's just that's disturbing. That's a lot of fish left on the --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey, then Charlie.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So, in this amendment, we're not going to have no action for SG 2 permits, and is that what I'm understanding?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: That's disappointing for me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I guess you could bring something -- After you hear from the AP this week, you could bring something in at the next council meeting, before it goes out, but you asked the AP some questions.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was under that assumption of the pecking order was to go to the AP first, but I was hoping that we could include the SG 2 in here and change the language to where they're allowed to be leased or -- It's a good chance for folks to get into it at a small level, and so I'm looking forward -- I was hoping that maybe we could have some discussion on that after the AP comes -- After the AP. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and, Kerry, you know, you talk about -- I think you said 30 percent latent, and we're always going to have some latent. I mean, it's kind of like industrial capacity. We're never running at 100 percent. We're going to run at 80 percent, or 85 percent, or maybe, maybe, maybe 90 percent, and you need that buffer, so that if, all of a sudden, the year class is great in five different major fisheries, then you've got people that can jump in and do it, and so I agree that 30 is high, but I don't think we're ever going to get down to -- I would be surprised if we ever got less than 10 or 15, but that's just me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. I agree with Dewey's suggestion of, after the AP discussion, to discuss this down the road on SG 2, but, to answer Mike's question, I'm good with Alternative 2 and the language in that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on these two alternatives? All right. I don't see any other hands on this action. Are we good to move to the next one? Okay. Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, moving down to Action 2, this is your action where you are considering revision of the bottom longline gear storage requirements, and also revision of the species limitation that is in place for vessels that have longline gear onboard, and so we have two alternatives here.

The first alternative kind of states the current situation and notes the species that are allowed for vessels that have bottom longline gear onboard. That would include this group right here, this highlighted group of deepwater species.

Then, looking at the other alternatives, the modifications would be that vessels that have bottom longline gear onboard would be able to harvest not just that group of deepwater species, but they would be able to harvest any snapper grouper species. They would only be able to have harvest of the non-restricted snapper grouper species if the bottom longline gear is appropriately stowed, appropriately stowed meaning hooks are not baited, and there are no hooks of the longline gear on the deck of the vessel.

Then Alternative 3 would be the same as Alternative 2, except with the addition of a notification requirement, and so that last sentence is the only thing that's different between these two alternatives. Vessels that intend to fish multiple gear types on a single trip must submit a notification prior to departure, and that came out of your discussion at the March 2026 meeting, and so those are the alternatives as they currently stand.

There are a few references in here that will take you to some of the language in the Code of Federal Regulations, and you can check those out, and then we have Jessica here for the second part of her presentation. She's going to discuss kind of an example scenario of what this notification requirement could look like, and so I'll pull her presentation back up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have questions first.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Before we go into that, a question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie, then Jimmy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Can you explain what's going on with wreckfish? Why are they -- I'm reading that it was -- They were pulled out of the alternatives, because I was hoping that, if my guy was offshore on a wreckfish trip and it's like it is, like he tells me it is right now, and the tide is running too strong, where he can't get to -- Where he can't catch anything, and he could go inshore and use his golden tile endorsement, and so can you explain what -- Or am I just misreading something?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and so wreckfish was pulled out of the language because wreckfish are not -- As I understand, and as we've discussed with General Counsel, wreckfish cannot be taken when there's bottom longline gear onboard, and so the requirements regarding wreckfish wouldn't be changed by this amendment. The fact that wreckfish kind of operates in its own different capacity, and this is addressing that group of species that is affected by the longline endorsement, and so the reason why wreckfish was pulled out of the language is because it wouldn't be changing. The regulations regarding wreckfish wouldn't be changing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm still confused. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Ditto. I'm still confused. You can't go longlining for golden tile and then go inshore and have gag grouper on the boat, and so we're modifying regulations, and I don't understand why we can modify this set of regulations, but this other set of regulations can't be modified. I'm still confused.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: So the first thing I was going to say was the highlighted in Alternative 3, where it says "notification prior to departure", I think that language would have to be changed. We may want to wait till after her presentation, but it would be before you change gear, and not prior to departure. I don't think that's the intent, because that's not going to really get us where we want to go. I think it was -- According to the notification presentation by Jessica, it talks about you would notify when you're changing gear offshore, or you would do both, but, anyway, that's part of the language that got my attention.

Then, as to what the wreckfish question, I had the same question, but it seems like wreckfish has their own set of regulations just for wreckfish, and so, by doing this here, it doesn't change those. Is that the point of the IPT, that you would have to change those regulations in a separate management action?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would have to ask a few more questions with our GC rep, to see if it's a possibility of including wreckfish, but the fact that this entire action is centered on the bottom longline gear, and wreckfish already can't be taken with the bottom longline, and the action here is removing the species limitation for bottom longline gear if you're going to switch them, if you're going to switch your gears, and so that's why wreckfish isn't included here.

Now, kind of separate from that, you know, it would be a question of can you fish for wreckfish, and then also fish for these other species, or fish for wreckfish and then also have longline gear onboard, something of that nature. We can go back and check with GC and see how we can adjust this to match that intent, if that's a stated intent that you all want to be able to fish for -- You want people to be able to fish for wreckfish and also then change gears and switch between wreckfish and other species as well, and I'll see what we can do as far as including it in this action, or if it would need to be its own separate action, but I'll check on that.

As far as the notification, that was developed based on the subcommittee and the council's direction in March. Where you ended in March was not at-sea notification. It was prior to departure, but, if you want to switch that to at-sea, then that's something that you all can direct. We developed it based on your direction that you gave at that time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm going to go back to hands, and I would say I think our intent is that you could take wreckfish, you know, that wreckfish be included in the list, because I don't know why it would be excluded, I guess is what I would say. If you're going to allow it, you're going to allow it, but, anyway, back to hands. Charlie, Dewey, then Jimmy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and that's fine. You know, we don't want longline golden tile, I mean wreckfish, and you're only talking maybe twenty miles to get inshore, and then you can set golden tile, and, you know, in times past, golden tile lasted a month-and-a-half and you were done. Now it's stretched right on, and so it definitely -- A lot of the wreckfish guys actually have golden tile permits, longline, but thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know this answer, and that's why I'm asking. You have wreckfish, and you're fishing that with a bandit, and not longline, and do you have longline gear on your boat?

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, but we have to either take all the gangions off the boat or disable the longline spool. It can't be where it can operate. We have to take -- Generally, we just take the gangions off the boat.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Right, and so, on that same trip, you want to be able to go in there and go golden tile fishing?

MR. PHILLIPS: If like what's going on right now, and my boat captain told me the wreckfish have lockjaw, and the tide is so bad that he can't get to them, and he could easily run twenty miles inshore, if he was allowed to keep his gangions on the boat, and have wreckfish and longline gear on the boat. He would have that option. Right now, he does not have that option. He could go catch beeliners, but he can't catch golden tile.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Even though he has the endorsement.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: All right. Well, I just, I just trying to maneuver through this, that this is a bottom longline action, and how does it fit in there with that, and I guess it's both being able to use the permit. It maximizes the use of a permit, and now what's going to be the argument if a -- This might not be the same thing, but if it's somebody with a golden longline endorsement, and, all of a sudden, their season ends, and they can't go longline for other species?

I'm just asking, and how does the shifting around and all this stuff go into effect, or whatever like that, and is that something totally different, and I'm off-base? If you've got a golden tile endorsement, and you want to go golden tile fishing, then you can't come -- Once that golden tile fishery is done, you can't go snapper grouper, or snowy grouper, with a bandit, can you? Well, I'm just asking, because I've had other folks that's in the golden tilefish with the endorsement for bottom longline. Once their season is done, golden tilefish --

MR. HULL: If you have a longline endorsement for golden tilefish, you can't have a hook-and-line -- You can't hook-and-line fish golden tilefish. You either do one or the other.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Once the season closes, you can go in there and go snapper grouper fishing?

MR. HULL: Yes.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: All right.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Back to Jimmy. You had your hand up from earlier. Okay. You're good? All right. Are there other questions before we see Jessica's presentation? Okay. I think -- I don't see any additional hands, and let's go to Jessica's presentation.

DR. STEPHEN: All right, and so we'll get back into the gear notification. We had a couple of questions asked again after the last council meeting, which I used to kind of center this portion of the presentation. The questions were asked to kind of clarify different aspects of the gear notification, and some of them would be who would the captain contact, and what would be the method of that contact? What gears or fisheries would be allowed and require notification, and at what point would you declare?

I do want to remind everyone about the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel's Discussion points. They were fairly strong and firm in that changes in gear need to be primarily enforced at-sea. If we wait until landing, it's more difficult for them to understand which gear the species were caught under, and then they had also recommended either an electronic monitoring or a VMS system in order to report.

Moving on to when the notification would be submitted, law enforcement, as well as the agency, probably prefers the at-sea notification, because then we're better able to analyze what's occurring with the fishery, and how things are going, and be able to subset that data out in order to determine the impact of this moving forward, and so at-sea notification that you're changing gears does provide law enforcement with a real-time notification, as well as a timestamp of when you submitted that you were switching your gear, so they can kind of tell where you're at, and as we

get through what fields are required, that will provide additional information that will be useful to law enforcement.

If we look at the prior to leaving notification, and that's saying before you even leave the dock you say you're going to use both gears, that has a lot more loopholes built in it, both for analytical purposes as well as enforcement purposes. Most likely we could envision that someone would just automatically declare they're using both, because they're not sure what's happening, and then we would have more trips being declared that way than were actually being used under both gears, and so that would mean that trying to determine how useful it is might not be as easily distinguishable with the data we have.

When you're doing that, you're unable to link the gear to any particular date or time when they're out fishing, or particular area of the sea in which they're switching the gears in order to fish, and it does not account for if they want to switch back and forth, and so I'm not sure how likely it is that you might be longlining, then bandit reel, and then back to longlining, but we wanted to take that consideration in, that the switching of gears will not always be in one direction and may be multiple times throughout the trip.

To that purpose, I was concentrating on the at-sea gear notification process, and I wanted to kind of walk you through what would happen as we currently have it envisioned. This is still subject to change, and nothing set in stone, and so ideally what would happen is, before switching to the different gears of the vessel, the captain will use a satellite phone, or something like a Starlink system, in order to call a toll-free number and say, hey, I'm changing gears.

That toll free number would go specifically to a twenty-four-seven-operated call service that the agency would pay for, and so there's always someone available. You're not restricted to business hours or hours where law enforcement is available. We would have that call service have a specific script that they would ask you, and so they would ask you things like what is your vessel identification and information that we would need to go through.

I want to caution that we never use call services to be able to advise fishermen. They're solely there in order to take the information and submit it into a data system, and so, in this case, the call service would enter the information into a web-based database system while they're talking with you. That information would directly feed into a SERO database, and the call service center, at the end of the discussion, would provide you with a confirmation code, and so that would be your proof that you notified them, because, while you're at-sea, you might not have something, if you're encountered either at-sea or at the dock, to say you did the call, and so this confirmation number would be your proof.

Once it's entered in the database, we can allow the database to email the appropriate law enforcement officers, and that would be based on the intended port of landing, and so, that way, we're not emailing everyone on, you know, the east coast that someone is switching gears. We're narrowing that conversation, or the email, down to the law enforcement officer most likely to be in your area.

The law enforcement would also have access to the database directly, and so they would get the email, and they would also be able to open the database and query it, so they could see that information as well, and we do that because sometimes emails get stuck along the way, and so we

want to make sure that enforcement would have another way to look at it, and, again, the confirmation number you're given would be the key part to quickly finding that.

Then, by the end of the trip, the fishermen would complete separate catch and effort by gear in the commercial logbook, and so, once we move to the electronic commercial logbook, you'll be able to put information in by gear. This will help show which species were landed under which gear and when you did the gear switching.

I did spend some time asking a variety of folks that would be interested in how either to analyze the data, enforce the data or look at it from a management perspective about what fields would be necessary to them in order to gather some of this information. Typically, we always capture the vessel name and the registration number, whether that's a U.S. Coast Guard or the state registration. We do recommend, when someone is talking over a phone, to give their registration number. There are a lot of vessels out there that have the same name, and we want to make sure we're not putting in the wrong vessel when you're calling in.

It was suggested that we put in whatever your SG 1 permit is, or an SG 2, and I'm not sure if the SG 2 applies in this situation, but you would also give your permit number, and that helps us also link up, in case there was a typo or a misunderstanding of the vessel between the two, and so things to ensure that we are capturing the right vessel.

Date and time would be in there, and that would be automatically generated from the system, and so, when the call service hits submit, it would put a date and timestamp automatically on that, and we would know that it was submitted at this date and time. It was suggested that we put in the area in which you intend to longline fish, and whether you're switching to or from longline gear, and so which way did you start? Did you start longline fishing and switch to bandit reel? If that's the case, I might have to modify this a little bit. I was honestly thinking the other way, that it would start bandit and switch to longline.

What would be the target fishery for your bottom longline, and so, if there is a need for that, to know which of the different species you're going to be targeting with the longline. The landing port, this one is key, because this will be how we determine what law enforcement agents would receive the notification, and so where do you intend to go back, and we can talk about this later in development, of like how narrow or how broad that scope is. For us, it would be enough of an intent that we're hitting the right enforcement agents if they needed to meet you at the dock.

Then, again, the estimated date and time of your landing. I want to stress that that's an estimate. We know that sometimes things can take a turn, and the weather is bad, and you might go in earlier, or you hit a good fishing spot, and you might stay out longer. I will mention that, the fields that have the asterisk, and so the three bottom ones, were ones that would help inform law enforcement that they need to meet you at the dock to double-check what's going on with the landings.

When we're talking the gear notification, and where you're going, I wanted to look at how easy we could make it for the fishermen to say kind of what area they're at, and so I looked at our existing grids that we have out there. Our coastal logbook grids are very large. They're about one-degree grids. They cover a huge amount of area.

In discussions with law enforcement, because of areas, and like there's certain bottom longline closure areas, and different protected areas, they were recommending a much smaller grid, potentially a one-minute grid, to go through with that. That would require a little bit more development than our part on how to make that easy for fishermen to enter that information. I don't want to get too far into that until the council starts picking information, because there could be other size grids that might be effective as well.

Then, during the discussion, there were a bunch of other additional questions that were raised that I just wanted to put in front of the council, and so one of them, as mentioned before, is are you always going to be switching from a gear to a bottom longline, or could it be the other way around? Could you switch between multiple gears, and, if that's the case, do we want notifications every time you switch? Do we need to be more specific about what permits for the longline gears are appropriate, and what should be included, and so I think this gets a little bit back to your question about wreckfish and how that goes. You might just want to think about the species and the permits under longline gears and be a little more explicit within the document.

Then when would the notification need to occur, and so are you occurring before you hook up the longline gear, if you're moving from bandit to gear? If so, do you have to have a certain amount of time? Does it just have to be immediately before? If you're leaving from the dock, does it need to be hours before? Different considerations, and, again, I'll stress that the at-sea notification is probably more helpful for tracking the impact of this change in regulation than the at-dock, and I believe that is my last slide. Yes, and so open for questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Jimmy, then Amy, then Charlie.

MR. HULL: Thank you for this. In my opinion, it's well thought out, and I've tried to visualize this in my operation, and I see where it would work, and, of course, most of this is beneficial to law enforcement, which wants to have the ability to enforce that we don't have bad actors using bottom longline gear to catch gag groupers, and so it works.

At-sea notification, in my scenario, would work, because you're stowing your gear initially, and so it's down below stowed. Your hooks are unbaited, and zip-tied down below in the V-berth, and you're anchored up, and you're catching, in my case, red snapper, and I catch my trip limit of red snapper, and so I want to go inshore now and set a longline on sharks, and I've got to travel fifteen miles inshore, because that's where the sharks are that I want to catch.

When I pull on the anchor and intend to make my way inshore, that's when I'm going to make the gear notification change, and call in and say where I'm going, and what I'm going to do, and then it will be timestamped, and I can go ahead and pull out my hooks. It takes an hour to cut that bait and get everything hooked up ready to go and get your gear ready, and so, in that timeframe, while I'm idling in, I could be intercepted by law enforcement, and my longline gear will be out on the deck, because I'm rigging it, yet I have red snapper in the box.

This notification lets them know my intentions, what I did, when I did it, and where I'm headed with this longline gear, and so I think it's well thought out, and I think it will be useful and satisfy law enforcement, I hope.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and I'll also say it really does satisfy management as well, when we're thinking about stock assessments and where you're catching certain species, and so, currently, we just have one area for a trip, even though you might be in multiple areas, and understanding which gear that you're catching which species on would be an improvement in both the stock assessment and management, and so it's not solely the law enforcement, although that plays a large part. There's a lot of aspects to it that would actually assist management as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, Jessica, thank you, yes, for this presentation. It is well thought out, and I concur with Jimmy. A couple of questions. The call service center, is that already something that you guys know that fisheries are using and that this particular effort would dovetail with it?

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and so I was actually having this conversation with Jimmy at breakfast, and so we have a call service that we use currently for our IFQ system. and so it's a little hard to say completely what's going on, because contracts are scrutinized within the government. My intention would be to modify my existing contract to allow this additional script, and we would have to do development work on the database, obviously, to do that and have that same call service do that.

We tend to write contracts so we potentially could use the same contractor, if they're so desired, for multiple years, and so, again, similar to the wreckfish amendment, where we had a call service, I was envisioning these all wrapping together. They're all very small contracts, and so it makes sense to put them into one vehicle that we're going to go forward with and use.

I will say that making that contract modification and all that may delay this part of the amendment to be effective until we have that and the database built, and so just keep that in mind, because we have certain deadlines to hit for contract modifications.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Jessica. This is definitely one way to skin the cat, and my guys use text a lot. They almost never use the sat phone, because they're just so -- They're unreliable. You've got to get out on the deck, and go figure out which way you've got to hold it, and, if it's raining, or if it's nasty, it's just -- They can sit there and text from inside the pilot house, and do it all day long, and it's fifty-dollars a month, and so they don't mind doing that, and so could we text, you know, all this information in?

Just as another side note, I could see where VMS would work really well for this. Then you don't have to send all the information in. All you do is just say that I'm switching gears, and that's the end of the story, and then you don't have to tell them where you are, because they see where you are. I can see this being a perfect -- We're not talking a whole lot of people here. I mean, I think I just looked back, and there were forty-four shark fishermen, and there's thirty-something golden tile fishermen, longline.

If everybody is doing it, and a lot of these people that do have these bottom longlines, or longlines, are not going to want to do it, and I could see fifty fishermen, and I'm just picking a number out of

the air, but I -- I know the issues that we've had with VMS over the years, and people's attitudes toward it, but I was really surprised, at the March meeting, where people were -- They didn't like it, but they were willing to consider it, and I see this fitting very well as a VMS fishery, and, if these guys like me want to do it, and there's money for the VMS, I would be -- I think that would be the best way to run this, and we get all the scientific information, and law enforcement is covered better, and I just feel like that's something we need to seriously consider as an option. Thank you.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and so I'll respond to the text one first, and so, with the texting technology, I'm not sure we have anyone currently in our office that has the -- Understanding technology and how to do it. I would probably start reaching out to other regions. I'm in a lot of collaborations with other regions in general, and sit on national groups, and so I've not heard of someone using that. I wouldn't say it's off the books, but I would say, if we wanted to try something like that, it might really delay the effectiveness, because it would be new technology, and we would want it still to go into a database, and send out to enforcement, and so that's the tricky part, and you might need back-and-forth communication through it.

Back to the VMS, yes, and so a VMS would have a lot of things where you would click it, and it would generally get your area where you're at, and so you would know where you were, when you were, and so you wouldn't have to do the grids. It would have the date and time stamp. There's a lot of benefits to that, and I believe the enforcement panel had advised that that was a way to go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go to Kerry, so, if VMS is an option here -- Because it says, in the document, that, if a call system is required, it may delay the implementation of the action, because, as you explained, because of the contracting aspect of it. If VMS was selected, would that delay this action?

DR. STEPHEN: I'm going to speak off the top of my head. I think it would go a little faster, and so there's a lot of built-in things within the VTRACK system, and so we would get a new form in. They already have a way to communicate that out to law enforcement, and so that nature of it wouldn't need necessarily to go to us. We would have the VMS techs kind of create possibly a query, or a boundary, for them, and so your biggest hurdle there would be just creating the VMS form and getting it into the systems, and then the purchase of the VMS units.

We do have a VMS reimbursement program. That is still active. There are also -- We would have to consider whether it's the best option, and there's both satellite VMS, and that's typically used, and then some fisheries are starting to use what we call cellular VMS. That's a store and forward, and so it captures the data at-sea, but it doesn't send the information to law enforcement until you hit a cellular boundary.

I will say we've had some trouble occasionally with some of that, depending where you're located. In the Gulf, we have some just blank cellular spots, where it didn't communicate well. I would think the Atlantic is a little bit better in coverage, but you never know, right, and it depends where you're at, but those are different options for that, and then they have different reimbursement prices, because the cellular VMS unit is significantly cheaper.

There are also VMS already required for some of the HMS vessels, and so you might want to look at the overlap there. When you do that, you want to make sure whatever you decide is still

compatible for the person who is required for under some other regulation to have VMS, and so you don't want to say cellular only, and HMS has a satellite one, and then they're sitting two units on there, and so you want to be expansive in that sense.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: So I think that there's sort of two answers, in my mind, to your question, Jessica. I think it's what Jessica said, as far as how much it slows down her shop, and then there's the question of how much it slows down our development of alternatives and sort of all of those nuances that we put in there, in the document.

That aside, depending on the guidance we get on that, I am a fan. I think I've said before that this action, of all of these, makes me the most nervous. I'm not against it. I'm going to go with it, but it does make me the most nervous, because of the potential for bad actors and the efficiency of bottom longline to catch some of these snapper grouper species, and so VMS makes me take -- Like lets all my air out and go I'm -- Like it removes any doubt for me, and it makes me feel so much more comfortable.

Plus, I think that you're getting a privilege to do this, and part of that privilege is that you need to then carry a VMS, and those of us that are only going to fish one gear don't need to have one, and so I would like to get some guidance on what adding VMS to this document will do, and I'm curious, obviously, what Jimmy thinks, or what others think, about adding it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before we go to Jimmy, Matt Walia, with law enforcement, has his hand raised online, and we're trying to unmute him, so that he can respond here.

MR. WALIA: Can you hear me?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MR. WALIA: Perfect. Thank you for recognizing me. Matt Walia, Office of Law Enforcement. I just wanted to throw a couple of things out. I appreciate Jessica's conversation and those couple of initial questions. I just wanted to reiterate a lot of these questions did go to LE AP, and we gave our opinion on it.

This one is difficult, because it's primarily enforced at-sea. You can make your declaration that you're switching gear, but, with our limited resources, it would only be at-sea, and so our main concern, and there's only one listed in the decision document, but there's some other concerns out there, and it's more trying to figure out what gear the fish were caught on.

If we do a boarding dockside, or after the fact, it's going to be really hard for us to verify that, and so the intent is there to allow the fishing, but the enforceability of it still makes it difficult. A lot of this would be after-the-fact investigation, the time stamps, looking at logbooks, electronic logbooks, and so this wouldn't be real time. There's a lot of SMZs, and the bottom longline closure that's out there, and that causes concern, and so I just wanted to raise that.

Then, while I have the mic, just to throw out consideration, and you guys were talking about the stowage definition, and the other addition that's already in the regs, going through the SMZs, is to

have the buoys disconnected from the gear as well, and I believe most folks already have those disconnected, but just to note that, for consistency, to maybe add that language in there too, and we're happy to still talk more, and I do want to note that we have one of our agents in-person as well, Special Agent Mitchell, and so he can speak more to questions that you have as well. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so I don't have a VMS on my vessel, and so I'm not really up to speed on how the VMS operates, and what it does, but I have a general idea, and so I'm not opposed to having VMS to use multiple gears on a trip, because I just need to be able to use multiple gears to survive and have a profitable trip, and I'll do whatever's necessary, and so, if that means VMS, yes, that's what I'll get, and so, yes, it's what do we need to satisfy everybody, so that we can use multiple gear.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey, and then Amy.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I understand the use of the permits, and trying to get there, and I'm just not a fan of more regulations. We already -- You're already allowed to use buoy gear. How many buoys can you use? You're allowed ten hooks on that buoy gear, and does anybody -- I don't know the question, and how many buoys are you allowed to put out there? I'm just -- I was asking, because Amy got me the answer to the ten hooks, and I was just asking about the buoy.

We talked about bad actors, and we talked about -- Somebody said gag grouper fishing, and we already allow buoy gear. It allows you to have ten hooks, and so, if somebody buoy gear fishes, or -- I'm just not for more regulations, because I don't see the issue of a problem, and you talk about bad actors, and, well, there's bad actors in a lot of things.

I'm supportive of using the gears, and being able to do multiple things, but it's due to minimal part, minimalist part, and some people might not have the dollars, or the money, to go buy, or to fulfill the obligation that it allows them, and so I'm going to be supportive of this at the end, but I'm not supporting -- I just don't like the more regulations and more hurdles. At the same time, you already allow buoy gear fishery, which is a bottom longline with just ten hooks, because it's on the bottom.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to get the document pulled up to figure out how we want to edit that. Thank you for that presentation, Jessica, and don't go far.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you for hearing from me. My name is Kevin Mitchell. I'm the agent here in Charleston. I just wanted to reiterate a couple of things that Matt spoke on and to give you as the council a real-world expectation, should this amendment pass. The VMS, Mr. Phillips, if it does pass, I think that's one of the only ways we'll have any enforcement over this, but, to be clear, realistically, the weather conditions, and the boat platforms that we run, a lot of times we're not going to be able to get out there and real-world check.

To reiterate what Mr. Walia said, yes, this is going to be on the dock after the fact. That being said, that's what we do with a lot of our fisheries now, but, with the VMS, that's the only way for us to make sure, if there's a gear change, if we can't get out there real-time offshore, that the boat is not in a prohibited area with prohibited gear. Again, either way, I just want you as the council

to have a real-world idea of how we're going to be able to enforce this, and 99 percent of it is going to be at the dock after the fact, which is a little bit of a hurdle to figure out how did you catch this fish, and what gear did you use. Either way, I just wanted you to have a real-world idea. Thank you very much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't know how I'm asking this question too, but I understand, like with a shrimp boat, how VMS is used to tell like towing speed versus steaming speed and things like that. I don't quite understand the technical aspects of understanding whether or not a snapper boat is a bandit fishing or longline fishing, but Jessica is so smart.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and so I can help to explain a little bit more about how the VMS works, since we do use it in the Gulf, and so, with the VMS, we typically have it on twenty-four-seven, but it's at one-hour pings. Sometimes we have stipulations where, if it's at the dock, we can put four-hour pings. That used to be done, and sorry, and pings are -- It's recording your location. The at the dock to the four hours is done because of battery life.

The new VMS units that are out are spectacular. They much have much better battery life. They have tablet interfaces, but, back to specifically to your question, a lot of times what we can do is, when it's approaching a closed area, which is a pretty big concern, is law enforcement can start making it ping almost every minute, or even shorter than that, and we pay for that. That does not come at the cost of the fishermen, because you're looking to see if the vessel is coming in.

You can sometimes have automatic notifications that warn your captain you're approaching a closed area, and so, a lot of times, they might approach an area, and if it's a seasonal closure in particular that they're not aware of, those reminders are really helpful, because they don't intend to be, you know, fishing in that, and having that reminder is good, and so there's a lot of benefits to that.

While we're speaking on it, there's a lot of safety benefits that come to VMS, and so we've had a lot of real-world circumstances where a vessel has gone down, and I was working in the Northeast when one of their vessels was going down, and we had an observer onboard, but we also had a VMS unit. The observer got a message to us that there was trouble with the vessel. We got to OLE, and they pinged it just constantly, which was able to direct the Coast Guard directly to the vessel, and so, in that sense, there's benefits that are outside of management and enforcement to that that come with it, and that's typically what I hear from the Gulf guys, one of the reasons they appreciate the VMS unit.

I'm do suggest, if you're considering it, maybe go talk to some of the Gulf guys, how they manage their fisheries, how they might use that VMS, and what their pros are, versus, you know, the weight of having that VMS constantly on, but hopefully I answered your specific question about how it could be useful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and closed areas I think are not necessarily -- I mean, there are some, but it's not the main concern. How can you tell if someone is bottom fishing, also in relation to

what they're actually catching, versus bandit fishing and what they're catching when they're bandit fishing, with VMS? I'm a fan of it, like I said, and I'm just trying to make sure I understand the utility of it.

DR. STEPHEN: We'll go into -- The shrimp industry was a good one, and so we use GPS positioning in the Gulf shrimp industry to determine catch and effort going from it, because you're going a different speed when you're trawling, right, and so then you're going -- Then you're getting to a different location. Other regions also use that, in where they'll have different ping rates that help tell what a vessel is doing, so you can identify when they're fishing.

We would have to think about what those factors might be if we want to use it in that method, to determine bandit from longline, and so that would probably, you know, need some discussion with industry of what you do and how you do it. Typically, what you're seeing is where they're being at that location when they're switching the gear, and so that timestamp, and that's the same thing we were kind of asking for, in that the gear notification would automatically be done with that VMS when you say you're switching gears.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Dewey, then Amy.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and the reason why I say this is you just heard that 99 percent of the enforcement is going to be at the dock, which is free. The VMS that we use pelagic longline fishing, I think it's -- If the money is available, it's like \$3,300 for the unit, for particularly what we had, and it's \$65 a month, and we had a ping rate of every hour, is what we have for pelagic longline, I believe.

The first system was given to me, and the other two systems I had to buy, and so I just think there's other ways for enforcement, through the dockside monitoring, to look at the bad actors, what's being landed, how often do they land something, and what species are they being landed, and, you know, with some of our trip limits, we've got crumbs, and so it's not like it's tens of thousands of dollars of something being landed, and, you know, that's my only reason. Basically, I want full use of the permits, but I'm not looking for no more regulations that cost the fishermen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, to kind of piggyback on Dewey, you know, my thought process is, after hearing some comments, and this idea that perhaps some of these fishermen would be considering VMS moving forward, things that we need to be thinking about, and talking about transparently, would be, to be able to have multiple gear use, you're going to have to have your VMS on every single trip, and it's not like just when you're going to be using multiple gears, and it's going to be every single fishing trip you take.

You're going to have to hail-out, the button, but you still have to -- I mean, there's all of these other things we haven't even talked about, like hail-out and hail-in, and when is the commercial electronic monitoring going to be up and running, so that we can take our gear and push it to our catch, and I think I have more questions than I have answers, but I was just curious about -- If you want to go, Jessica.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and so I'll comment a little bit, and so the hail-in and hail-out isn't necessary a requirement for every VMS. We tend to use it because it's a helpful tool, but so, just because you're going to have the VMS for the gear switching, it doesn't necessarily mean you need to have the hail-out or hail-in. Those are used for different tools for different aspects of it, and so I wanted to keep that in mind, that you could do different things with the VMS.

MS. DUKES: Okay. Jessica, keep this conversation going, and this is good, and so, in essence, perhaps it could just be that, in this particular instance, for the utility of multiple gears, you could just simply say, yes, you have to have a VMS on your boat, and you have to have it on at all times, and then, when you switch the gears, there's a process to do that.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, that's correct. That would be the most simplistic way of doing it, and, again, this would be something I would suggest would go back to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel for their input and suggestions, and I'll admit that I have not looked at that recently, and so I'm not as up to date.

MS. DUKES: Then, to the point on the commercial e-logbook, I cannot remember what the implementation date that you're shooting for is right now.

DR. STEPHEN: So that's a little bit up in the air. We have the proposed rule route, right, and so that's sitting up at Headquarters. We're also working on this east coast logbook system that everything is going into, particularly when we have some of the other things like MFA, and just ways in which to do cost savings for the agency, and so that's moving along fairly rapidly. I just hosted a meeting where we discussed more about that, and so more to come on that as we start to move forward to it, but we're definitely progressing at a faster rate than we had been, and we also have the permit system now working.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can I go to other folks? All right. Charlie, and then Rick.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Dewey, I know it's more equipment, but I actually see this as less regulations, because we don't have -- If we don't have to hail-out, which we shouldn't, and, I mean, they're looking at us. The only thing we do, other than have the VMS on the boat, is say when we're changing gear, and say when we're changing it back, and that's it. We don't have to be trying to see if our sat phones work, and get out on the bow in weather.

To me, this is simpler. It's more gear, but I think what you get for it, and even though law enforcement may have to write a ticket at the dock, they will have much more information about what's going on, because it seemed like I read, at some point in time, they caught somebody in the Gulf that was doing something, longlining or something, where they weren't supposed to be, and they could just tell they were longlining looking at the track, and the speed, and you can't do that, you know, just calling in and out. I think it's just going to be part of making our fleet professional in the long run. Anyway, that's just me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to Rick, and then we're going to go in and try to edit these alternatives.

MR. DEVICTOR: I think that's where I was going with this, was perhaps -- Well, it looks like we need to modify Alternative 3, per the discussion round table, because we were talking about prior

to departure, and I heard Jimmy say that's not what we're thinking of, and the IPT could build in some language from Jessica's presentation, I think, and perhaps are we looking at an Alternative 4 at this point, and just put in VMS? Have everything else, but just put in the VMS on that one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so what I just heard was an Alternative 4 that would have the VMS requirement, and then, just so I understand Rick, on Alternative 3, you're talking about, instead of the notification prior to departure, which is that highlighted part on the screen, it would be changed so that it's like at-sea notification as gear is changing, and that's how that highlighted part would be changing. Okay, and I just wanted to make sure I understand what you're saying. All right. I'm going to go back to hands. Dewey, you had your hand up.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: You know, Charlie talked about the VMS. The next question is, is it going to be free? The VMS, the \$3,300, and I know some are able to do that, and how about the ones that are not that? You know, also, I look at the buoy gear fishery, and you can go out there, in your red snapper area, and set a limited amount of buoy gear with ten hooks on there.

You can haul that up, however way you choose, and you can go in there inshore and set your shark gear, and you're all legal, and so why do we want more regulations that's going to cost people money than we already have, when you've got legal means of fishing right now that I don't know how they could tell the difference if you're buoy gear fishing or if you're hook-and-line fishing. You catch a certain species, and you come in there and go shark fishing, and only use that as an analysis, because it just -- The regulation part of it, if somebody's going to give everybody free VMS, hey, that's great. Then it only costs the fishermen \$65 a month, maybe, thereabouts, and so that's another thing. I haven't seen no free trees lately, but it's just one thing I look at it, and I think there's a -- I'll leave it at that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, and so, as you're going through this discussion, and so I want to make sure we're good, and so what we're talking about is we're talking about modifying Alternative 3 so it's at-sea, and we're talking about adding an Alternative 4 that would have something in there about VMS.

We've also heard today that Alternative 3 might take more time, might slow this entire amendment down, and the VMS might make it go faster, and so that's another consideration, but all of that to say that we're working on a document that we hope, at the June council meeting, we're preparing it for public hearing, and I would like the public -- If we are at all thinking about VMS, I want them to be able to comment on it, and so I would love to see an alternative, you know, that we're starting to craft now, so that we could get it ready, but I'm going to go back to hands. Kerry. Okay. Let's go ahead, and let's take a break. Kerry has to step out for a work thing, and let's take a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let's get going again. All right. Where we left off before the break was about modifying Alternative 3 and adding an Alternative 4 with a VMS requirement. Are we good with that? What this means is it would be added to the document, and then some analysis would be done prior to June, so that we could look at a prepared for public hearing document. Is that how this would work?

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DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess the expectation for the analysis should probably not be too extensive, just because we are very limited time, and we are also -- This is not the only action in this amendment that we are developing, and so we're talking about a month between now and when the briefing book will need to be completed. We're talking about a month in between now and when we need to have the briefing book completed, and we'll need to have whatever is done additionally here, along with what we are already developing for this amendment, and so I would say we would be more looking to do just the what is needed, what is, you know, bare minimum necessary, as far as analysis for VMS. We would do what we can in that time, but I'm not going to set the expectation that we're going to have everything done before this public hearing draft on that additional alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so are we good to edit Alternative 3 and add Alternative 4? Okay. I see heads nodding yes on that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just following-up on the earlier wreckfish discussion, we kind of had some background back and forth between myself, Regional Office representatives, and General Counsel, and so the difference for wreckfish is that basically there are two different sections of the federal code. One is addressing the bottom longline species requirement for the non-wreckfish species, and then there's a completely separate section for wreckfish.

What we would probably do, to kind of accommodate the request that's been made, is basically make another alternative that is specific for wreckfish, and so that would be like an Alternative 5, in which we're adjusting -- Removing that requirement of wreckfish cannot be onboard if there's bottom longline gear onboard, and then kind of setting similar requirements as what we're saying for the other species, and so we would probably do kind of two alternatives, one for the everything else and then one for wreckfish. That way it gets hit in those two separate parts of the code, but we can add that as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm looking at Charlie. Is that the intent, that we would add an alternative that would speak to wreckfish?

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I would like to make -- I mean, the whole point is to make fisheries more efficient, and ideally it would not slow anything down, but yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That's adding an alternative, or alternatives, to incorporate wreckfish into this action. I think that's all we needed on this gear action. I think we're good to move into the next action, and so back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so, moving us down into Actions 3 through 10, and we're going to kind of address these as a bulk item first, and so the first item that will hit is the discussion about the temporarily-adjusted trip limit alternatives, and kind of the process that we've been starting to go through of how trip limits could be adjusted from one year to the next based on the harvest in that previous year, and we have some draft language for different alternatives.

The first alternative that we have here, and we don't have the number listed underneath each of the separate actions right now, because we want to get some feedback from you all on what these should look like, and what we would do is we would apply the same alternative in each of Actions 3 through 10, and so we kind of have A, B, and C right now, and the plan would be pick from A,

B, or C which ones -- You know, you can pick one, or you can pick multiple, but which ones do you want under each of these actions, and then, once we kind of have that formula, then we'll adjust it based on the species that are considered.

Remember we have I think it's eight species that are being talked about, as far as changes to trip limits in one way or another, and those eight species are different enough that we can't really group any of them together. They may have a different, you know, season start date, or they may have a split season, or a different trip limit, and so we're addressing them in these separate actions, but we're trying to do a lot of, you know, copy and paste, and make minor changes, so that we are not making crazily different changes to all of these different species.

What we have here, and so Draft Alternative A -- All of them have this language of providing NMFS the authority to increase or decrease commercial trip limits, and the differences between these actions would have to do with the -- Or rather the decision points for these actions have to do with the trigger, which would be this part. If less than this percentage of the ACL is harvested, or projected to be harvested, then the trip limit would be potentially adjusted by the agency for the following fishing year, and so you have the trigger at that point.

Then, depending on B or C, you have different guardrails, if you will, and so the guardrails would be upper and lower bounds on how high the trip limit could be adjusted, or how low the trip limit could be adjusted from one year, and so Draft Alternative B includes guardrails that would be plus or minus 50 percent of the current annual catch limit, and so, for example, vermilion snapper has a thousand-pound trip limit in a given year, assuming the current trip limit in a given year, and it could be increased to no greater than 1,500 pounds. That would be a 50 percent increase. Conversely, it could be decreased to no fewer than 500 pounds, and so it's plus or minus 50 percent.

Draft Alternative C is a bit of a tighter guardrail. It would be plus or minus 25 percent, and so none of these numbers are necessarily set. You all can, you know, have your discussion and set what you think would be appropriate guardrails, as well as what you think would be an appropriate trigger, but these are some of the decision points that would need to be made so that we can set this process up and there wouldn't need to be a prolonged type of public comment opportunity to go about making these changes, and I'll pause here to see if anyone has any questions.

I think Dominique was going to give some information on kind of what this looks like with greater amberjack, as an example species, but we can do that after we see if anyone has any general questions about what we're discussing here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I was just wondering about when. There's a projection in here, and when would this be done? We thought about the timing, you know, because you have when data become available, and then you have the fishery starting, and then you have the time to change the trip limits, and so my concern with this has just been is it practical to do this, and I think some of our issues with Spanish mackerel, and trying to do step-downs and stuff, and we've seen that that's just not practical within the timeline that we have, and so I'm kind of concerned about do we have the ability to actually do this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, kind of responding to that, I'll scroll down past the alternatives and jump to -- We have this very long and very colorful table, okay, and this table describes, if you were to do this type of change for all of the species that you're talking about, you know, and this incorporates all the different split seasons, all the different start dates for all these different species, and this is kind of a calendar year description of what deadlines are getting hit.

The color coding that is in here, just to give a brief summary of it, your green is going to be the final implementation date when an adjusted trip limit would go through. The pink, or actually, on that screen, it looks more purplish, but it looks pink on my screen, and this would be kind of when the Regional Office would be submitting the temporary rule package.

That has to happen before the implementation date goes through, and we kind of game planned for about two months ahead of time that they would be submitting that package ahead of the implementation date, and so you can see, for example, greater amberjack gets the rule package submitted January 1, so that the implementation for season one can go in place March 1. That's the beginning of season one.

The blue lines would be when we would be expecting the projections from the Science Center ahead of a council meeting, and so, for example, those species that would be coming to the council for consideration of trip limit changes at the March meeting, the expectation is that the Science Center would have the projection memo for those species by somewhere around mid-February, kind of game planning for the briefing book deadline.

Normally, the March meeting is that first full week of March, and so mid-February is about when the briefing book would go up, and so you can see vermilion snapper season two, gray triggerfish season two, and those would be submitted for the March council meeting. They would be discussed there.

Within this process, there would be kind of check-ins between the agency and the council at the council meetings, where the agency would say, you know, we have this projection that says vermilion snapper in season two is not going to meet its ACL. They come to the council, and what do you think the trip limit should be next time it's season two, and should it go up, or should it go down, or should it stay the same, and then the agency would consider the council's recommendation in their decision of whether to increase or decrease the trip limit.

Following a council meeting, the council would send a recommendation letter to the agency, and the agency would submit the temporary rule package, and then the different trip limit would go into place, but you can see these different color coding, the different dates that would need to be met by different entities throughout the year, okay, and now, again, this looks very complicated, because you have eight different species in there. The fewer species that you're talking about, the more aligned things can become.

At the same time, you know, we kind of recognize there's a lot of variety within the snapper grouper fishery, and so this could become, you know, more a normal process that you would have if you decided to implement this type of action, and so it would just be almost a standing portion of the council meeting where you all take a look at the snapper grouper trip limits for anywhere from two

to five species, and you say keep it the same, increase it or decrease it, and then the agency makes a decision in follow-up of that meeting, and so that kind of addresses the timing.

Because of that -- Sorry. Coming back to the actual question, the timing means, if you work backwards from implementation date to temporary rule to when the council is meeting, your projections are probably going to be -- Let's say out of, you know, your twelve months in a year, probably month eight, eight to nine, would be when your projections would be made relative to that year, and they would be looking at are you predicted, in a calendar fishing year -- In August, are you predicting that you're going to hit your ACL, or are you going to be significantly lower than your ACL, and so that's kind of the timing with which projections would be based on. It wouldn't be based on the end of the year, because you need to have a rule change in place before the end of the year, and so you need to give that buffer time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So the first one, if you want the adjusted trip limits January 1, you're saying the Science Center is going to need to be doing the projections in August of the prior year.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Correct. August of the prior year. The council will get them at the September meeting.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So, if we want a change this coming January, we need projections in August, and the Science Center is going to be using data from, at best, May, and I doubt they're going to be using June. I mean, we have a significant lag just getting data for stock assessments, and so that's greatly impacting my thinking on this, is just the timing that we get in just getting data for stock assessments.

They're going to be using preliminary data for quite a few months, you know, because there's the time to report, and then we don't know that they're late, and then we wait to see, and all the things that we hear that tells us we can't get final data for a stock assessment until June, you know, following the year, and so then I'm thinking like Dewey, who is always interested in, well, when and where is this fishery happening.

If you have a fishery that substantially happens in the fall, and you're doing a projection with data through the spring, I don't know that we're going to be able to have much confidence in saying that we think they're only going to catch 75 percent, and then what if it turns out, because of the time that this takes, you're grossly wrong in your projection that you made with 30 percent of the data on, you know, the 100 percent of the fishery, and this rule package has been submitted, and I guess this would be like, you know, to Rick, and what's our options for saying, in December, whoa, stop the presses, and we better not do this, you know?

I just think that this is a good idea, but, to me, knowing pretty well how the data and timing of this stuff works, I'm not sure that we're there, in terms of making it happen in this way, in this real-time way, unfortunately.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to go to Rick, and then I have a question, too.

MR. DEVICTOR: Yes, and I had some of the same thoughts, and, you know, this is pretty complicated, as we know, and so what really helped me was it's actually like a five-step process that this is, and it starts off with the Science Center providing the projections, and the council talks about it, and Mike just went through a lot of this, and then we get a recommendation letter, and then we submit the temp rule package, and then the trip limit goes into play, and so it's actually, you know, five different steps.

What helped me was to take this information and just walk through it with one species, and not a split season, the most basic starting January 1, and John hit upon a lot of this, and what you would get is a projection from the Science Center on August 15. The council talks about it in September, and recommendation letters are sent in October, the temp rule is submitted in November, and, to John's question, yes, we don't want to pull back something that we submit, and that will be a mess.

Then, again, what happens if you all look at landings, and something drastically changes, but you had already sent your recommendation letter, and so, yes, lots of questions I had also, but, again, what I recommend, if you're going to dig into this timing, is maybe it's good to just look at one species, and kind of walk through some of that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and let me ask my question, and so, basically, for all of the different species that the council discussed, you basically have two options. You're basically saying, hey, we're going to select some static, new static, trip limits, or you're going to go with this adjusted trip limit option, or both for each species, and is that what we're saying in this action?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Well, in the next eight actions. In the next eight actions, yes, you would be potentially, A, changing the static trip limit, B, adding a process where you have an adjustable trip limit, where that static trip limit could be adjusted up or down based on the harvest in the previous year, and just noting that I pulled up on the screen kind of Rick's way of approaching it.

When I made the document, I was thinking of it through a calendar year. Rick sent me something that was thinking it through like all the way through for one species, and so this is kind of the same information, and just a different format, but it lays out those five steps, and the dates that are associated with those steps, kind of the same as what that other table did, but just this may be a bit more digestible, because it's smaller and more compact.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so, just to continue my question, so, for every one of the species that we're talking about here, we could make a decision that we're not even going to consider this, I don't know, floating trip limit or whatever, and we could just say, okay, for hogfish, we're only going to consider static trip limits, and then maybe for one species, vermilion, we're going to say, okay, we are going to consider these floating trip limits, if you will, in addition to a static trip limit change, and so you could make it -- Make that decision for every single species and you would be -- It's almost like kind of choose your own adventure for every single one of these species, right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes. The only exception I would say is you have I think three in there, and I think it's golden tilefish, triggerfish, and gag, where you are not considering a change to the static trip limit. The only change that you've directed to be considered at this point was kind of the floating trip limit, as you've said.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Jimmy, and then Charlie.

MR. HULL: Thank you. To that point, originally, I thought our idea was to take a single species, like vermilion snapper, where, year after year, we have not achieved the annual catch limit, and a very small percentage of it, and increase the trip limit, period, and not -- What you said. That's the simpler, easier thing to do, and then we can look -- You know, here we're trying to take in all these other species and go, well, we're going to do all these evaluations on the fly every year, and make these adjustments, and we can't do that, but we can look at a history of a species that, over the past several years, has not done it with the trip limit that's there, and we need to increase it, and that would be what I would suggest we do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, and I'm kind of with Jimmy, and for even more reasons. Let's not make it so complicated that we can't do it, and we're going to have a really hard time doing it anyway, even if we could get some numbers in in a timely manner, because you're going to have effort shift, and, once permits can be traded on one-for-one, you're going to have a number, amount, of people coming in, that we don't know how many people coming in, or how fast they come in, and so we've got so many moving parts and pieces that I don't see how we're going to be able to do this. It would be great, but I don't see how we're going to be able to make this dog hunt. We've just got too many moving pieces.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, I think so, and I think -- Now my recommendation, where I'm looking at this, is raising the trip limits to make sure that you're catching what you're allowed to catch to me is consistent with this executive order, and making the most of our fisheries, and likely to be the type of thing that will be fast tracked through approval, along with the permit stuff.

The other bit -- This is complicated. It may be something that we need at some point in the future, you know, Charlie, but I think you just -- Something else I hadn't even thought about was you're significantly changing the baseline if this permitting thing goes through, and in next year's fishery, our 2028 fishery, may be very different than the past, and you guys know how the projections are done. They're going to say, you know, over the last five years, what percentage of the fishery was landed by this time, you know, and we do projections by looking at the past, and hoping that's a crystal ball into the future, and you're changing the whole system right now with these permits, potentially, and the past may not tell us anything about the future.

Maybe you change a few of the trip limits, maybe conservatively, because of the like what is this going to do, as a first step, and then see how that goes, and see how the permit situation and effort settles out, and then, if you decide you need to better fine tune it, we come back and try to do that in the future.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I see heads nodding, but what are we nodding to? Are we nodding to we just want to edit the static trip limits, and we're just throwing this whole thing out, and we appreciate that staff have worked hard to come up with this five-step system, but, now that we see how it would work in a calendar year, we think that there's some pitfalls to it, and so, instead, maybe we're just looking at the list of species we came up with, and we're looking at -- I'm going to call it the static trip limit options. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: The only thing I would add to that is the reason I think we had it in there in the first place is that we're trying to thread a very fine needle of keeping the season -- Ideally, what we really want is the very last pound of ACL to be caught at 11:59 on December 31, and this is what we were clumsily attempting to make happen.

I think, as long as there is, you know, a record, and the rationale behind this is the council's intent is still as it has been, unless this has changed, to have a year-round fishery, to find the trip limit that gets us the combination of the simplest way to manage, but a year-round fishery, and the most efficient. Those are the things we're trying to get, and that's what we will then proceed to talk about during the static trip limits, but it's probably important for us to continue to remember that that's how we got in this box in the first place, is all the times we've talked about we want fish all year, and not just 3,000 and 4,000-pound trip limits and have it close in August.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: You know, and that's not even getting into that, ideally, we're going to be moving away from Cadillac assessments into quicker Chevy assessments, and so we're going to get, ideally, and I said ideally, and you heard me, and I want it on the record. We're going to get assessments every three years or whatever, and so, by the time the dust settles, we can make much better management decisions, ideally.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so it sounds like we are -- We've had some discussion here that we can get to where we want to be, which is trying to take all of the ACL, make sure that's all harvested, with the static trip limits, as opposed to this, which might not actually be able to be implemented at the end of the day. Okay. Rick. Rick, and then Jimmy.

MR. DEVICTOR: Yes, and, of course, just building on what Kerry said, the idea was how can we be administratively more efficient, and like how can we move forward changing trip limits without going through an amendment, right, because that takes two, whatever, or three years, even if it's a framework, and so, again, going back, the idea was to get 100 percent of the ACL, but, also, can we affect next season, and so I think we should still look at it, and keep it in mind. You know, we're always looking at streamlining and efficiency on the governmental side, and so maybe we'll still look at this.

I know we talked about last time that HMS maybe does this for bag limits. I know it was brought up before, but anyway, and so something to think about, and I think the intent is good, but this definitely shows that it's definitely harder than, you know, it is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I think we covered it. I think going back to adjusting the static trip limits for the species that we have not come close to the ACL on, and we need to increase the trip limit to better achieve that, and keep the fishery open as long as possible, and not get into this complicated, temporarily-adjusted trip limit alternatives. I would just take that out of here and replace it with adjusting the static trip limits.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, and I don't want to belabor this, but I'm just curious, because I was just at the Mid. I mean, they set specifications every year. What magic Magnuson tool do they have that we do not have, and what did they build in their plan that they did not -- That we did not build into our FMP?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I believe that they set the specs for three years and then change them if they're needed.

MR. CARMICHAEL: They have a process. It's spelled out in the Federal Register for how they set their regulations, and it involves, you know, the scientific review, the advisory review, or recommendations given to the council, and the council reviews it, and then their implementation is they write a letter, following the council meeting, to the Regional Administrator, who then implements it.

It's been likened to our expedited framework, which is, you know, at its fastest, like what, a two-meeting-type thing, and it's somewhat similar to that. I have been told, at times, that there's a bit of a -- How they handle NEPA difference that might affect that, so that our expedited framework is more accessible to us at this point in time under NEPA, and NEPA things that have been put in here, than their process, which is essentially a single council meeting, and then, usually within a few months, the regs are put in.

I mean, that's the kind of stuff we're going to be looking at, with the governance and the efficiencies discussion, to see. I do think though that, for the most part, our expedited framework, which we don't use that much, may give you guys what you want if you do these static changes and then some aren't coming out like you want, or things are changing in the fishery. You know, keep in mind you have like two meetings, and so you could add something like this with a different timeline, where you ask the Science Center, hey, we weren't happy with how that trip limit turned out, and give us the projections of what would happen if we did some different types of trip limits.

Then you could, in theory, you know, an expedited framework, something like that, through like your June and September meetings, and have it in plenty of time to be put in, but, you know, you would be having like more of a year lag, which actually works, and it may be enough for where we are now, as, you know, a transition before we decided to really thread that needle finer and say is it even realistic to do anything, or do we even need to do anything, on this, you know, more real time, with like a six-month lag.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I have Trish, and then Kerry.

MS. MURPHEY: I just wanted to jump in real quick and just say I agree with everybody around the table. I wish there was just a thumbs-up button here to make things easier, but it does seem very complicated, and so I'm with everybody on the static trip limits.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Trish. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: John, thank you. That's very helpful, and, to that point, I wonder if we don't somehow build into our council meeting process, wherever you think it's appropriate -- One of the things we don't do is we don't sit down on -- We don't have a regular meeting that we go what were

the commercial landings last year, and what were the whatever, and, in fact, to the point I've made a zillion times since I've been on this council, we pretty much only get things on the agenda for reacting to an assessment, or something like that, and so is there a way for us to procedurally, per our innovation plan, have a certain council where we know we're going to have one agenda item where we look at -- We can all decide what species matter, and we don't need to look at everything, but we see what the landings did in X period of time, and we decide whether or not we need to do an expedited framework, because, if not, then it's on us to go look up what the landings were and see if we hit them or not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I think the SAFE report can do this for you. Every two years, we plan on bringing this to you. We will have an icon up top that will show, you know, if you guys are -- If you are reaching your optimum yield, and so maybe we could also put something in there that indicates whether or not the commercial ACL is being achieved.

That way, if you want to look at it -- Whatever timeframe you want to look at it, let me know, and we can build a button in there that says -- So you can go right to the top and sort based on whether or not it's getting to that level, and you'll be able to pull out the information that you need, and so for the different species you would like to look at. Do you want a two-year time period, a three-year time period? How would you like to look at this? That way, we can start building it for the next time you get a SAFE report, which is going to be a year -- Probably a year-and-a-half.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, and then John.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would love to see a two-year period, and what I would love to see is, maybe in September, when Tracey Smart comes and gives us her SERFS, or whoever comes and does the SERFS presentation, that that's the meeting that we also look at a selected group of snapper grouper species landings, because those two pieces of information are the two pieces of information, in my mind, that I would use to go what's going on here, and do we need to do something about it, short of an assessment, especially because we know we're not getting a lot of assessments, and so, in September, that's when we look at this, is -- Would be my dream.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I was -- I guess I'm channeling my Kerry today, because I was thinking it would be great within our planning to do that, and that's what the Mid does. They -- At this meeting, we're doing this, and I think that would help, and then I think we have a bit of a universe of species that we talk about, and it seems like we now have a handful of species where you would like to see this more intense look at trip limits, because we don't necessarily need this for all fifty-five species in snapper grouper, clearly, but we do have a group of species that you are concerned about that are fundamental to the fishery, and important, that we can then look at, and I think that makes it manageable for everybody around the table, as well as those doing the analysis.

It also gives us some stocks, when we started thinking about the assessments, and which assessments do we want on this recurring basis, and, well, we're going to start with these, right? Knobbed porgy someday, but we need to start with these, getting regular good information, and

ideally getting this synchronized, which is part of the Mid's approach, is you get the assessment, and you get this landings information, and you get all this at one time. We can get there, and narrowing the scope of species gets us a long ways toward actually achieving it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we were trying to capture that here on the screen, a two-year frequency, typically at the September meeting, start with species included in this document, and then possibly adjusting the trip limits through the abbreviated framework process. Anything else that we missed on this discussion? Okay. Appreciate that discussion. I like the thinking of how we're going to try to be adaptable and innovative. All right. Back to Mike for where we're going to go next here in the document.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, given the direction that we're going to pull out, and I guess I'll go ahead and just overtly write it here that you all want us to remove the adjustable -- The adjustable alternatives. We'll remove the adjustable trip limit alternatives. I will say that does change the game plan, meeting plan, for the information being presented a little bit less, but we'll adjust, and we'll do what we need to.

At this point then, what we're going to do is we can start going through Actions 3 through 10, and look at the species-by-species, the species-by-species trip limits, and get you all's feedback on those, and so, at the top of these actions, I just want to point out, in your briefing book, you have this table that includes kind of the summary information, and this will definitely go into the amendment as well, but current trip limit, and then the percentage of the ACL that has been caught based on the three years of completed information that we have, and that will be going into the amendment, and then, if there are any closures, those are noted in parentheses in that table, and so you can use that as kind of a reference as we go through this.

Going through these actions, what we're going to do is we're going to kind of move back and forth between myself and Dominique Lazarre. She'll come up, and she'll present the trip limit analyses associated with each action, and so we'll start with greater amberjack. You can kind of see the actions on the board here. I'll go ahead and pull up her presentation, and she can come up and present the amberjack trip limit analysis, and then I'll hop back on to capture any discussion related to this action that you all have, and so give me one second to pull that presentation up for her.

MS. LAZARRE: All right, and so what I've tried to put together for you guys today was taking into consideration a lot of the discussion points from the last council meeting, in terms of some specific requests to look at kind of like the state-specific distribution of landings, to see how that might impact the analysis, and then to also take into consideration specific trip limit alternatives that were proposed during the last meeting.

Before I get into greater amberjack, I'll do a brief refresher of what the analysis is, and then, like Mike said, for all of the species that we had specific alternatives proposed, I've gone through and done some analysis to show you, similar to vermilion and golden tilefish last time, what it might look like based on what the current data shows.

Just as a reminder, we had the ten -- Actions 3 through 10 are looking at all of these different species. I just wanted to highlight that I'm not looking at 8 through 10, where you were only looking at adding the additional flexibility for the Regional Administrator to be able to change the trip limit, because it was very unclear what we might land on in terms of what the percentages

were, and so I focused, in terms of the available time, on just providing analysis on Actions 3 through 7, where we had specific trip limit changes that were proposed for each species.

This is, again, a reminder of the work that Kyle Dettloff did to help us, for the IPT, better understand kind of what proportion of the ACL was being caught on trips, and so Kyle used the trip ticket information to show the proportion of the ACL that was caught on a trip that did not meet the trip limit, versus trips that did meet the trip limit, and so the kind of bluish color on the screen are trips that did -- Or the percentage of the ACL caught on trips that didn't meet the trip limit for each species, whereas the red is the proportion where they did meet their trip limit.

The goal of this was for him to try to determine how much you might need to increase the trip limit to actually achieve the ACL, and so, as a reminder, if there's a number next to the bars, that's the increase, the eight X, or three X, and that's the increase that would be necessary, based on Kyle's analysis, to reach the ACL for that particular species. I tried to cut down his plot from last time to just the species that we're going to talk about today, and so the two greater amberjack split seasons, vermilion, red porgy, and then just the northern zone for hogfish and red grouper, and then just to highlight, for the second season for greater amberjack, there's no number, and that's because he would assume a ten X or greater increase is needed to reach the trip limit.

Okay, and so, in terms of the analysis methodology, just to kind of remind you of what I'm going to present, and so, first, I just do a general review of the landings history, so we all have a frame of reference for what the landings have looked like in reference to the current ACL over about the last ten years, and then I generated a monthly average of landings for each of the split seasons, or full calendar year seasons, for each species, so that you could see how much fish is being landed within each month for each of these species.

Then I took a look at the logbook trip records to better understand the distribution of how many fish are being caught on different trips, and so what proportion of trips, either in the region or by state -- How many fish are fishermen landing per trip, and so this is where I really tried to take into consideration what you guys asked for, in terms of what can we look at, and like are there differences between the states that might be impacting what we see.

I did do some work where I was looking at the state-specific landings averaged by month, but that got into a lot of confidential data, and so, even though I looked at it, it's not something I'm going to present, because it gets too confidential with all the different states by month, but I did make sure to look at that, and then, last, it's just showing you what the projections look like for each of the alternatives for each of the species, and then I have my like semi-fun graphic that I tried to put together.

Again, Number 1, we're just looking at the landings history, and what has the fishery been doing over the last ten-ish years? 2, I'm looking at the monthly landings, and so this is where we're getting our daily catch rates that we use for projecting the season, and so it's showing you about how much has been landed on average over the last three years by the fishery in each of those months, so you get an idea of what the magnitude of landings are.

Then I look at the trip records, and that's where I'm generating the scalar that we'll use to upweight those monthly landings, and then we're summing those monthly landings to figure out our

projection and compare our cumulative sum of landings to our current ACL to see whether or not we would project a seasonal closure.

All right, and now let's get into the species, and so, greater amberjack, we're looking at the season one on the left, and season two on the right. The landings trends have generally been flat in season one since a drop in 2019, and so somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000, close around 300,000, pounds landed annually in split season one for greater amberjack, whereas season two, again, relatively flat, oscillating between 100,000 and 200,000 pounds gutted weight over the last year for season two.

Now, when we're looking at the monthly landings on average for the last three years for both split seasons, again, you're always going to have season one on the left, and season two on the right, and I apologize that I couldn't put January and February at the end of the graph, because of the way this split season works, but, just based on the time, I couldn't figure out how to make the graphing work in time, and so I apologize for that, but, in general, what you're seeing is that the highest landings for greater amberjack are occurring in May, right after the one-month April closure for greater amberjack, and then, in season one, are staying around 50,000-ish pounds a month. In season two, the landings are a bit lower, between 10,000 and 40,000 pounds gutted weight per month on average. Now is when we're getting into more information. Sorry. A question?

MR. HULL: Yes, and thank you. The one bit of information I would like to know is how many trips were made to achieve these landings?

MS. LAZARRE Can you repeat your question?

MR. HULL: Yes, ma'am, and so, when you were looking at the previous landings to develop these numbers, do you know how many trips, how much effort, was made for the landings that you're getting? Do you know the number of trips?

MS. LAZARRE: So I could look at the logbook data and determine the number of trips per month, but generally it's two separate datasets. I'm looking at the ACL monitoring dataset that comes from the Science Center after all the landings have been finalized, and that's based on the trip tickets, and is basically aggregated by gear and species within each month, and so that's not giving me a number of trips that are associated with it.

It's giving me information about the number of dealers associated with those landings, whereas the trip records, which I'll show in the next slide, you have an idea of like the magnitude of trips that are being caught over the five years that are -- So I'm not looking at the number of trips per month, but it is something that I could get into, if we need to know how many trips are associated with those landings.

The way that I'm kind of looking at the distribution of trips is at the annual level, and here I'm showing the number of trips for the last five years from the logbook data, and I've broken it down by region on the left, and then by individual state on the right, so that we have an idea of the spread of trips, in terms of what proportion of the trips are catching how many landings, but, if it's important to look at the number of trips per month, that's something I can try to get into using the logbook data.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I can see where, for me, it would be important in like the case of amberjack, and so there's really not a lot of effort for amberjack right now off of my area, for different reasons, and weather being one, but the other is depredation from sharks. You can't get an amberjack to the boat, and so people don't even bother, and so, when you see the landings go down, I mean, there's a reason, you know, and so okay, and so it can be obtained. Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, to that, I'm not sure it can really, because -- I mean, yes, the number of trips, but you have no way of teasing out the data of what people are going to target, right, and so, in other words, how would you know? The only effort, CPUE sort of information, I think we truly can tease is how many people went to target snapper grouper species. I don't think there's any way, because of the way this fishery operates, that you can identify who decided and not decided to go amberjack fishing, based on the way we collect the data now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: These -- Considering what you had to work with, this looks really good. The problem is, with the changes that we're making, and adding more fishermen to the mix, and we don't know how many more fishermen, or how many more trips are going in, and is it going to be 10 percent more trips? Is it going to be 15 percent more trips, and, because they can catch 50 percent more fish, are they going to try to target amberjack, because it's more profitable at 1,500 pounds than it would be at 1,000, or -- None of these variables do we know. We're -- I mean, we're just -- It's a slippery ball we're trying to grab, and we're supposed to be the experts. Bless our hearts.

You know, we're going to use this as kind of a starting point, but we have to keep all these other things in the back of our mind, and the nice thing is expedited frameworks. If we miss, then we can change it, you know, at a relatively quick time, and so I'm really optimistic, and I'm glad to hear, you know, John explain all those options, but, yes, I'm definitely for picking them up, but I am skeptical about how far to go, because I just don't know what's going to happen, and I don't want to go nuts. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. John, and then Mike.

MR. CARMICHAEL: One thing that I am concerned about, and look and see in like a figure like this is, is the trip limit limiting, and, if the trip limit is not limiting, then increasing the trip limit is not necessarily going to increase the catch, and, if the trip limit were limiting, it seems to me you would see an awful lot of trips coming right up close to that trip limit and then dropping off.

If you think about recreational, where you're talking about ones and twos in fish and such, you see that, and I look at this and go most people are catching very few fish. A tenfold increase in this trip limit is probably not going to do anything, and so I think maybe we need to take a step back and get a better handle on why are we not -- Why are we not catching the trip limit we have before we increase the trip limits that we have?

Another thing, and now I'm thinking like Dewey a lot, but he's been getting to me, is travel lift boats, versus boat trailer boats, and I think you guys need to look at an analysis like this that looks at the size of the boats, because the trip limit that a day boat needs, you know, on a T-top outboard with a couple of coolers, or a fish box, is very different than what a multi-day snapper grouper boat needs, and maybe it's a daily trip limit type thing, as we get there, and something like that.

I don't know. I mean, I know that's a radical way of thinking about trip limits, on a daily basis, but, you know, when you have such vastly different classes of vessels in this fishery, I think you're going to have a hard time just tweaking trip limits to get where we want to go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I've got a lot of people in the queue. Mike is next.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I just really quickly want to note, kind of off of Charlie's comment, the thing that John introduced, as far as like abbreviated framework to potentially use to change trip limits, that would require you all to change your framework procedure. In order to do that, you need to change your framework procedure, and you need to include trip limits in the abbreviated framework procedure.

The abbreviated framework right now only includes annual catch limit, like ABC changes, but you if you want to -- But you can change your framework procedure. I'm just letting you know that it's not in there now, and you would need to take that action, and make that change, if you wanted that to be your option.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can we do that in this document?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm not going to tell you no, that you can't put something in a document, and, yes, you could do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think we need to add that action, but I'm going to go back to my list. I've got Kerry, then Dewey, then Dominique.

MS. MARHEFKA: John, I see your point. I do have a slight argument, in that I look at South Carolina, and there were -- I mean, it's little writing, and that's not a criticism. This is amazing. It's criticism of myself. Say ten or eleven -- Eleven or twelve trips in the State of South Carolina that met the trip limit, and two of those individuals, one of which could very well be my boat, having an increased trip limit does make a difference, and I think that's what we have acknowledged all along, is that this isn't going to necessarily get us to the ACL, and it's not necessarily going to change the entire fishery, but the traditional boats that are out longer, and go slower, it will benefit a portion of the fishery without, I would presume, hurting the other part of the fishery.

Yes, it's a small number, and it's not going to get us to our ACL, but it does make a difference for -- I mean, twelve trips, and that's a trip a month that you can get so many extra fish, and that could be a thousand more dollars a month in your pocket, just in South Carolina alone, and so I don't know that the argument is just to get to the ACL. It's also to benefit a lot of these traditional boats.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm going to you, John, to that point, but I've got a lot of other folks.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I wouldn't say don't change the trip limit, but I think that's an important rationale, and, you know, I think what it does argue against is like drastic changes in it at this point, until we better understand what's going on in the different vessels, maybe.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and it's almost like these short-term changes, that would do the benefits that Kerry is talking about, then we would intend to come back and look at this, after you change the two-for-one and figure out how the behavior of the fishermen are changing, because you don't know what type of boat they're going to use, how they're going to fish, what state are they going to operate off of, and you've just got all these other behavior factors that you don't know yet. Okay. I'm going back to my list. I've got Dewey next.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: To Kerry and Jessica's point, I think that the incremental changes would help, but I also think that we're going to learn more into the future once we get the SERO quota monitoring page fixed, and a few other things, and we can see how stuff is moving for each state. We don't want the confidentiality part, but we can see actually -- See how this fishery is moving, and, if we could get to where there's at least a monthly quota tracking by each state for a certain amount of species, then we're going -- You're going to either be able to see more of this flow and go, and then you can decide on the amount.

One last thing, and I was talking with some fishermen who knew northern Florida real well with the amberjacks, and a lot of the reason -- They said that the heavy hitters that used to fish for amberjacks have got out of it, and so that's -- You know, I think you're going to see this play out as we see whether it's a trailerable boat, or a travel lift boat, and how much is caught, and you're going to be able to see exactly what the answer is. It won't be 100 percent perfect, but it would be a lot closer, and this is a good way to help us here with what you have to do. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Dominique, and then over to Jessica.

MS. LAZARRE: So I think, in doing a lot of this analysis, and looking at these species, for me for the first time, a bunch of different species at the same time, I think of this analysis as being also baseline. We're just looking to see what we generally see. You guys proposed a lot of pretty modest increases, and, just by doing this presentation, and you'll see a lot of the projections are going to look very similar, and I'll skip to the end.

Most of them, you're not going to get really close to the ACL, but, in doing this, Jessica and I started talking about how we could add to this analysis, potentially for June or other meetings, and one of the things that's on the list, that I did not have time to do, is looking at capacity, as best we can, and so we're already planning to work together to try to match up the logbook data and see if we can get a better understanding of what the species composition is on trips, to understand if there are some trips that might be targeting particular species, either in time or based on the size of the boat, and that might be influencing things, because a lot of what we see in this analysis is that there isn't --

To me, it does not seem like the trip limit is what is limiting getting to the ACL, and so better understanding the things that we can look at via data, which are what species are you catching, and how potentially does the size of the boat impact that, and so we also see it. It's just we had very little time between when we last talked about this and today, and so I did as much as I could, but it's definitely on my plate, in terms of the next step.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That would be super cool. Jessica, over to you.

DR. STEPHEN: Just to add to that, there is certain information we do collect on the permit applications, such as the length of the vessel, the total horsepower of it, the hull materials, and, if there's anything in particular we can do, and I think fuel capacity, and there's things like that that you think would indicate more of that trailer boat, versus a non-trailer boat, because we do not collect that information, it would be helpful for us to know, because then we can start using the correct variables of what we're looking at in the permit system and apply that to the analysis we're looking at.

We do get different information sometimes for the U.S. Coast Guard-documented than the state-registered, and so the U.S. Coast Guard gives us the gross tons of the vessel, the net tons, and so it's a different way of looking at size. The most consistent we have is length, but we can also look at -- I could look into how much we have about like hull capacity, and we do have like what type of hull capacity they might have within it, and so, if there's any suggestions, particularly from the fishermen on here, about what variables about a vessel's characteristics might help us, we would appreciate that back, and then we can go dig through what we have in permits and see how we can apply it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, and so just a time check. We're set to end at 4:30 today. We are a little bit ahead of schedule, and so don't worry. We're doing good, and so, just thinking about the discussion today, and just be kind of thinking about wrapping it up, and we're still on the first species, which is fine, because we took out all those temporary moving trip limits, and we're ahead of schedule, and so just thinking about amberjack and what you might want to do here, if you have questions about the data, et cetera. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, I was just going to reply to Jessica's boats. I would, obviously, use length, and then a lot of these go-fast boats are thirty-five foot or something, and so, if you use length and horsepower, because those thirty-five-foot boats are going to be -- You know, 600 or 1,000 horsepower or something, and, for a thirty-five-foot snapper boat, it's going to be 175 horsepower, and so you could take those two factors and figure out what the go-fast fleet is and what the not. You know, I've got a forty-five footer that's got 800 horse, and so you can't necessarily use horsepower, but, if you use length, and then you figure out which -- The horsepower versus the length, I think you can figure it out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other -- What? Okay. Gas. Okay. All right. Anything else to help with what Jessica is asking for? Any other thoughts? Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: This is probably a reach, but I've really been thinking about this question that keeps coming up about what's going to happen when the two-for-one goes in place. One of the -- We have a couple of knowns. We know how many latent permits are out there. If we make the assumption -- If we're as conservative as possible and make the assumption that every single one of those latent permits is going to enter the fishery, is there a way to then -- Once you get a good characterization of effort, is there a way to proportionally assign that to the X number of boats that we're going to assume all come into the fishery?

Say right now the fishery is 40 percent fast and 60 percent slow, and then you take however many permits are latent, and assume they're all coming in, and do 40 percent of them to fast and 40 percent of them to slow, and assign them some level of whatever that average cap was to get the idea of what's the worst-case scenario if all of those boats come into the fishery and catch their trip limit off.

Like it's not completely unknown. There is a cap. There's a highest number of boats that can come in this fishery, and so we can know the worst-case scenario if they all come in. I suspect the answer is going to be, based on those multipliers, that we're still not going to hit the ACL, but, anyway, that's my thought process. You don't have to do any of that, but, if anything stirs in you when you're analyzing, that would be something I would be thinking about, is that 30 percent latent effort and assume the max effort comes out of those.

MR. PHILLIPS: If I was going to look at those numbers, I would probably split it up a third of them coming in, two-thirds coming in, and all of them coming in, and look at all three of those numbers, because we know they're not all going to come in, but you might get a third of them in. You may even get more than that, but at least you could have some kind of a pattern on what might happen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and, also, where this -- You know, I tend to think about a little bit of a profit or not-profit, and we can talk about all these boats possibly coming in, but there ain't but so many places where they could go to have the profit or not-profit, because I can just think in my mind, and so that's another thing, because -- I mean, unless they want to get rid of money, and the best thing to do is go into commercial fishing, and they can get rid of it real quick like, but I'm just saying that that's when you look at it, and so, you know, what state they're going to come into, or wherever like that, and what species they potentially fish.

I think the stuff that you all are putting together, both you and Jessica, because you all have got the holder of the truth of where the data is, and you can see what it is, where we don't get to see it, but you all can put it together, and you can really paint the picture of the lay of the landscape accurately, and so that's a good thing. Thank you.

MS. LAZARRE: I'm just going to temper expectations here. I will do as much as I can to incorporate as much of this conversation into the newest update on this analysis in the future, but, because they're unknowns, you already don't fully love what I'm doing. If I'm putting one-third, two-third, triple scalers on top of things, it's going to get wonky.

I can try to accommodate some of this, and I think that, again, a stepwise process, and the next step is seeing how best we can use the data that we have from logbooks to understand better what the connection between what I'm hearing mostly is length and horsepower, and whether it's gas or diesel, and like those things, using that to try to like determine what proportion of the fishery are in those categories, and then looking at these trip distributions, and not by state, but regionally, based on like looking at them by horsepower length categories to better understand that, and that, in my mind, is the next step.

Adding the latent permits on top of that, we might be able to put some scaler in, but just remember, when I'm doing my low, medium, and high scenarios, that I'm doing my pie-in-the-sky, and I hope that I understand this, and so, in terms of what I've done, the best assumptions that I can make are the people who are generally catching near the trip limit are likely the ones who are going to benefit from this.

If we see a clear distinction in the hull capacity parameters that we put in, then I can try to associate that with this, but I think we really have no idea what the change in the two-for-one is going to do, in terms of what people try to target, and so adding that layer might be maybe a step too far, but let's get through the first step, and we'll see where we go from there, but it's something that I'll definitely try to do. Should I keep going, or are we --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Hang on. Kerry.

MS., MARHEFKA: I will try to make your job easier, after trying to make it harder. Do we all agree that maybe the only thing they need to look at is gas and diesel, and they can throw out all the other, because I can't think of a scenario where that isn't the line. Can you all?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Do gas and diesel, and then you can talk about the rest.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and just to make your job easier and only look at one thing.

MS. LAZARRE: Well, I would never just look at one thing, and so I'll look at it, but I'll probably just apply -- Well, I have to know now, because you've told me that length and horsepower matters, and so we're going to see how that lines up, and then I'll show that you're right, and then we'll move forward from there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think one thing you could do is, you know, in terms of just the first cut of what will the higher trip limit do, is like right there, and it says 6 percent of the trips caught than 1,100, you know, and so you would assume that 6 percent of the trips then are going to catch 1,500, instead of 1,200 or 1,800, but then, Kerry, and all you guys, I was wondering, and like, so if the trip limit is 1,200 pounds, what do you think the good player fisherman, who doesn't want to go over that, what is he really bringing in?

So like is 1,100 pounds the right number, or would you really want to look at maybe the proportion that comes to like 1,000 pounds and above, to think of someone who is leaving fish biting, but they're stopping because they're afraid of hitting the trip limit, and what's that number, because, to me, that would be important as to what percentage of trips are really out there catching the trip limits and could have caught more, because, obviously, a guy that caught 500 pounds probably couldn't catch more, or had some other reason, or he's in a small boat, and his cooler is full, you know, stuff like that that won't be impacted by this, and so what is the sort of -- How close do you cut it, really?

MS. LAZARRE: Keep in mind I did have a 10 percent buffer on this, and so, if the trip limit is 1,200 pounds, I included trips within 10 percent of that, and so 1,080 pounds, and just to have kind of an arbitrary 10 percent number -- If there's a better percentage, I can incorporate that, but I did

incorporate some buffer room around that specific hard number, just because we thought that there would be some people who would stop fishing close, but not at that marker.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I had Amy, and then Dewey. Okay. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I believe folks know what their boxes hold, and their different things, and so they're probably within that 10 percent buffer of getting there, depending on how much ice, how long they've been there, and so that's something I feel quite good on, you know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're getting close to our end time today. Jimmy.

MR HULL: To a couple of those points, I try to catch exactly the trip limit, and by using -- I know the capacity from previous trips, or what my box holds, and so I try to exactly catch it, and the other -- You know, initially, we're trying to increase trip limits to further catch the ACL, and so how do we do that? Either by increasing trip limits or increasing effort, one or the other or a combination of the both, right, and so we've got to do one, or we've got to do both, and so it sounds like you guys assume that we're going to increase effort when we get rid of the two-for-one. I don't -- You assume that. If we know that we can increase trip limits right now, if we ever get to that, then say it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and do we think we're good for today? We'll pick this discussion back up in the morning on amberjack. All right. Just looking around the room, to make sure everybody is good. All right. Good discussion today. Good work. I believe that we are set to come back at 8:30 in the morning. Thank you. Thank you, Dominique. Thank you, Jessica.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on April 20, 2026.)

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APRIL 21, 2026

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going again this morning. When we left off yesterday, we were working on trip limits for greater amberjack, and so I think we're going to dive back into that. One of the things I wanted to come back to, in addition to going back to the topics on the purpose and need, is I would like to talk about today what needs to be modified for the snapper grouper abbreviated framework process and make a -- Prepare a recommendation for the full Snapper Grouper Committee.

We surfaced yesterday that commercial trip limits need to be added to an abbreviated framework process, but I'm thinking recreational bag limits probably need to be in there, but I think that we

need to bring this up so that the Snapper Grouper Committee can talk about it at the June meeting, and so, with that, I'm going to turn it back to Mike, so we can go back to looking at the data for AJ.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, and I think we left off kind of halfway through Dominique's presentation, and so I'm going to go ahead and pull her presentation back up, and she can finish then going over the amberjack projections, and then I'll come back on, so we can have the discussion about the scale or trip limit changes.

MS. LAZARRE: All right, and so, to jump back into it, we were talking about the distribution of landings per trip. On the left, we have kind of the regional view of the proportion of trips that are landing amberjack in the poundage, and so more than 40 percent regionally are catching less than 100 pounds of amberjack on a trip, and then you've got about 6 percent, in those top two categories in the red box, and my red box is over one too many bars for this graph, but, in all of my graphs, I tried to have kind of a red box identifying that these are the proportions of trips that we're altering in the trip limit analysis to upweight and figure out what -- These are the people that we assume are likely to catch the new higher trip limit that's being proposed.

Then, on the right of all these slides, you'll see the state breakdown, and so going from north to south, North Carolina through Florida, and then Georgia I think it's kind of interesting to look at in this graph, where it has more of a uniform distribution, whereas all of the other states in this season one for greater amberjack have near 40 percent of their trips landing less than 100 pounds.

These values are the specific scalars that we're using to up-weight the landing, and so I'm not going to show you the work that I did where I applied the state-specific scalars. I did do it, and, for most of these scenarios, I'll just tell you that it ended up being pretty close. If there was a closure projected, it was only a couple of days difference, and I think part of the reason why this worked out the way it does is because the -- Some of the areas that have a bigger weight might have smaller landings overall, and so it all kind of comes out in the wash as like an average when you're looking regionally, versus when you're looking at it state-specific, and so just things that I wanted to like highlight in terms of all these slides I'm going to present.

I try to identify what that 10 percent buffer is in my first bullet, so you know what poundage I changed, and then, just looking at these scalars, you can see they're all fairly similar. Georgia is a little bit higher, but, again, it's being applied to a smaller proportion of the trip records and landings in the projections.

Then here's our closure table, and so, for greater amberjack season one, there are no projections, or there are no closures projected, even for our low, medium, and high landing scenarios. Again, I did look at this with the state-specific scalars, and there's no major difference in the outcomes, and then, that column in the middle with the average landings, I'll always show you this projection plot afterwards, which gives you kind of a visual representation of how the landings are changing over time, and so like a slow ramp-up in March, a closure during April, and so you're not seeing a change in the landings, and then it continues to increase over the course of the split season, but, again, you're not seeing like a huge difference between the proposed alternatives and the no action scenario, which is the bottom, or the green, line.

Now, if we want to look at amberjack season two, September through February, again, on the left is that regional plot, and, if you look, it's really less than 2 percent of trips are catching between 1,100 pounds or more on those trips, and so it's a small amount of trips that we're using to up-weight that scalar.

Then, a little bit different than season one, all of the states have that high, close to 40 percent, in the less than 100 category for season two, tailing off as you go through the higher and higher poundage per trip for these distributions.

Then, looking at the scalars, I think it's good to see that they're quite a bit lower than they were for season one, and so, again, because there are so few trips in season two that are hitting that higher trip limit, the up-weighting value is pretty low comparatively, and so I don't think you'll be surprised that, again, no closures for any of the scenarios, low, medium or high landings used.

I think it's also good to remember that, you know, the preliminary analysis done by Kyle Detloff indicated that a 10X increase might be necessary, and we're not even doubling the trip limit, in terms of what we're looking at. Obviously, if all the discussions of two-for-one and other things - - You know, like there are going to be unintended consequences of changing the baseline trip limits, but just to show based on what we do know in terms of people who have been landing that higher trip limit, and increasing the trip limit, based on these alternatives, does not appear to cause much of a difference, and then, when you look at the projection over time for that average scenario, those lines are very different, because the percentage increase was so low. That's it for greater amberjack.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dominique, and so now we'll go back to the document. Now that we have this information, and we've seen all this, we'll go back to the document, and look at our alternatives, and make sure these are the right numbers.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so you have -- Right now, your alternatives include the current trip limit of 1,200 pounds, 1,500 pounds or 2,000 pounds, and you would have those evaluated for each season if you wanted season-specific trip limits, and so the main question to ask here is are these the alternatives that you want considered in this action, and are there any others that need to be explored, or is this the range that you want to see in the amendment?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thoughts? Charlie.

Mr. PHILLIPS: You know, and I don't -- You know, 1,500 pounds only going up 300 pounds, and so that's probably 25 percent, I guess, and, if you go up to 2,000 pounds, you're going up like probably 60 percent, and do we want to put something in the middle, like 1,750, just so we can really have a -- Even though we really don't know what's going to happen, but it might not be bad to put a 1,750 or something in there, just to -- For discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Is everybody good with that? Okay. I see heads nodding yes. All right, and so Mike is going to do some typing when he finds some out. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: To start the discussions, I mean, I'm inclined to, you know, go for the 2,000-pound increase. We're not going to reach the ACL, with the current effort, by doing anything like this, but it will be helpful to a fisherman that happens to get lucky enough to get on a bite of amberjack,

where he could actually make some money and provide product, and so, you know, in general, most of the -- Like we talked yesterday, most of the guys that used to specialize, and target amberjacks only, they don't exist anymore. They're gone, and so this is like on a -- This amberjack is more of a portfolio of your catch composition when you're fishing for everything else in the snapper grouper, and the jacks show up on a spot, and they start biting, and so, obviously, you're going to catch what's biting, but -- It would be helpful, I think, to the fishermen to go ahead and have the ability to catch 2,000 pounds when it happens, because it's just -- It's not like it's going to happen all that often.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have a comment and then a procedural question. I do -- It will be interesting to hear from the AP tomorrow, based on who's here also, because I seem to have a pretty strong recollection that Jack Cox, from North Carolina, several times has said he's really concerned about amberjack, and so, again, that gets us into the conundrum of are we not -- Why aren't we catching -- You know, why aren't we catching the ACL, but we are far below our ACL, and the ABC, and so I think that we're safe there for now.

Procedurally, Mike and Jessica, obviously, I know right now our job is to ensure that we have the range of alternatives, but I'm just wondering -- In our council meeting in June, the subcommittee is not -- It's the full committee's meeting, and we're supposed to have a document, prepare the document, for public hearing, right, and so is there any utility in, if we know -- If the subcommittee knows what it's preferred might be, to notate that now, so that it moves quicker in full committee?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, and Mike and I were just having that conversation, because I have the same concern, because there's not a big hunk of time for the subcommittee to meet at the June meeting. You all are having a good discussion, and kind of preparing the rationale right now, and I would go ahead and select your preferred. That way, when it goes out to hearing, people kind of know what you're moving towards. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: So, to that, I'll go with Jimmy. I think mostly I'm interested on hearing what the feedback is at 2,000, and so, for that reason, I'm comfortable if we go -- If we suggest to the committee that 2,000 might be the preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mike is capturing that. Are we good with that? Okay. People are saying yes for both seasons. Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So just a question related to this. Do you all want to keep it in the format that it's in right now, in which you're doing season one and season two, and we would select different subalternatives, or do you want to just flat out say you're going to keep the trip limit the same for both seasons, and then that would condense the options, and then, you know, we would still specify season one and season two, you know, that it applies to both, but we would just have one set of alternatives there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Keep it as simple as possible, quicker, and it's easier for fishermen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so then that would revise the format for this action, and then I think we're also removing Alternative 4, since we got rid of the whole temporarily adjust trip limit language, right? Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm more asking this question -- This is kind of out of curiosity, and, Rick, it may go in your direction. The whole pounds whole weight or gutted weight thing is an artifact of, as I understand it, a couple of amendments ago when amberjack, you know, had its trip limit set, and there was kind of a late change that happened, and that was to accommodate the late change that happened, but, now that this triple limit is being revised, it may be clearer to specify whole weight or, you know, gutted weight, and specify which one of those is being applied, and I believe the ACL is in gutted weight, and so would we be able to just put it in gutted weight, and set the trip limit is in gutted weight for greater amberjack, moving forward here?

MR. DEVICTOR: Yes, and, you know, I think that makes sense. We've been talking about that too, and, yes, it's probably simpler to have it in one unit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: If we do that, let's round it out to like 1,800, 1,850, and not 1,888 or something like that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Well, I guess to that, because the unit has been whole weight or gutted weight, I was just going to delete the "whole weight or" portion of that, and these would be gutted weight, gutted weight units, because I believe, Dominique, your analysis was all assuming gutted weight, and is that correct?

MS. LAZARRE: I used whole weight from the logbook data, because that's the form it's in, but I could -- It would just be a conversion to convert it back, and so the proportion wouldn't change.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so we can -- We can update that to reflect that, but, yes, we can just make it gutted weight.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That sounds good. People were saying yes. and thumbs-up, on the gutted weight. All right. Now we're going to dive into vermilion snapper, and so we're going to see some data first.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes. Just an overview of your, of your alternatives, the current is 1,000 pounds gutted weight, and you've directed for consideration of 1,250, 1,500 and 2,000 pounds as your alternatives, and I'll pause here to switch back over to Dominique's presentation.

MS. LAZARRE: So fun musical chairs today, and so you've seen a lot of vermilion already from the first time I presented, and so it's, again, you're seeing very similar information. Just to reframe things, January through June for season one, in about 2020, the landings dropped off, and have stayed pretty stable, at in the 300,000, or 250,000, pound annual range for season one. Season two has higher landings, at least through 2023, and then there was a drop-off in 2024, but, for the most part, the landings have been fairly stable since 2020 for both seasons, with season two having higher landings than season one.

Then, when we look at the monthly landings for season one and season two, season one ranged between 40,000 and 60,000 pounds per month. Season two ranges between 50,000 and 75,000 pounds per month, and so, again, you have, again, higher landings per month in season two.

Looking at the distribution of landings per trip, and regionally, about 40 percent of trips are landing less than a hundred pounds, as we see with some of the other species, but you have about 11 percent of the trips that are in that top two bin that's being altered for the trip limit analysis, and then, we look at this by state, we have a similar situation that we did with greater amberjack in season one, where Georgia has more of this uniform distribution, as compared to especially North Carolina and Florida, and then, even in South Carolina, you can see a slightly lower proportion in that smallest weight bin category, but I think overall similar trends between the states.

Then, when we're looking at the scalers, again, you'll see that pretty high scaler in Georgia, and also in South Carolina, because you had a higher proportion in that highest bin category for those two states. Florida still has a pretty high scaler, but, regionally, about a 34 percent increase is what we would expect when we alter those highest bin categories for the trip limit analysis.

For the most part, no closures are being predicted, and so I think vermilion is one of the situations where the baseline trip limit increase is really achieving the goal that you're looking for, where you're likely to have a pretty long season, and you get closer to the ACL than you have in more recent years, and so the only closure that's projected for vermilion season one is in that highest landing category, and so higher than average landings and the highest trip limit alternative that's being proposed.

When I looked at this with the state-specific scalers, there was only a three-day difference in the closure date when you're looking at state-specific versus regional, and so, again, the graph here is showing you that average scenario, and so you don't see the closure, because I'm looking at that middle column, and, with the 2,000-pound trip limit, you can see that you're getting closer to that ACL, and not quite there, but it's an improvement over what we've seen in the past.

Then, for vermilion season two, you have an even higher proportion of trips in that top two bin category of 900 pounds or more, about thirteen-and-a-half percent of trips being altered, as compared to season one, and, again, you have those higher landings, and so, in season two, you end up with a larger proportion of -- Or like up-weighting the landings a bit more, and you'll end up having some closures being predicted.

Then, when we're looking at the distributions by state, South Carolina is looking a little bit more uniform, and then Georgia kind of has the opposite trend, where you have a small number of trips, but you are having quite a few fishermen catching near that trip limit within Georgia, as compared to other states within the region, and so this might be a more important fishery in Georgia, in particular in season two, where some of those fishermen are really going after vermilion and are able to capture them in season two.

Then, when we look at our scalers, you see we're up-weighting by, again, about 40 percent in that highest trip limit category regionally, and then, again, the scaler magnitude is higher in season two versus season one, because of that higher proportion of trips in the 900-pound-plus category. In terms of closures, there are closures being projected for most of that high landings scenario, but most of those closures are close to the end of the year.

We also have to keep in mind that vermilion has a rollover, and so, you know, like the small amount of quota that might not be caught in season one would potentially prevent an overage, or this closure from happening in season two, if everything worked out as projected. Then, when we're looking at our graph, again, you're seeing kind of that green line on the bottom is our status quo, and then you can see that you're getting, again, closer and closer to that ACL line by the end of the season, based on the alternatives being proposed. That's all I have for vermilion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Any questions? I see questions. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Not a question, but just to start the conversation again, but I'm not a vermilion specialist, but I have talked to guys that are, and they really need an increase, and most of them would like to go with the 2,000-pound. I said, well, what if it closes early, and they go, well, at that point, at the end of the year, it doesn't matter. I understand there's different opinions, and so -- But these are the guys I'm talking to out of Mayport, and they go, you know, by that time, you know, we've got the fish, and there's going to be a short closure, or there may not be one, if there's carryover, as you said, and so, you know, they're pushing for 2,000 pounds. It would really be helpful for them, and so that's what I would like to see go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: A counterpoint. I am very comfortable with 2,000 pounds in the first season. I am very opposed to 2,000 pounds in the second season, and something that we need to consider is Amy just pointed out that, you know, sort of a lot of our dayboats are now targeting black sea bass, and they're going to be switching into vermilion when we decrease black sea bass, and plus add in the effort that could come in with the new fishery, and I think those closure dates in season two make me very nervous, and so, for that reason, I would prefer --

I'm comfortable with us staying -- Like two things for season one. I do think in this case, Mike, we need to keep them separate. I think that I would be comfortable removing the 1,250 alternative and adding -- Sorry. I got ahead of you. I'm sorry.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm good.

MS. MARHEFKA: It's just like me to do that. To move -- For season one, remove 1,250 and add a 1,750 in between 1,500 and 2,000, with -- I would like us to say that 2,000 would be our preferred, and then, for season two, I'm comfortable with a range of alternatives, personally, and I would like to see 1,500 for season two.

Also in season two -- So I'm worried about the shift from black sea bass, and I also feel like, in season two, we have more -- In my area, we have more options, where, at the beginning of season one, we really only have like beeliners, you know, and it's huge, and so, when we have groupers available and things like that, beeliner becomes slightly less important, slightly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, we're trying to capture everything you said there, and so we're adding an option for 1,750 for both the seasons, and then you said recommend preferred of 2,000 for season one, and did you say 1,500 or 1,750 for season two?

MS. MARHEFKA: I said 1,500, and I also said I was okay -- You have removed -- I wasn't going to add this 1,750 for season two, but I'm happy to do that if that makes sense to others.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're looking in our crystal ball as to what's going to change, and how it's going to change, and I can see, even with a 1,500-pound trip limit, that's another \$2,500 or \$3,000. For that kind of money, you can put another man on the deck. A lot of these boats used to have three-man crews, plus the captain, and now they're down to two, and some of them even at one, but they're going to -- Not only will we have -- More than likely if -- You know, going to two-for-one, more boats working, and we're going to have more crew on the boats, and so I'm a little skeptical.

I'm happier with 1,500 pounds, and then, if we don't do it, then go up with the abbreviated framework. I can live with what Kerry has laid out. Then, if it's too much, then we back it off with the abbreviated framework, but we are going to have significant increased effort, and Georgia doesn't have a lot of options. I mean, we live and die on beeliners. I mean, we don't catch a lot of grouper, and we don't -- We just -- They can target some amberjack sometimes, but we don't have any sea bass, and so we don't have a lot of options. We live and die with vermillion, which is kind of probably what's -- Why these numbers are laid out like they are, and so I don't want my guys sitting around the dock twiddling their thumbs in all of December or whatever if there's a closed season, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, actually, I'm comfortable changing to that, and saying 1,500, for all of the reasons you stated. You know, we are a beeliner specialist fishing operation in my family, and, yes, it would be pretty devastating for it to close early in December actually, or there was one in there that said November, and not knowing -- God, that would be -- It was November 8 too, I believe, which is very early, and that would be devastating. For that reason, I would amend my recommendation at 2,000, and go to 1,500, and let's see what the public says, and hear what comes out of public hearing, but that's me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we switched that on the board, and so I want to make sure everybody is okay with that. Even though both those seasons are the same, I would still keep these alternatives separate. That way, we can get feedback from the public on both the seasons, and the analysis will be separate for both seasons there, and then we could change our recommendation back to 2,000 for season one, and keep it at 1,500 for season two. Any more discussion on this? Good discussion on why we're selecting this. Anything else on vermillion? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Not on vermillion, but, after listening to that conversation, and I really do appreciate all the perspectives coming throughout the range, or the region, and I'm wondering if this going back to, for discussion purposes, with the AP and public comment, if it would be advantageous for us to put the greater AJ back to the two potential options. I'm just wondering, you know, and if they're weighing the vermillion changes between season one and season two, do they also want to then weigh those decisions with the greater amberjack? Just a question more so than anything.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. What do you all think about that? You want to go back to AJ and keep it as alternatives, separate alternatives, for each season? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I'm supportive of that. I think there are things we might not be thinking of, for instance when groupers close, and what people are going to do, and the interplay between AJ, amberjack, and then the black sea bass being reduced. I think it's all worth keeping that on the table, and so I support that, Amy. Good thought.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All good with that? All right. Anything else on vermilion snapper? Okay. We're going to go back and look at some of the data, and now we're on to red porgy.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Red porgy, you have your current trip limit of fifteen fish. This one is a little bit different, because you don't have even seasons. You have Season 1 is January through April, and Season 2 is May through December, and so you may see that as it plays out in the analyses, to whatever extent red porgy would be increased, and then the alternatives that you are considering are thirty fish or a forty-five-fish trip limit there, and so I'll pause here and switch us back.

MS. LAZARRE: All right, and so, for red porgy, you see something a little bit different with this truncated landings history, and so I'm only showing the last five years, because the split season I believe was put into place in 2020, and so trying to show the full landings just didn't make any sense with the graph.

You see, in the last two years, the landings have gone down. I think that's because of the closure, and then, also, the trip limit changed for red porgy in 2023, and so, when we're looking at the magnitude of landings, I think it's important to know that season two landings are three-times higher, basically, than season one, and so, similar to some of the other species, you have higher landings in the later part of the year.

For red porgy, because of that closure, I only looked at a two-year average, instead of a three-year average, when looking at the monthly landings for the two seasons, and then the landings are fairly similar, a little -- Like between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds per month, and then they tail off a bit more in the latter part of the year, September through December.

With red porgy, I had to do a little bit of, I guess, additional work, because the trip limits are in numbers of fish and not pounds, and so I reached out to the Science Center and got some TIP data, the Trip Interview Program records for red porgy, to determine the average weight of fish, so that I could determine like an estimated number of fish from the poundage reported in the logbook records, and so the two-year average for season one is about two pounds and season two is two pounds, and so there wasn't much of a difference between the two seasons. I did want to make sure to look at it that way.

I also looked at it by the states where the fish were landed and observed by TIP interviewers. I'll note that the majority of fish that were measured and weighed by TIP were from North Carolina and Florida, but you'll see soon that a lot of the fish that are being landed are in South Carolina, and so I might have some questions for you all, in terms of whether this pound per fish seems about right or not, because that might influence the analysis.

When we're looking at red porgy season one, and so this is the January through April, and so I've got a real big red box over the bars that are essentially available to change, and so that first bar is zero to ten, and then it goes up by ten fish per bar, and so basically eleven to twenty and up is to the right, and so, even with that trip limit change, based on the average weight, the estimated number of fish can be a little bit higher for some of those trips.

Again, it's a pretty small percentage that we're looking at that might be over thirty fish, and I'm using an average weight to estimate the number of fish, and so it isn't exactly right, in terms of what someone might have put in the cooler, but it's about 45 percent of the trips, you know, like are catching more than ten fish, and I think I used thirteen fish and up as the cutoff for whether or not I altered the trip.

Then you see very similar landing behavior between North Carolina through Florida, where the high percentage is like between 40 and 60 percent of people are catching between zero and ten red porgy on their trip. Our scalers are pretty high, again because we have that 45 percent-ish of trips that could be altered.

Again, I used thirteen fish and above, and so 10 percent and 15. The 1.5 I rounded it up to two, and then I also wanted to highlight, again, that South Carolina, if we look at this first graph, you have almost half, or maybe more than half, of the trips are coming from South Carolina, and that proportion scaler is really kind of driving the regional scaler, in terms of what we're up-weighting the landings by for the projections.

Again, no closures are being projected, and part of the -- I don't know if this is the reason for that, but one thing that I wanted to bring to the table is making sure that the fishermen in the room agree that about two pounds gutted weight seems right for a red porgy being landed, just to make sure that that isn't negatively impacting the analysis, but I'm getting some nods that it seems about right, but, if in South Carolina that's different, please let me know.

Then, when we're looking at our projection for that average scenario, you know, we do see an increase as you go from fifteen to thirty, but we're still not quite getting to that ACL as desired, but I would also keep in mind that the ACL overall is pretty low, and so the changes that we're seeing are also going to be harder to see.

May through December looks really similar, and so a slightly smaller percentage. 38 percent of trips are catching ten fish or more, and, again, the distribution by state is looking pretty similar in season two, for the May to December season, and we see a very similar magnitude of scalers for season two, as compared to season one, and then, again, South Carolina is driving a lot of the increase in magnitude for the scaler value.

Again, no closures are being projected, even with the -- Like we're matching that 3X increase that was predicted by Kyle Dettloff's analysis, but, again, I wasn't sure if maybe average weight was playing into that and not quite -- We're not seeing the increase based on whether or not the size of fish is different, but I think, in season two, you do see kind of a larger difference, in terms of what the increase towards the ACL looks like, but, again, that's also in part because the landings are higher in season two, and so you have more to work, with in terms of increasing those landings, and so that's it for me and red porgy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Dominique, I'm making sure that -- I think you're right on with your poundage, but I have a text out to make sure. Amy also is much more of an expert than myself, but, as far as red porgy, what I wanted to sort of address to the group is that, for me, I'm thinking about this very different than I'm thinking about the other fish that we're addressing in here, in that I don't think anyone has any hopes that we're going to get close to the ACL with red porgy.

You know, we've been dealing with this fish since 1998. I just went back and looked at the SERFS data, and it's been below the long-term mean for a long time. There's something going on with red porgy. I personally don't believe it's fishing pressure. I think it's something else.

The way I'm looking at this red porgy trip limit, if we decide to do it, is more of a bycatch allowance, if you will, such that, if you're on the red porgy, you're not throwing them back. We would still be below our ACL. We're not in any danger of sort of exceeding the number we're biologically allowed to have, and we're not wasting fish. Whether or not that's the right thing to do, I don't know, but just so you all know that's how I'm thinking of it. This is just such a different animal than the other animals, and it's not about reaching the ACL for me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I don't -- I agree with Kerry. This is a regime change, regime shift, something. I don't think it's fishing pressure. That said, I've got a captain now that was from South -- Had been working in South Carolina, and he was telling me he had been offshore and caught some really, really big red porgies, I mean four-pound average or better, big fish.

You know, if you can have thirty fish, or forty-five fish, and you can average three pounds or something, or four, you know, it gets -- It might be worth running a few miles and making a stop on them. I mean we run around for snowy groupers, and we run around for some really small trip limits on fish at times, and so I -- In one aspect, yes, it's bycatch. In another aspect, when you're hungry, you go do stuff that you normally wouldn't do, and these guys are hungry, and so, if they think they can go out there and find some, you know, big red porgies, and it helps fill up the box, they're going to do it, but I agree. I would say probably at least 50 percent is going to be bycatch, but you're going to have some people that are going to try to go target this fish just to fill up the box.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I agree with that, and so I would like to recommend that we go with the forty-five fish, because then you would go -- If you know where some porgies are, and you're close enough by, you will go target them, and it will help your trip be more efficient, and profitable, and so that's what we're here to do. I think we should go with the forty-five fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Jimmy. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Just to Kerry's point, when she was talking about bycatch for this, Dominique, did you happen to look at any of the observer reports, or any of the information on discarded fish, just to see, you know, what is the reasoning -- What is the reason for discards of red porgy, or even

if discards are occurring, and, you know, is it the bag limit that's doing it, or is it the size limit? I can see those having some considerations for you all's discussion.

MS. LAZARRE: I didn't specifically look at the discard logbook, and that's something I can look at before next time, but, that big drop in 2023, I just associated it with the trip limit change, because you were getting closer to the ACL before that, and then, when that went into play, to me it seemed like those two were causally linked, but I can definitely go into the discard logbook and see if there's more evidence for that, just to make sure I look under every rock.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks. I just wanted to add that -- I mean, this one kind of -- This fish kind of troubles me too, but I thought Kerry really gave a good rationale, to me, about, you know, it's a low biological ACL, and we don't want to be throwing fish back, and so I just want to say I support what was stated, and I think Kerry gave a very good rationale for our recommendation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Anything else here on red porgy before we go to the next species? You guys good? Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Next up is hogfish. The current trip limit for hogfish, and this would be the Georgia through North Carolina stock, and so the northern stock of hogfish, that is currently a 500-pound trip limit, and the alternative that is being considered is a 1,000-pound trip limit, and that's the only one that you all have under consideration at this point, and so switching us over to the presentation.

MS. LAZARRE: All right, and so, with hogfish and red grouper, we're going into no more split seasons, and so, for hogfish North Carolina through Georgia, the landings history, again, is truncated, because the geographical split I think was put into place right before -- In 2017, and so I didn't show like a couple of additional years of data there, and it's a pretty low ACL, and right now we're sitting at about 5,000 pounds-ish below the ACL, in terms of where there's room to have gains.

Unless I am really bad at Googling, I can't find a closure for hogfish in January through April, but the landings were really, really low during that time, and so you have the highest landings for hogfish between May and August, tailing off over the last third of the year, and so I didn't expect that, and I ran it down a couple of times, to make sure I wasn't missing numbers, but I'm glad to know that that is what I should expect.

Then, when looking at the trip distribution for hogfish, there's about 6 percent of trips that are within fifty pounds of that 500-pound trip limit, and so those are the ones that are being, you know, like altered for the trip limit analysis.

I had to combine South Carolina and Georgia for the graphs, just because of confidentiality, but they're very similar distributions between all of the northern zone states in terms of the state-specific trip distribution, and so you've got, you know, 60 to 75 percent of your trips landing less than fifty pounds for hogfish.

Then, again, the scalars, and combining South Carolina and Georgia, there again for confidentiality, and then very similar numbers across states, and compared for the region, and then, when we're looking in terms of closures being projected, there is a closure projected in October with the highest landing scenario for our doubling of the trip limit, and then, again, there was no big difference when looking at the state-specific scalar versus the regional.

Then, when we're looking at our projection over time, really low landings in the first third of the year, increasing during those summer months, tailing off a little bit towards the end of the year, but getting, you know, quite a bit closer to that 23,500-pound ACL for hogfish. That's it for hogfish for me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. We're going to get the document pulled back up so we can look at the different options for hogfish. All right, and so we're removing Alternative 3, and so we just have one alternative to increase it to a thousand pounds. Is that good? Is that our preferred? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't have a strong feeling, but I have a question that maybe someone from staff can answer. We're all looking at each other, because we are presuming, or -- Amy has the knowledge, I think, that this is primarily a dive fishery, which --

MS. DUKES: (Ms. Dukes' comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. MARHEFKA: It is? It's only? It's what? It's not? You just found out it's not? Okay. Well, the divers, forget that. I did biologically -- I was going to say it does correspond -- Those months there isn't catch corresponds with the grouper closure, and so that's sort of what we were all thinking. That's why you look at data instead of making assumptions.

I guess my question is, when I think about something like a gag, that like really aggregates to spawn, site-specific can be sort of subject to localized sort of site-specific depletion, and I'm curious, and does hogfish -- I don't know enough about its biology, and does it fall in that category? Is that something we need to be concerned about? I don't have any skin in this game otherwise, and I'm not familiar with -- You know, Mark maybe catches two a year.

MS. MCCAWLEY: They form harems. I can tell you that, and so they have unique spawning behavior. They form harems, where one of them is transitioning. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I almost don't have a dog in this fight, because I think Kerry probably catches twice what we catch in Georgia. It is like non-existent almost, but I have had fishermen talk about some localized depletion, and I don't -- You know, maybe I should know, but I don't know how fast it takes to transition from a female to a male, and some things like that, and, like Kerry, I thought it was 90 percent probably dive production, but, again, I'm willing to be wrong, but, yes, and I'm just going to try to listen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, based on that, do we think that this one alternative is probably good to go out for public hearing? Okay. Do we want to pick that as our preferred, or just leave it like this? Okay, and so it looks like people are saying just leave it like this with no preferred. Okay. All right.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, moving us down to red grouper, the current trip limit is 200 pounds gutted weight, and you are considering a potential increase to 300 pounds gutted weight. Similar to hogfish, no split season or any additional options for that on the table at this moment.

MS. LAZARRE: All right. Last one. You are almost through with me, and so red grouper after 2015, and so, in 2016, you see kind of a decline in the landings below our current ACL, and then the landings are ranging between 25,000 and 50,000 pounds per year since then, and so a little bit of a decline, but then kind of coming back up again in 2024.

Because of the shallow-water grouper closure, I dropped the months January through April, and I'm just showing May through December, just for ease on the plot. The highest landings are occurring in May, immediately after the closure, which I think would be expected, and then you have declines through the year, with the exception of December, where the landings kind of come back up.

For red grouper, the proportion of trips that are catching, you know, 175 pounds or more, it's only about 2 percent, and so there's very little kind of wiggle room in terms of scaling up the landings for people that are catching at or near the trip limit, and so you have basically 60 percent regionally that are catching twenty-five pounds or less per trip. North Carolina, South Carolina, and even Florida, are at about 50 percent, and then the majority of Georgia trips are catching twenty-five pounds or less.

Then, when you're looking at these scalers, we're talking about regionally like a 4 percent increase in these landings. There's very few trips that are being -- That are catching that higher value, or higher poundage, that we're using to upweight the landings for the projection. It's predicted -- No closure is being predicted, and we're only looking at like I think not even a 2X increase in the trip limit, and Kyle's analysis showed that a 5X increase might be necessary to get you closer to the ACL.

Then, if we look at our plot for that average scenario, I think you can see why. That really low magnitude scaler is not changing the landings much, in terms of what the expectation is in terms of increasing the trip limit, and that's it for right grouper, and then, maybe before I pass it back off, just a quick conclusion slide basically saying that, in terms of the baseline trip limits, vermilion and hogfish were the two that seemed most likely to increase, and get you closer to the ACL, whereas, some of the other species, you don't quite get that close.

Then I just tried to point out what the largest increase that you're proposing is, versus what the analysis by Kyle showed might be necessary to get to the ACL, just to give you some context for maybe why some of them are not hitting quite what you expect, but, again, a lot of the discussion has been today, and in the past, that you're not looking to make any major changes, knowing that there are going to be additional impacts of the two-for-one and other things, but I just wanted to help put this into perspective for all the species in the end. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right, and so talking about red grouper. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Okay, and I'll start. We're seeing a lot more red grouper off of the east coast of Florida, you know, in the past few years. You know, we're not going to -- By doing -- The reason we're looking at these different species is because we have an ACL there available that we're not

getting close to, and, by increasing this from 200 to 300 pounds, if we did so, we're still not going to get close to the ACL, but we're going to provide the fishermen, individual fishermen, an opportunity to have a more profitable trip, and be more efficient, and so, I mean, that's the purpose and need, really, is to help these fishermen be more profitable, and efficient, and not that we're going to reach the ACL.

It's just fortunate that we have that ACL, and the opportunity to do it with all these species, and so I would like to go to the 300 pounds, so that it provides them that opportunity. If they're lucky enough to catch 300 pounds of red grouper, they can catch them, and make a profit, and provide seafood to the general public. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. I think we also want to remove Alternative 3, which is the temporary trip limit. More comments here on red grouper? We're all good with the 300, and I see heads nodding yes, as the preferred. Anything else here? All right. I'm going to pass it back to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so we've gotten through all of the static trip limit changes, and, for the other three species that were included in the document, gray triggerfish, golden tilefish hook-and-line, and gag, those -- For all three of those, you all were only considering, at the last meeting, the temporarily adjusted trip limit changes, and so I guess, before we completely pull those out of the document, I wanted to check in with the subcommittee to see what your recommended path forward would be. Do you want to keep those in, and consider static changes to those, or do you want to remove those three species from the document?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I think I'd like to look at some static changes for those.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Gray triggerfish is up first. What are your thoughts for some of the alternatives? We're at 1,000 pounds whole weight. I'm just watching what Mike is doing here, and we're removing those temporary adjusted trip limits from these actions, and so we're at 1,000 pounds now, no split season, and what are your thoughts on either an option, or multiple options, here? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Because I don't know exactly what it would -- How far we could go before running into the ACL, I would probably just, by default, make some 200-pound increment jumps, or something like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So maybe 1,200, and how many? Two or three? Okay. Two or three. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, just from a comment perspective, we heard, while we were in Jekyll, several folks, during the public comment period, that said that they preferred that we not do anything with gray triggerfish, and, at one point, we were discussing the potential changes for some trip limits, and then we decided, at that meeting, to remove them. I'm not saying we can't at least see what the public comment says, but I'm just reminding the group.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and triggerfish gives me the most consternation, because I want to support it. I'm looking at, again, going back to the fishery-independent data, and, since 2020, it's pretty far below the long-term mean, and that makes me very -- In my -- This is one of those species where, in my stomach, I feel like this might be more of a biological thing than an effort thing, and so it makes me nervous. I think that taking those out to public hearing is a worthwhile endeavor, but I would like to just say I want to hear from the public what they think, because it makes me a little nervous.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right, and so then still those three options, or do you want to cut it down to just two options of 1,200, 1,400? Okay. I see heads nodding yes to just cut it to the two options. All right, and so, once again, this would be prepped to go to public hearing after the June council meeting, and then we could hear what folks have to say. I agree, and I heard from folks, at the last meeting, that they had some concerns about trigger, but I think it's fine to go out for comment. Anything else on trigger? All right. Back to Mike.

DR SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and then the next item was for golden tilefish hook-and-line. That trip limit is currently 500 pounds gutted weight, and so, again, the same question as for trigger. Do you all want that to be taken out of the document, or do you want to keep it in and consider any static trip limit changes?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. This is golden tile hook-and-line. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I don't see going up on that trip limit, because they're catching it anyway. I mean, we're just going to -- I forgot how long it took them to catch it, and probably five or six months or something, if that, and so they're going to get the fish, and, if you get 500 pounds of golden tile on a trip, that's a decent trip, especially when there's -- A lot of it is small boats that are running off of Florida, and so I think that's a profitable trip, in my book, on a small boat.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Not disagreeing with you, but, just for the record, we only hit 63 percent of the ACL, and so, if we're leaving fish on the table, and they're there -- Or talk about going up, and I wonder if it's worth having that conversation. I could go either way, because I see your point. It's a great number of fish, and it's a great fish for when we don't have other options, but, if we're only harvesting 63 percent, and have the ability, and I think we just had a positive assessment, the last one, and so let's maybe -- Do we want 500, 750, 1,000?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's at 500 now, and so 750 and 1,000? Okay. 750 and 1,000. Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and it just -- With the discussion there, it did pop in my head, because I was trying to remember off the top of my head, which is never good, but I did put it in the document here, and so golden tilefish, just seeing the performance -- We don't have 2025 within this figure, but golden tilefish, its performance against the ACL, there's been -- 2024 was 94 percent, and 2023 was 84 percent, but there was a closure, and then a reopening, and so there was some discussion about whether it closed, you know, too early at that point, and then 2022 was 107, and so this was one of the situations where -- Different from some of the other species, where they have a lot of room between the current catch and the ACL, and this one is kind of bouncing pretty close to its ACL under the current trip limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and, you know, historically, the longline component was catching their fish in a month-and-a-half, and did it for a long, long time, and, for the last couple of years, something is going on, currents, tide, water temperature, something, and so whatever is going on that's affecting the longline is probably affecting hook-and-line, and, if those conditions go back to the historical normal, then this is going to change too, and so I would -- I don't mind going out to public comment, but I just thought I would put that on the record.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I would be more comfortable with like 500, or 600, given that we're closer to the ACL in some years. Also, I talked with a golden tile longline fisherman, and, yesterday, he was telling me there was only like seven boats that are fishing golden tilefish longline. They can't find no crew, and other folks are aging out, some different things going on there, and so that's, I think, the reason why maybe we're seeing -- And the environmental changes in the ocean, and so I think the multiple factors are the reason why you're seeing the ACL not getting caught up like it used to be as quick.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so there's some trip limits there of 600, 750, 1,000. Is 1,000 too much? I'm looking around. Okay. People are saying 1,000 is too much, and so maybe just options for 600 and 750. Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. If golden tilefish is how you would like to see it, then we'll move to gag, pulling out the adjustable trip limit, and then would you all like to see gag continue to be in the document or removed? The current trip limit is 300 pounds, and then, just briefly popping us back up to the table, it kind of shows the recent performance. 2024 had a closure at the end of June, on June 30.

2023 was the year that the trip limit was changed, that the regulations were changed related to gag, and so that had a closure, but that was more retroactive. It was based on the harvest that had already occurred, and then it closed in October of that year, and then 2022 was before the current regulations were in place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: At least for me, I was comfortable with this temporary trip limit for gag. I'm a little uncomfortable with kind of coming in right now, at this stage of the game, and increasing a static trip limit for gag. That's just kind of how I feel about gag. I feel like it needs to recover a little bit more and the ACL to go up first. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I agree. The number that's not up on that screen is our 2025 commercial ACLs, and that ACL was reached, and actually a little over. It's 104 percent, and that was closed right around the first of December, and so it is a fishery that's going to last the vast majority of the season, and, with the potential of some increased effort coming into play, I would really like to leave this one alone for right now, and let's see what happens maybe in a year or two.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: If I remember, at our port meetings in Georgia, one of the divers was telling me he was seeing more gags, and they were looking better, and I'm hearing from fishermen that the same thing applies for scamp, and so we're just lower and stuff, but, because of the nature of the beast, and it takes so long to get stuff done, and things are changing, but we can't go up on a trip limit, because we can't go up on ACL until we get another assessment, and so we're going to have to just ride that horse, I believe, and probably just stay where we're at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy, then Kerry.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I agree with all that's been said on gag, and we probably should remove it from the document, but, from the last assessment, this is one of those miraculously fast rebuilding stocks, according to the science that came out, that this thing was going to recover very, very quickly, and so we need to go ahead and let it do its thing, and recover, and then adjust the trip limit at that time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree with everything, and I'm fine leaving it. I just wanted to point out, to Charlie's point, the ACL is going up every year, because we built it into the last amendment we did, and so that's great. I mean, it just means we get more trips, at 300 pounds, but I agree, and I don't think we need to increase it right now, but we are getting more ACL every year.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, if that's the case, and we -- If the ACL goes up, and we don't catch the fish, we're still going to have the option of the abbreviated framework doing something, I guess, and so we have a way to get there from here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Amy.

MS. DUKES: And a stock assessment that's going to be completed in 2027, which, again, in that year or two window, it might give us a little bit more information to play with.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: This is in a rebuilding plan, and so there is payback for this stock, and so that's another concern that could come into play.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was -- I agree with what Jessica said actually, but I agree with everyone else. I was concerned about this one, and, now that we've blocked out that other alternative, I supporting removing this one, and then, when we're done, can we go back to hogfish?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We can, and so let me just do a check, and so we're all good to remove gag from the static trip limit portion of this document? Okay, and so it will come out of here. All right, and then now we're going to go back to hogfish. Go ahead, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: So, just to be consistent with the rest of these actions, and the different alternatives, I wonder if we should just add another alternative to hogfish, like 750 or something. You had 500, 750, and 1,000. It's really more because you're giving multiple alternatives for the other species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is everybody good with that, because right now -- We go all the way from 500 to 1,000, are we good with adding 750? Okay. Heads are nodding yes. All right.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Before we dive into the next action, which is the commercial trip limit possession requirements, let's take a ten-minute break, and then we'll switch gears.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to go ahead and get started again, and we're moving into Action 11, which is modify commercial trip limit and possession requirements. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, and this is the action that was added in March to try to address the issue of fishermen being able to land fish -- Especially on days when dealers are closed, to be able to land fish, offload them, and then be able to go back out and trying to address how definitions of sale -- Trying to address the issues of what completes a trip, what completes a sale, things of that nature. Existing regulations, some of the language from the Code of Federal Regulations, that's included in the action right now. We still need to kind of figure out how to condense that into a brief explanation for that no action alternative.

Alternative 2, what's being considered here, and I think we left it there for the purpose of showing what we would be changing about that regulation, and so, Alternatives 2 and 3, both would remove the language of purchased or sold from that requirement, and so there would no longer be a requirement related to purchase per day, or sale per day, and the both of these alternatives would allow fish to be placed in a secured shore-based storage location.

The difference between the two alternatives of Alternative 2 versus Alternative 3 is who owns the location. Does it need to be a location that is owned by the dealer, or is it a location that does not need to be owned by the dealer? As long as it is a secure shore-based location, and the commercial trip ticket is completed and left with the fish wherever they go, then which alternative you all would want to set up in that way, and so that's kind of what's been developed by the IPT at this portion.

We're expecting there may be some discussion. You know, we kind of took the discussion that you all had, and we tried to come up with the best thing we could, based on that discussion, but, if this is not what you were thinking, then please let us know, so that we can adjust our course of action in developing these alternatives, and make it more what you're looking for out of this action, and so I'll pause here to see if there's any additional discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thoughts? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Explain to me the fisherman's portion of a commercial trip ticket would be completed and left with the fish, and so the fisherman right now have electronic reporting, or not yet?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not yet.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay, and so what is he going to fill out, and what is he going to leave with the fish? I don't understand.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and this is a place where it's not -- It's not particularly my expertise on all the paperwork and the paper trail that goes along with the reporting portion of it.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Generally what happens, to my knowledge, is my vessel comes into the dock, and he has to give his dealer his VTR. Well, we've got two things where we're located, because I've got VTR and the coastal logbook, and so we give the number of the logbook to the dealer, or we write the date and our logbook number on a piece of paper and put it in with the fish that's from my vessel, and like Fishing Vessel Tar Baby, whatever the logbook number is, and the date, and we put it inside, but we put it inside the fish house, in a vat where the fish are at in ice, and do that.

I'm just kind of curious of the -- What is this person that's at a shore-based secure location -- What are they putting in? Are they identifying their catch based on the logbook ticket number that they have? I'm trying to -- This is their catch, and how are you identifying it? Do you have to put the vessel's name, the date, and your identifying logbook number for your catch for that day? Is that what everybody else is thinking? Does that make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I've got hands up. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: That's exactly what we're doing, and I think we need to spell that out here on the alternatives that explain that, and so you unload into a secure shore-based location that is owned by the fish house, or not, but I think that that's where LE wants it, and you put exactly what you said, and you put your vessel number, your vessel name, and you could put your logbook, the VTR number, which would complete everything that you can at that time to identify that this trip is over, here's the catch, until the fish house opens up, and then you can have further information. You can have the exact weights, and species.

I think, in the discussion I remember, that was going to satisfy law enforcement, and that's what is currently occurring now anyway. Maybe not to the extent of they're putting the logbook VTR number with it, but they're at least identifying the catch, what boat it came from, and potentially an estimate of the weight. That's occurring now, and so this would just make it -- Give us a little bit more information, and make it official that this is the process that needs to happen, and that could end the trip at that time, and then you could go conduct another trip.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I'm just looking at Kerry. Is this kind of what you were thinking here with these alternatives?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I like them. Sort of Alternative 2 I think works for who we consider the traditional boats that are always tying up at, you know, a fish house. I do wonder if there's

room for considering Alternative 3 more as how we would want to go, based on people that are trailering their boats, and not necessarily participating in the way that we're used to. There are guys that trailer, and they go back to their own dock, they unload, and they go again, accumulate a couple of days' worth of -- Or trips' worth of fish, and then transfer it to someone. While that's not how I operate, I think that some people do operate that way, and so that's why I was thinking Alternative 3, but I'll let Charlie --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, yes, I've got a commercial fisherman in Savannah, and there is not a dock in Savannah, and so he likes to unload at his at his facility, and then bring them down to me the next day, or he might want to work a weekend, and have two trips, and then bring them down, and so it would not be at my facility, and it's just -- It's logistically impossible for him to, you know, come in at six o'clock, unload, drive an hour down here to me, and he could put stuff in my cooler, but it just doesn't make sense, and we don't have a VTR. We're just using copies of the logbook in Georgia, and, when we go to electronics, I'm not sure what Georgia folks are going to want us to do, but we'll figure that out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so how can we edit Alternative 3 so that it says that more clearly? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I think it says it. I think this is a matter of what Jimmy was always saying, of let's sort of highlight -- Sorry about that. I think it's fine. I think that Jimmy was just maybe saying Alternative 2 would be more of like this subcommittee's preferred way to go, but I was hoping, I think based on things I learned from Charlie, that exact situation, that we would look at Alternative 3 more favorably.

I do question how that will work once we go to electronic reporting, and so, since we know that's coming, it would be kind of silly of us to build it around a logbook that isn't going to exist, and so we need to think about that. I also think -- I don't exactly know who is enforcement, and luckily we have Officer Mitchell here, but you need also some kind of documentation. His guy needs documentation in transit, like a bill of lading or something, doesn't he, to move the fish to you anyway? No? I thought you had to.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So now the bag limit applies on the road? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think it needs to be cleaned up a little bit, because I think you could be opening Pandora's Box. It might already be open, but nobody is really saying that. I mean, so somebody comes into their private dock, and they throw a trip limit of fish in their gray tub, and they put a date on there, and they go back out, do it again, put a date on there, go back out, do it again, and then, all of a sudden, they get enough fish, and they're going to drive down the road to the fish house with three different limits of three different days that's put there, and that's --

All we know is they're showing up at a fish house, to a licensed dealer, with three days' worth of land of separated out landings that nobody knows nothing about, and I clearly, at this point, am in favor of people unloading their fish and getting to get back out, but I still, to this date, cannot understand the issue of the problem of where it was -- It hadn't been explained, and it wasn't explained very good to law enforcement.

There was a one-off issue here that never got really explained in the devil of the detail of what happened, and so I just wondered, you know, how much more -- It just seems like we're really opening a box here, but hopefully maybe law enforcement could talk to that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish, you have your hand up?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and Dewey is kind of saying the same thing I am. I mean, I'm not sure where -- I'm just wondering if we're trying to fix something that's not necessarily broke. I mean, looking at the meeting minutes from the Law Enforcement Committee, and granted they did say they didn't know enough to have any recommendations, but they felt like, you know, maybe just talk to those individual dealers, because it doesn't seem to be a widespread issue.

If I remember, this was really more Florida, and so, now that this has been explained more, and I see Matt Walia online, and I wonder if we could see if he could speak to this a little bit more, because I've just got some concerns that we're -- We're not fixing something that's a big deal.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think it's a bigger deal than what we think it is if it has happened a few times, which it seems like it has, and then we're being told by our attorneys that we would have to go in here and fix this language, and so I feel like we've kind of already stepped through this process of how big a deal is it, and we decided it was a big enough deal. We felt like the language -- According to our attorneys, we can't just leave it like this and continue the practice of what everybody has been doing. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: When this first came up, and I spoke to Shep about it, he said this issue does come up, in his words, every five years. I wasn't familiar with it in my time on staff, or on the AP, but, if that's the case, then it does seem like something, and, again, the biggest issue, I think, is the fish house issue. If your fish house is closed on a weekend, there needs to be a uniform way to deal with it. It was not a -- It has not been a problem in South Carolina, based on the interpretation or whatever was worked out informally in South Carolina, but it was an issue in north Florida, and so I, at the very beginning when we started this, hoped it could just be a directive.

This has put -- This has really -- You know, we're all -- Let's all enforce it the same way, and we haven't been given, to my knowledge, an assurance that that is the case. If it is, then we can drop it, but, if your fish house is closed on a weekend, you need a way -- You shouldn't have to miss fishing days because your fish house is closed on a weekend, and that's all I care about. How we get there, I don't know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy, then Dewey.

MR. HULL: Yes, and the fish house isn't just closed on the weekend. They close at night too, most of them. They go home, and so, in my area, we have a lot of kingfish boats. They're small boats, and they fish -- They day fish, and they come in, and they need to unload their limit of kingfish that they caught for the day, and they generally go to the fish house, and there's vats placed out at the fish house with ice in them, and so they unload into the vat.

They put their name of their vessel in there, and then they re-ice, and then, the next morning -- I mean, these guys leave the dock at three in the morning, and so they're gone, and they're never at

the fish house when the fish house is open, because, when the kingfish are running, they're constantly on the move, and so they have to unload, and then the fish house takes it from there, and then the logbook catches up with it later.

I think we should spell it out, and, if the electronic logbook gets in place, it could solve a lot of things. It could timestamp things, you know, and they could then say develop a logbook number, whatever you want to call it, and I call it VTR, and so, attached to that vat, right, and so you have a timestamp there, so that law enforcement knows, well, he has unloaded, and he's done the job of putting a number on it, and it's at the fish house.

That ends the trip, so they can just keep on going and make a living, right, and so that's where I see this as something that needs to be fixed, and made official, so that there's no problems, because it's occurring right now. It happens. It's been happening, and we haven't had any big problems that I know of, but I think we need to spell out what needs to be done, and work with the agencies involved, to make sure that everybody is happy with the way the actual fishery is being conducted. For me, it's mostly the kingfish fleet. That's what is going on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so it sounds like it would need to be fixed not just for snapper grouper, but I'm going to let Mike cut in here, and then I'm going to Dewey, then Trish.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and I think you mentioned exactly what I was going to bring up. If this is an issue that's happening beyond snapper grouper -- This amendment is a snapper grouper amendment, and so, if it's something that's affecting king mackerel, or, you know, any other species, then you would need something more comprehensive, in terms of your vehicle to do it, than what's being done in this amendment alone, because this is for the Snapper Grouper FMP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish, and then back to Jimmy.

MS. MURPHEY: So, Madam Chair, I was wondering -- I do see Matt Walia, and I guess the law enforcement on the call, or on this webinar, and could we hear from him, just his thoughts, after hearing this discussion?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Okay, Matt, and you should be unmuted.

Mr. WALIA: Okay. Great. Can you hear me?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MR. WALIA: I appreciate it. Yes, and a lot of it just comes out of the accountability, right? We don't want to see a vessel possess more than the daily trip limit, and how to know they don't go out multiple times during the day, kind of that scenario that Dewey laid out, and so I know we proposed before there's recordkeeping and reporting that the dealer has to show. That could be as simple as a text showing some transaction occurred where that fish was put on that secure shore-based location owned by the dealer, and the dealer can show that to us, whether -- Even though the fish house may be closed, maybe they can still get in contact with them, and, hey, when you open up on Monday or Tuesday, we're going to bring the fish up, and it shows that that ownership moved from the vessel over.

I know where -- A lot where we are, and Kevin Mitchell is there as well, and so, if it's easier with him in-person, he may be able to get on, but, as far as removing purchased or sold, I would refer to our lawyers. We have GCS, and Jamal Ingram is on as well, because that does seem to open it more if you start taking some of that language out, but, for us, for law enforcement, we just want that accountability and tracking. Did that fish move off the boat, and where is it, so someone does not take advantage and go out and get multiple daily limits. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Jimmy, then Kerry.

MR. HULL: I'm good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have a couple of things. One, there is no requirement to sell your fish, and so there's one thing. There's nothing to stop me coming in and keeping that fish for personal consumption, and so purchased and sold doesn't even apply in every situation. Second of all, the definition of trip -- Amy and I are double checking, and we talked about this last time it came up, and it's been a minute, is not -- These are not daily trip limits.

These are leaving the dock and coming back to the dock trip limits, which can happen, in certain areas, multiple times a day if they come back, and that's how it is right now, and so these are not daily trip limits, and, third of all, there is already a workaround, and, quite frankly -- Well, I'll just let me finish this, and then you can correct me, because I see that smirk on your face that you're about to.

The last thing I'll say is, you know, there's already a workaround, and I'm not doing it for this reason, but, for those of us that are our own dealers, because we can already -- In theory, you know, we're in cahoots with ourselves for whatever paperwork. I mean, I wouldn't do that, but my recommendation, if we don't move forward with this, the next time I get a call from a fisherman that says like my fish house is closed on a weekend, I'm going to go, for fifty-dollars, become your own dealer, and, you know, report, you know, no trips on the trips that you're not your own dealer once a week, you know, and you can already -- There's already a workaround, and maybe that's what we tell them to do, but is that really what we want people to be doing?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mike, and then Amy. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to kind of -- This highlights some of the confusion that that is happening surrounding the language, and so the link within your document right here of general Magnuson-Stevens Act definitions, that's I think what Kerry is referring to in terms of the definition of a trip.

The definition of a trip is the leaving out and the coming back to the dock. However, the trip limit, as defined for the Snapper Grouper FMP, and several other FMPs, does have to do with the board or landed -- Onboard or landed, purchased, or sold from a vessel per day, and so the trip limit is applied in a per day fashion, even though MSA in general defines a trip as leaving and coming back to the dock.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: This is fun. No, but, you know, we've got -- Ideally, we're going to have more fishermen coming in to the fishery, you know, getting rid of the two-for-ones, and hopefully having people being -- Having more fish to catch, and we've got issues with infrastructure going away, and so there's going to be more and more people unloading somewhere, and probably a lot of it is not going to be at a dock, because you're going to have to travel a ways to get to a dealer.

You know, like my guy in Savannah, and he can -- He wants to unload, put stuff in his cooler, and maybe he wants to go back the next day, and he could keep those trips separate. He could do separate paperwork for them. He could take a picture of them as they go into his cooler, and get a timestamp on it, if you wanted to do it that way, and there are ways to document it.

I think he's not going to be, you know, an exception. I think there are going to be more and more people that are going to need to do things like that, and so we need to figure out what method to the madness is, whether we're using a -- You know, maybe we use a state ticket to show that this trip was landed here, and or our electronic logbook, and the trip was landed here, and this is the number, and you can document it.

There are different ways you can document something went into a cooler, and then, if they need to bring a one-day trip down on Monday, or they need to bring Saturday and Sunday trips down on Monday, and they're kept separate, and then they're packed and logged, and it's clean, or as clean as it's going to get, but it's doable that way, and so, you know, we just need to figure out how to, you know, connect all the dots, but, yes, we can do this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Matt, and then Dewey. Maybe Matt's hand was a residual hand. I'm going to go to Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and so Matt just said that a text, and so, if a person in Savannah comes in one day, and he unloads his fish, and puts them in his cooler, and he puts his vessel name, his date, his commercial logbook, and it's on his cooler with his fish, and he also texts the dealer that he's going to sell to that I've just unloaded this species of fish, estimation of the weight, and I'll be delivering them on whatever date, and so he sends that text.

You have a record of the dealer and the person telling -- You know, telling what the transaction is going to be, and he has unloaded, and he goes back fishing, and goes back and do it all again. There's a transactional text, you know, of documenting it, and stuff like that, and so I think that appears -- Like listening to Matt, and enforcement, that's what they're looking for, and has anybody got anything wrong with that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so what do we need to do here on this action? I agree with everything that's being said. As things are changing, this -- The way this is written, these definitions et cetera, don't appear to be modernized for what is happening now, and what is set to happen in the future, and this does not appear to just be a snapper grouper problem, and so I think that, whatever is decided to do here, you're making a recommendation to elevate this and, you know, to fix it across multiple councils, through some other vehicle, other than the snapper grouper commercial amendment, I guess. Okay. Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: Just thinking in terms of this document, it seems like some of the details that Jimmy was talking about to go in the discussion, you know, the steps and everything, without going into the alternatives, and I wonder if you do have this text option, and is this a new alternative that we add to this outlining that process?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I like adding the text option. I guess I would also say maybe the IPT could meet to discuss this, based on the discussion that we're having here, and how to accommodate the original issue, but also what happens once electronic reporting goes into place, and is the text an option, and it seems to work for law enforcement. Jimmy, thoughts?

MR. HULL: Yes, and I agree with all that, and the text, you know, to develop the start of a transaction by a text to the dealer, which would then transfer basically ownership at that time, and this fish is coming to you, and it would start the process. Using, you know, the technology that we have, either a text and send in a photo of the -- Of everything, the logbook to the dealer, and that's what we need to do, and do we add this alternative in this amendment, as a start, or do we develop another amendment for, you know, all different fishery management plans?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't want to slow this down, and so it makes me very nervous. I mean, I think this -- You need to do it for dolphin wahoo, and you need to do it for king mackerel, and you need to do it for this, and king and Spanish, probably.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MS. MARHEFKA: Dolphin wahoo, and so that would make me really nervous. Then I had a question. I think I'm just not thinking this through clearly in my head. If you're your own dealer, like I am, is that already solved, because you're your own dealer, or do you text yourself? I'm just trying to figure it out. Do you have to send a --

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Are you open seven days a week, or are you open just --

MS. MARHEFKA: Twenty-four-seven, 365 days a year.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Then don't worry about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

Ms. MURPHEY: Thanks for all the discussion that has gone on. I'm kind of wondering -- I'm all for trying to come up with some solutions. I mean, my take from Matt was, as long as they can see accountability for those fish, then everything is good, and that's -- If we can come up with methods to do that, then I'm great with this, but I'm wondering too if this is, you know, more than just snapper grouper, if this is something that needs to be separated out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, but this isn't the only thing that needs to be separated out, and so I think that the discussion that we're going to have during Other Business about the options that we want to add to the framework for snapper grouper -- I think that is going to require a full Snapper Grouper Committee, you know, and so you've got multiple things here that are beyond just the

subcommittee, but, yes, and I don't know what the vehicle is so that we can fix this across multiple fisheries.

MS. MURPHEY: Anyway, I'm all -- If we can find a good solution, I'm all for it. I just -- I was just worried about what solution, if there was, but it sounds like there is, and so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I would look to Mike or -- Okay. Let's go to Matt, and then I'm looking for council staff to give us a solution. We got a lot of information here, and then how does this come back to the council, since it spans multiple fisheries, but go ahead, Matt.

MR. WALIA: All right. Thank you. I appreciate it. I just wanted to clarify that I used texting as an example. I don't want to take away any sort of technology out there, and so just some sort of means of notification, and people have sat phones, and there could be other avenues to look at, but it's more of having that record of accountability, and so if that opens up things for you. I just wanted to clarify whether that goes to a sort of tracking system, and you get a confirmation number, and that could be an option too, just getting a record. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Mike, how does this -- How does this come back for a discussion that's going to span multiple South Atlantic fisheries?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I think, if this is something that you want to address from multiple fisheries, the subcommittee can make a recommendation, and I guess your recommendations -- I don't know if they can go directly to the council, or if they go to the Snapper Grouper Committee, and I might need Myra's input on that, but you can make a recommendation that would however way get to the council, the full council, of this issue being addressed across -- You know, across the -- I guess it would be the finfish fisheries that it would apply to, and I'm not sure if there are others that it would need to affect. Then the council would need to decide if they would like to begin some form of comprehensive amendment to address this, but Myra is at the table, and so she may be able to give more information than that.

MS. BROUWER: No, and I think you covered it, Mike. That would be my thought process, too. It would be cleaner, to me, to address it in a comprehensive vehicle, as you said, but I don't know what that looks like. I'm thinking that maybe it could be like a categorical exclusion type thing, and I'm looking to Rick, but I -- You know, I think that would be the cleanest way to approach this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so let me try to talk about the steps here, and then I'll go to Dewey. I know he's got his hand up, and so it sounds like something will come back to the Snapper Grouper Committee that maybe meets these various criteria. Then the Snapper Grouper Committee can discuss it and figure out if they want to elevate it, you know, to the full council to expand multiple fisheries. Okay. That's seems like -- I see heads nodding yes. Okay. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just want to make sure that this is -- What we're working on is for the exception of where people don't have open fish houses available to unload your fish, or be there, and I don't want, all of a sudden, to get away from the norm that I'm allowed to go into my fish house, drop my stuff off, label it and all, like I said I've been doing, and now, all of a sudden, I got to change this new idea or some other requirement of texting my dealer or something like that. I

just want to make sure that this is what we're working on, is for fishermen to be able to get fish to their dealer who is not open seven days a week, or don't have access, and I just want --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Or in the evening.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, the evening, and I just want to make sure that we're not going to, all of a sudden, be changing something where this is the norm, and this is for the exception. We're making -- We're changing for the exception.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought that we were just adding to what already existed.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's how I interpreted this, but more hands have gone up. Back to Mike, and then over to Amy.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I think, in relation to what you asked, Dewey, what I've heard is, the whole idea of text messaging, it's one way that people -- You know, that people can record, document their trip, but it wouldn't be the only way to do that, and so -- Especially as electronic reporting comes online, you know, there may be a necessity for people to have some form of paper tag, or something like that that follows the fish, but I think the language, as we would construct it, would allow for these multiple methods, and maybe the amendment itself, when it gets written up, would have these are examples of ways that you can do it, but it may be one of those like, you know, including, but not necessarily comprehensive, as long as you are showing the appropriate documentation, you're having the pieces of information all included in some way, shape, or fashion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and Matt kind of got to my point about a communication documentation, that Mike just then also discussed, with the not limiting it perhaps just to text or what have you, but I think, in the absence of us, you know, deciding how we want to do this, whether a different vehicle, a categorical exclusion, and I'm going to need to understand that better, but this idea of just making this easier on the fishermen I think is all in the -- In our minds, and our hearts, and so I think having those conversations continuing with IPT, and getting a little bit more legal advice, would also be advantageous for the conversation when it comes back to the Snapper Grouper Committee or the council as a whole. I would like those to continue.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, Mike, I saw that you were typing up the recommendation, but I'll wait for you to get that IPT part on the screen.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, just getting clarification, what questions do you have that the IPT needs to respond to, and I don't know that it would necessarily be the IPT for this amendment. If this is being pulled out of this amendment, this may be, you know, more of council staff and SERO staff and GC get together, and we kind of work together to come up with some form of response, but if we could get some clarification of what specific questions do you want responses to, and then we can work on getting that information to you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, some of the questions I think are listed above, like what happens when you go to electronic reporting and other -- So some of the questions are already listed there. Can you go back to the subcommittee recommendation, and so how do we word this? Recommend exploring this fix across all South Atlantic fisheries? Back on these questions, do we add an alternative that text is a suitable option, or will texting with the dealer that's closed be adequate? Is that suitable, and like that's another question. Amy, what else?

MS. DUKES: Adding the exact information that is going to need to be included in that, so that we're not -- Whatever LE is going to need, whatever the dealer is going to need, whatever information the fisherman has to give, any time restraints that that has to be done, and just, again, we want to ensure that everything is documented in the beginning, so that the fisherman can do its job, his or her job.

MS. MCCAWLEY: The timing of what pieces of information, what is the timing with which this action needs to be taken, and what other questions need an answer here on this topic? I mean, it's really about the definition of when the trip limit applies, and not about how you define a trip. It's about the definition, and that's how I see it, based on this discussion today, and so, to me, I think that that's where we're directing staff to look, is to modify the definition of when the trip limit applies, or something like that. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So do you all think that it is the right direction, in terms of how the IPT had originally interpreted your request of the first step being removing the purchase or sold per day provision from the trip limit definition? Is that the direction that you want to go? That does open the door of, you know, kind of the discussion that has happened around the table of somebody could accumulate two or three trip limits, store them, and then sell them all at once, and are you okay with that? Is that how you would like this to be developed?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think the answer is yes, because we don't see any other way to do it. Plus, we're trying to, I guess, make a path for what some people -- Like what Charlie is describing happening in Savannah, make a path for what people are already doing, and then will likely be more of in the future, and so it's like a multiday bag limit like in a vehicle, basically. A multiday trip limit in a vehicle, basically. Rick, can you speak to that?

MR. DEVICTOR: Yes. Since I was asked about the categorical exclusion, yes, and so, when we look at an amendment, we either do a CE, categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or EIS. The IPT will talk about it, but it is NMFS' decision on which is the proper thing.

The categorical exclusion is a category of actions that it has determined not to have a significant effect on the quality of the environment, and so it's very different than an EIS, which is a full-blown analysis. This is shorter. We did it for the comprehensive reporting amendment e-logbook, and so that was a CE. We've done it before with changing ACLs, and so, when I look, some of our guidance does have one of the categories is changes to reporting requirements, and so a good chance, but we won't promise anything, but it could be more streamlined.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right, and so we captured that as one of the questions as well, and so I think we're done with this action. Let's go -- Before we talk about timing, maybe can we circle back to the changing what we can do in an abbreviated framework? Can we talk about that? Kerry, do you want to start?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and so there's been, sort of away from the table, discussions about how fast this document can move and such, and we'll talk about that in a minute, but, in those conversations, you know, we thought about, you know, are there things that can be done through abbreviated framework, to get them through faster, and, as we learned yesterday, the only thing that this FMP allows to happen through abbreviated framework are, I believe, ACL changes and ABC changes, and so that requires a change to the FMP.

Obviously, it's pretty clear that at least we want to have that as an option sometimes, and so it makes sense to amend the FMP to allow commercial trip limit changes, but then, Jessica, you and I spoke off the record about there's probably more things, recreational retention limits and such, that may be able to be done through abbreviated framework, and so it seems like there needs to be an amendment to the FMP, and not just a commercial measure, and my preference, before I stop talking, is that it's probably not done in this document, but that we do do it relatively soon. It's part of our overall innovation plan, part of what we've talked about being more nimble and innovative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mike is capturing some language there to consider a change to the AF procedures, and it may include more than just commercial trip limits, because I'm thinking this might also include recreational bag limits and vessel limits, but we need a list of this, and so then I think what this subcommittee is doing is recommending to the Snapper Grouper Committee that they consider this overarching change to the Snapper Grouper FMP. Okay, and Mike is capturing all that. Myra, you've come to the table. I'm afraid to even ask.

MS. BROUWER: No, and so I'm just thinking through how the abbreviated procedure came to be, right? That is specifically to be able to change catch levels really quick when you have an ABC recommendation, so you can just say here it is, and just you do it, and it takes two meetings at the most.

You already have a regular framework procedure that allows you to make changes to trip limits, bag limits, even area closures, and so I don't know how we justify putting the same things that are in your regular framework procedure into an even more abbreviated way. I think we may run into issues with NEPA.

I know other councils utilize other avenues, like supplemental information reports for example, but there has been work already done previously to satisfy the NEPA requirements, so that, you know, there's documentation that says, you know, we're going to analyze a wider range of, you know, catch levels, or what have you, and then, when that council goes to change catch levels that are within that range, then they can do it really quick, and that's how I've understood that SIRs are able to be utilized in other regions.

Our council hasn't kind of paved the way, so to speak, to do that sort of thing, but we do have, you know, categorical exclusions and, you know, other avenues, and, as far as I know, that's kind of where, you know, my asking, how can we streamline things, and how can we do things faster, and that's kind of where we've ended up, and so I just wanted to put that out there so that -- You know, to keep expectations down. I don't -- Just give us some time to try to figure out if this is something that we can do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and I think we captured all that there, as part of the discussion. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Myra, if we stay with our framework, instead of an abbreviated framework for instance, what's the difference? Is it three meetings instead of two meetings or what?

MS. BROUWER: It takes a little bit longer, and it just depends on the action, right, and your workload, and how quickly IPTs can be put together and do the work, but, you know, we've been able to do regulatory frameworks in, you know, two or three meetings. I mean, for example, the black sea bass amendment that we just submitted was done -- You told us to start it in June, and you approved it in December. You know, it's -- I think that's like the fastest probably that we've done a regulatory amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I think we have what we need here to get some more information and bring that back to the committee when we get to the June meeting. The other discussion that I want to have, before timing, is to go back to the purpose and needs statement and the discussion that we said we come back to that had to do with like a use-it-or-lose-it provision, because I think that that would kind of change up the timing of the document, and so if we could talk more about whether or not we should add a use-it-or-lose-it provision at this time as we remove the two-for-one.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just making sure it's clear on the record as I'm recording your recommendation, and so, for this Action 11, you would like this action removed from the document at this point and then for us to bring -- You know, kind of go get with Regional Office staff, and GC, to talk about these issues on a more comprehensive level, but you would like this taken out of Amendment 60, correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. I think that the way that the subcommittee recommendation is worded is the recommendation. Yes, you would remove it from this, as long as it's being placed in a more comprehensive amendment.

All right, and so we started having a discussion here about use-it-or-lose-it and those types of things. We also talked about doing additional outreach for what are the requirements for permitted vessels, and so I feel like we need to have a little more discussion on this before we get into the timing, because all these different components will affect the timing of this amendment, will affect the timing of Amendment 60, and so discussion on a use-it-or-lose-it? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't mind, and I think it's probably a good idea to take some of this out to the advisory panel, but there's going to be a lot of changes, a lot of moving pieces, just with getting rid of two-for-one. effort, and how much it's going to change with these higher trip limits, and I would like to -- I don't want to be in a hurry with this, because there's so many other things going on, and I don't know how much of an issue it's going to be.

Ideally, snapper grouper permits will have more profitability attached to them than they have in the past, and, I mean, for a long time, that snapper grouper has just been not a profitable business to be in, for the most part, and so I'm thinking we're going to make it more profitable, and, as it becomes more profitable, more people will use these permits, and it may not be an issue, and you're going to have some latent permits no matter what, probably 10 or 15 percent. I don't care what

you do. I would like to get some input from the advisory panel, and maybe the public somehow, but I don't think we're at a place where we can say we want to do X, Y, or Z.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I don't mind getting input from the AP, but I feel like they've already given us some input, and sometimes they get a little frustrated when we ask them the same question, but they have given us some ideas on this. I guess I would also say, if you make the changes, and you aren't ready for speculation, or non-fishermen getting in there, then it has already occurred, and it's hard to roll it back, and so just wanting people to think about it right now, you know, as this change happens, and so I think I saw a hand over here. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think that there are different categories that I'm concerned about. There's latent effort of professional fishermen for various reasons, and there's latent effort of speculators, and then there are non-professional commercial fishermen, however many out there, catching -- Just wanting to catch more than the bag limit that have the money to spend, and so, in my mind, it is how important are addressing those three things.

They could get latent effort by professional commercial fishermen, and it's just part of portfolio fishing, in my mind. Speculation bothers me a lot more, and so I think it's addressing them from those angles, but, on the other hand, after having many conversations, my goal, with this particular vehicle, is that it stays as deregulatory as possible to get the things that are most important to us through.

Now, I also hear what you're saying. If we're taking away the two-for-one, are we opening -- Is that causing a problem that we then have to go back and fix, and I don't want to do that, and so then, in my mind, I'm like, well, changing the trip limits are the most deregulatory, and do we do it all right, and do it slow, and I think --

MS. MCCAWLEY: So she's saying, you know, do we try to make this amendment go slower, and consider all these pieces right now, or do we just do all these deregulatory things, see what happens, and then come back. Okay, and so I hear people saying come back, and so we're okay with not talking to the AP or the public about a use-it-or-lose-it? How do you want to handle that? You guys decide. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I say take baby steps, like we're doing, and let's see what happens with the two-for-one. and any changes that may happen in effort, and it's -- If we get into this, it's like, okay, and so what happens with the lose it? I mean, we don't want permits to disappear, and we already decided we weren't going to go to this pool at this time, but we may do that later, if we see that there's people that are speculative, and they're grabbing these permits, and they're not using them, and that's becoming late in effort. I mean, it's something that we just -- We're not there yet, I don't think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Do you put a control date, or is it is there a control date that -- I mean, how does it work for a possible control date for this use-it-or-lose-it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, what we did was we sent a letter to all people that had a permit in January of this year, to say we're working on something, and so I don't know if it's a control date so much as a notice that we're working on this.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I just don't know. There's a lot of moving parts here that we're getting ready to do, and I just -- I don't see -- I want to make sure that the -- I hope to make sure that the commercial permits that we have in the snapper grouper fishery, and the SG 2 fishery, stay in commercial fishing opportunities to be used, and that's twenty-six years of deregulation, or decommercialization, is enough for me, and so that's where I'm at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is there maybe a way that we state that intent in the beginning of this document? We had this discussion under the purpose and need, but maybe, as this goes out to the public, we state that as the council's intent, and then people can kind of react to that. Do we like that idea? Okay. Okay, and so I see people saying yes. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think I can, because that's -- I mean, that's been my hope along with this whole amendment, and how we approach the snapper grouper fishery, is that it's clear that it's this body's intent that there's a professional commercial stable snapper grouper fishery that sort of reflects where it is now. In other words, we're not trying to bring in industrial fishing, and we're not trying to go to all go-fast boats. It's sort of a pick what we want. It's important for this council to have a professional commercial snapper grouper fishery and help maintain that as it stands now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jessica.

DR. STEPHEN: I was just thinking about some of what you guys were saying, and my understanding, from the conversation this week, is there's a lot of concern about these potential commercially-permitted entities that seem to appear to be doing more private angling fishing, and so, in other fisheries, there are ways that have tried to curtail that by saying that all commercial catch must be sold to a dealer, transferred to a dealer, and does not allow the retainment of personal bag limits, and so you guys don't have that stipulation currently in snapper grouper.

That's just another way to get at the slice of the pie. It would need a lot of outreach, because I think captain and crew are used to taking home private bag limits, or having that potential to, and that does put a stop on that completely, but it's a way that we have all catch recorded between a logbook and a trip ticket. There's a one-to-one match, and you don't have a logbook that never went to a dealer.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That's an interesting point. Thank you. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: To what Jessica just said, so if you -- In our -- What we've already stated here was that clarify stability, maintaining the number of commercial participants, and I would add the word "food producers", and then you could add in our intent is that all of the production is to be sold, and that could lead to the permits being used by, you know, anglers for their own self going over the bag limit, you know, that the intent is to -- Apparently in other regions, they require the product to be sold, and so it's for food production, and that's our intent. That's what a commercial fisherman does. He's a food producer, and so you might -- That language I think would be important to put in there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We captured all of that. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I really like, you know, Jessica's idea of where it was done, and the first thing that comes to mind is Kerry telling people they need to be their own dealers, and so then they just turn around and do that, and they sell their fish to themselves, and they're their own dealer, and so I really think, you know, some people probably do need to be their own dealers, but most do not.

There's a lot of stuff attached to being a dealer, I mean, all these reports we have to send in, and I think it's easier just I think for the agency, and there's less people to keep up with, and I think it's -- You know, having not everybody being their own dealer is going to be much better just for the whole fishery as a whole, but, you know, but that would be a loophole right off the bat, but, again, I think that's a good starting point, and we can have that conversation and bring it out to the public. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think we've had some good discussion here. We captured those notes, and so, to me, this is kind of like a preamble at the beginning of the document as this goes out to the public, so that they understand the subcommittee's intent here with the document, and then showing the various alternatives.

Are you guys good with that, and so we're not doing the use-it-or-lose-it at this time, and we're not going to ask the AP about it again, because we've already talked to them about it, and so is that where we are? Just looking around the room, and I see heads nodding yes. Okay. Anything else on this topic? We've covered everything we said we were going back to. Anything else before we go into the timeline? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. A clarification. Now that we have discussed what this subcommittee's actions are with regard to Number 11, the commercial trip limit, do we need to go back and relook at the purpose and need at all, or are we going to continue to keep that where it sits now?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So let's make a note that we need staff to look at this and consider removing from this document. Yes. Okay. All right, and so, before we go into the timeline, can we take a five-minute break, and then we'll come back and go into the timeline, and hopefully wrap up?

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going again and try to wrap up the subcommittee, and so now we're going to talk about timing. I'm going to pass it back to Mike to discuss, because we have a timeline in the document.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I guess, just as we get to the timing, I do want to kind of bring back up Action 2 that you all, with your directives, have proposed adding Alternative 4 here. I just want to make sure that the expectations are appropriate. We can certainly develop language. There have been a lot of discussions about VMS, and it's been done in other places, but some of the analysis may not necessarily be as comprehensive as we've had in other amendments, just because we're putting this together in a month.

We're starting, you know, and we're putting this together in a month, and so necessary things that the public would need to have in order to comment on it is I guess what I'm looking for, and so, you know, just an awareness, obviously, that the alternative is included, and, just having conversations up here, there would want to be some information on whether there is money available, financial assistance available, for acquiring VMS. Is that something to include?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, please. Maybe a little bit of the information that Jessica told us about the two different types of VMS, and kind of what they what the cost difference is, and she says that they already have that information. Kerry, go ahead. Then I've got another one.

The other one I was thinking of, and I think it's clear to me, but, just so that the public is clear, we would be saying you would have to have the VMS if you are intending to switch gears, you know, between longline and another gear on the same trip, and so, in order to do this -- If you're not intending to switch gears, we're saying you don't have to have the VMS, and so I just want to make sure that's clear, that, if you want this privilege to switch gears, then we are saying you would need the VMS to do it. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and it should also be made clear that most likely what that will mean is it doesn't matter if on that trip you're going to switch gears. Once you have VMS, I think you always have to have it on, and have it working, and you'll need it for every trip, but I also --

MS. MCCAWLEY: She's thinking.

MS. MARHEFKA: Okay. Well, is she -- She can come back if that's not right, but the other thing I wanted to say is, overall, with this action, whether it's the VMS, the texting, or the whole action in general, what I would like some guidance on, from the agency, is how this action will be viewed in its parts, as regulatory versus deregulatory, because it's going to be -- I think that we all kind of agree, and it looks like you're going to answer that, and so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I think Rick has his hand up, and so Rick wanted to speak to that.

MR. DEVICTOR: I thought about this, and I could talk to John Carmichael about it, yes, and it seems in both this action, right? It's deregulatory in the sense of the bottom longline, and allowing people to just show that gear, but then requiring VMS, and reporting at-sea, it seems like that's a regulatory thing, and so it kind of seems both of them, you know, if that is chosen as preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Reading this, I see something a little different. I see it, when you have the gear change, I can go bandit fishing, and I switch gears to buoy gear, and so does that mean, if I do that, that I have to have a VMS?

MS. MCCAWLEY: No.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I also see this as a just more regulatory, meaning going to cost you more money to go fishing is the way I see this, and I don't think it's needed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey, and so we just clarified that this is only about the bottom longline gear, and so we put that in the list. Anything else that we want to clarify, since we won't have a full analysis when it goes out to the public the first time? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I'm sure you're going to do it, but I would -- If you're going to talk about cellular VMS, versus satellite, I would have a clear explanation of the pluses and minuses, you know, the advantages and disadvantages of each system.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We're getting that captured. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. The only other thing I could think of that we talked about was how this particular action may or may not delay implementation, and it would be helpful to get some more information, as far as what that timing change may look like between these options.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That's being captured, and cellular, whatever we're calling that thing. All right.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so, coming back to the timeline, here we are in April and reviewing additional alternatives. You all have directed several changes to be made, and so June 2026 is when you're scheduled to consider approval for public hearings. Just talking about this procedurally, from what I understand, this would be the last meeting of the subcommittee for development of this amendment.

From this point on, beginning at the June council meeting, this would then be handled by the full Snapper Grouper Committee, and the Snapper Grouper Committee would be making the decisions on actions, alternatives, and ultimately approval, and then the council approval, and so this would go to the Snapper Grouper Committee at that point, and I'll pause, because I heard there was a hand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I guess a technical question. If LE would like at-sea notification, and we say cellular is an option, but you're changing your gear seventy miles offshore, where there is no cellular, would it be at-sea notification? That may -- Do you understand what I'm saying? If they want real-time notification, i.e., you know, we talked about maybe calling in with a sat phone or something, and that would be real-time. It's one o'clock in the afternoon, and we're changing gears. If we're doing cellular, and there's no connection, they could type in they're doing it, but LE is not going to know it until a day or two later, or whenever they get back in cell range, and so would that be called at-sea notification, because basically you're not at-sea anymore?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I forgot. This came up when we were -- Whenever our last meeting was, in March, and I remember having the conversation at the table with Andy on the record, for the same reason. Both of our satellite phones don't work for phones, but work for text, and I believe the direction was text your trusted land-based person, and your trusted land-based person, i.e., your wife, then calls for you, and so I think that was the solution that was offered, but it is

going to be an issue, because our satellite phone would not be able to call, to make a phone call with that message either.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: That's one way to run around it, and so it just needs to be noted that you would have to do something else if you did not have -- If we went VMS, if we went, you know, satellite, then you wouldn't, and so, anyway, just getting into the weeds. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We captured it. I'm going to go back to the timeline.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so this will come to the Snapper Grouper Committee in June. Just thinking about what we can produce, from a document standpoint, in between now and June, you've made several changes. One of the big ones was removing the adjustable trip limits. Then you added a few static trip limits. We can incorporate those changes. Probably the biggest lift is going to be figuring out what information we can put together for VMS. We've kind of hit that. We've addressed that.

Looking at just the timeline between now and then, we can have the information put together for a public hearing document. I'm going to continue to put the caveat on it that it's not going to be as comprehensive as some of our other amendments have been, just because of the speed with which we need to do it, but we will have the necessary information there for the public to be able to provide some feedback, and we do have the meeting planned into the schedule between approval for public hearings and then final council approval.

We have a meeting in there where we can come back on the back-end and clean up some of those actions and provide some additional detail before you get to your final approval meeting. Just know that we're going to be working on the document in between June and September, and then potentially also between September and December. We're going to be making those additions of information as we go through that process, but I wanted to check back in and make sure you all are okay with the schedule as it's currently laid out, and you're comfortable with the schedule as you have it planned at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, obviously, it's the schedule, and it's not you. I think I'm just like looking at -- Because of sort of changes in events, the increase in trip limits, specifically for vermillion and amberjack, feels so much more important now, because of the cost of fuel, and there's part of me that doesn't want to wait until -- I mean, we'll be lucky if those go into place any time in 2027, but, short of creating a whole new document, I don't know what to do.

I certainly don't want to go slower, and, if there's anything that's going to pop up that's going to flag to staff, or to the agency, that this document is going to move slow because of anything in it, please, please, please tell us ASAP, so that we can decide what is going to get the most economic benefit for these fishermen in a time when they desperately need it.

This is not the purview of this council, or this agency, but I just want to point out that every day I'm seeing news headlines of every other country in the developed world is like helping their

fishermen through this fuel crisis, and our country doesn't have the ability to do that, and this is the one thing we have control over, and can do, and so I just implore you to let us know if you think this is going to go any slower, and, if anyone else feels a wild hair, and wants to do something faster for those two things, I would be amenable, but I'm not going to make people work harder just for my one idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I guess I would also ask -- I guess that this is as fast as it can move. It can't be, in September, review for public comment, approve all actions, and take final approval, and I guess that's not possible. I just wanted to ask, and Myra is coming up here.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm going to let Myra address it.

MS. BROUWER: I mean, all I can say is I don't think we've ever done that before. You know, it would be -- I mean, I'm not a lawyer, but I just would not advise it, because you would not -- You would be making a decision without having had really sufficient time to weigh-in the comment that you just received, and staff would not have enough time to really give you a document that is, you know, worthy of your consideration for approval, and so I would not encourage you to do that. That said, we can always try and see how it goes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Rick, Jimmy, Mike.

MR. DEVICTOR: Right, and I would have to talk especially to the economists, because, Mike, correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think that the economic analysis really has started on the trip limits, right, and so I think that that's going to be a pretty big lift to get it ready for approval in September.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I would just say that, when we send this off to the agency for final approval, and submission, that maybe we have some comments in there that say how important this is, and that the regulatory changes are there in it, and that, yes, there are some additional regulations, but they offset each other, and just explain to them, you know, how we got to where we are, so that they're not just going down a list of was this a regulatory change or not, or an addition, and just delaying it, because that's where the delay is going to come from, obviously, is in D.C., and so maybe we add additional comment at that time, and that's all I'm saying, so that they understand the importance of this and why we did things where we did.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thinking of -- Because, I mean, we've -- There have been a couple of select cases where you've pushed through in September. One of the reasons why I would agree with Myra, and recommend against doing that for this action, especially has to do with the bottom longline gear action.

You all -- It doesn't seem, from this meeting, that you all are really sold off the direction to go of VMS, versus at-sea notification, versus whatever requirements you have, and so that is probably going to be an action where you take a lot of input from the public, and you may need more than just immediately hearing, you know, that input to have the considerations for that action. That

seems like a really big change, to kind of, you know, react within the same meeting as you're getting that feedback, and so I would recommend, you know, similar to what Myra has suggested, you know, kind of with that -- That detail in there as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. I don't know that we need to have more discussion on this right now. I mean, I feel like it is what it is, and so be thinking about that between now and the June meeting. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just one more note, and so the Snapper Grouper AP is going to meet later today and into this week. I will inform them of the changes that have been made, but, I mean, a lot of this is going to be, you know, on the fly. We had a document in the briefing book two weeks ago, and, you know, so that's dated at this point.

I'll let them know what's happening, so that we can get some feedback from them to bring to you at the June meeting, but they're probably going to have their more comprehensive discussion on this topic at the October meeting, and so that also kind of like aligns more with the current timeline being retained, but just know that that's going to happen after you've gone out for public comment. You know, they'll have an opportunity to comment along with the public, but then, as a full advisory panel, that would be in between your approval of all actions and your final decisions, when they would be giving probably their most comprehensive input on this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have a question. Rick, do you recall sort of how the conversation went and everything that happened when the COVID change was made, the temporary change to the vermilion trip limit during COVID? My understanding is, and this was right before I got on the council, is that it originated from the agency, and not from the council, and was done sort of extraneous to our normal process. Can you talk about that at all? Can you say whether or not this fuel crisis, if you will, would ever be considered a situation, given the low level of biological impact that existed then, and still exists now, and is there --

MR. DEVICTOR: So you're speaking to for two species, including vermilion, and was it greater amberjack, when we increased the trip limit? Was it just one species? Okay. I remember there was a discussion at the council, I think, and there was a letter sent to the agency, and I think there was an analysis, some analysis, in that letter, and then we moved forward with it. There is a criteria for emergency. There's three prongs that -- I think is one is unforeseen, and the second one is economic impact, and there's a third one that I can't think of right now, and so we evaluated it, and we did say that was an emergency, and we were able to move forward with a rule.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so think about that as we head to June, that maybe it qualifies -- Like a trip limit change for a couple of these species qualifies for emergency action, maybe, and just saying. Okay, and so be thinking about that as we head into the June meeting. Mike has taken some notes on it.

All right. We are now done with the documents. We had great discussion. We did a lot of good work here. Is there any other business -- We've already talked about our Other Business item, and that was abbreviated framework procedures. We checked that off, and is there any other Other

Business to come before this subcommittee? All right. Seeing none, we'll adjourn. Thank you, everybody. Great job.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 21, 2026.)

- - -

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
June 5, 2026

Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee

Mon. 4/20/26

~~Tue~~ 4/20/26

Jessica McCawley, Chair ✓

Kerry Marhefka, Vice-chair ✓

Trish Murphey - web ✓

Amy Dukes ✓

Andy Strelcheck

James Hull, Jr. ✓

Charlie Phillips ✓

Dewey Hemilright ✓

Rick DeVitor ✓

Jessica Stephens ✓

Kevin Mitchell ✓

Dominique Lazzare ✓

SLC Comm Sub Mon
4/20/26

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Quantitative Fishery Scientist

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**Fishery Economist & FMP
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**Citizen Science Project
Manager**

Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee

Tue. 4/21/26
~~THU~~ ~~4/20/20~~

Jessica McCawley, Chair ✓

Kerry Marhefka, Vice-chair ✓

Trish Murphey ✓usb

Amy Dukes ✓

Andy Strelcheck

James Hull, Jr. ✓

Charlie Phillips ✓

Dewey Hemilright ✓

Rick DeVictor ✓
Jessica Stephens ✓
Kevin Mitchell ✓
Dominique Lazure ✓

SG Pom Sub Tue 4/21/24

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