SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL

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Transcript

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel

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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Town and Country Inn, Charleston, South Carolina, on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the fall 2024 Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting. It seems that staff fears that I might break the gavel, and so they omitted it from my grasp, but, anyway, I would like to thank the staff for bringing us together, and putting this on, and having everything ready for us to kind of tackle our agenda at-hand here, and I would like to go around the room here, starting with Robert Freeman, and have everybody introduce themselves, where you're from, and what sector you represent, and check-in with us. Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: Robert Freeman, semi-retired charter fisherman, Atlantic Beach area, fishing out to the Big Rock.

MR. FISH: My name is Andy Fish. I'm a commercial fisherman, and I represent Florida, and I also fish in North Carolina.

MR. MCKINLEY: Randy McKinley, commercial, and also a dealer, wholesale and retail.

MR. CONSTANT: Tony Constant, rec fisherman, Beaufort, South Carolina.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian, operations manager with Hurricane Fishing Fleet, charter, and we do commercial and all kinds of different stuff.

MR. MATTHEWS: Matt Matthews, recreational, from Georgia, but I also fish in South Carolina.

MS. STEPHENS: Haley Stephens, Ponce Inlet, Florida, for-hire charter and headboat.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: James Paskiewicz, commercial fisherman in the Middle Keys, and also a wholesale dealer.

MR. KIMREY: Chris Kimrey, for-hire, Morehead City, North Carolina, charter fisherman.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Paul Rudershausen, marine research scientist, North Carolina State University.

MR. BRANNON: Gettys Brannon, South Carolina Boating and Fishing Alliance, recreational sector, and I represent all of our boat builders and fishing tackle manufacturers in the State of South Carolina.

MR. COX: Jack Cox, Morehead City, commercial and dealer.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, everybody, and I guess that officially kicks-off this meeting. I would like to go over and get an approval for the agenda for this meeting, if everybody has gone over and looked at the material, and does anybody have any additions, or deletions, or anything that they feel is important at this point in time? It seems that there is no additions, and so we'll go ahead and approve the agenda.

Then, as far as the March 2024 meeting minutes go, are there any concerns with what was written down for our last meeting, and does anybody have any comments, or anything they want to share, or add, to those minutes? I guess there is no input there, and so we will be approving the minutes as well. From there, I guess we're moving on to the committee chair remarks. If there is any public comment from anybody in the room, or online, we'll take that at this time. I see that there is nobody in the room, and no hands up online, and so we're going to move forward with the committee chair remarks, and I believe that's going to be Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm here. Can you guys hear me okay?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, we can.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry I can't be there with you guys in-person. I have to go to another meeting for the South Atlantic Council, and so I'm happy that I can be with you today on webinar. I was just going to give you a little presentation on what happened at the last two council meetings, and I can answer questions, if you have them right now, or this afternoon. Otherwise, I hope that Kerry there, and she could help answer questions throughout the meeting.

These are highlights from both the council's June and September meetings, and so some of the amendments that the council approved over these two meetings include Amendment 48, which was the wreckfish, the updates to the wreckfish plan. Amendment 55 were regulations for scamp and yellowmouth grouper.

Amendment 36, which was another modification to the gag and black grouper recreational vessel limit, as well as modifications to black sea bass on-demand pot gear requirements for transit. The council also discussed, at the recent council meeting, some information from NOAA Fisheries, that they are in the process of developing a secretarial amendment, as a result of a settlement agreement and a lawsuit to end overfishing of red snapper.

According to the settlement agreement in the lawsuit, this secretarial amendment is due for submission to the Federal Register by June 6th of 2025, and there were also some notices sent out by NOAA and then maybe something that Kim Iverson sent out from the South Atlantic with more information about this, and, also, NOAA indicates that they intend to do some public workshops before finalizing this secretarial amendment, and I believe that they said that the workshops would probably be either in late January or early February.

The council continued, at these past two meetings, to discuss Amendment 46, which is the recreational permit amendment. The council has received feedback from their technical AP and the Private Angler AP, as well as the Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel. They got all this at the June meeting, and we didn't really dive into this at the September meeting, and the next discussion of this recreational permitting amendment will occur at the council's next meeting in December.

The council has also been working on Amendment 56, which is the black sea bass stock assessment discussions. The council continued discussions about potential management regulations, to

consider how changes should be incorporated into projections of future catch, and you guys are going to discuss this later in the meeting this week.

Commercial management, and so the council intends to assemble a commercial management subcommittee, like they had done for wreckfish, and so they had a wreckfish subcommittee, and so it would be a subcommittee of the Snapper Grouper Committee to continue progress on addressing commercial issues outside of the quarterly council meetings, and so these subcommittee meetings allow for really focused discussion, and they can be over multiple hours outside of a regular council meeting week, and then the council -- The subcommittee comes back to report out to the council as necessary. The first meeting of this group will be in November, and then a report-out on the subcommittee will happen at the council's December meeting.

The for-hire limited entry amendment, and so the council previously initiated the amendment to include the snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, and coastal migratory pelagics, and, in June, the council paused the amendment development until permit data is available from the Southeast Regional Office. They've been having some difficulties with their permitting system, and so there's actually a number of items that are on-hold, because of this data problem, and we can't see the number of permits that have been issued since I want to say early 2020, and so the council is just pausing until we can get some more information.

Then the SEFHIER improvement amendment -- It was initiated in June, to improve the compliance with SEFHIER reporting requirements, and the council is assembling an ad hoc for hire reporting advisory panel to get stakeholder input on the items that are in this document. Mr. Chairman, that concludes my presentation. I'm happy to take any questions, but I'm thinking you are going to have more questions on these topics throughout the week, but I'm happy to answer any questions now.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you so much, Jessica. I will look around the room here, for any questions we might have on any of this material that Jessica has presented, and I don't see any. Thank you, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So I guess we'll be moving forward to the stakeholder engagement meetings, and we have a presentation.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Good afternoon, everyone. For those of you that don't know me, I'm Christina Wiegand. I'm the Fisheries Social Scientist with the South Atlantic Council, and so I'm going to be talking to you guys today about an engagement effort that the council is working on to hopefully sort of start building some trust back with stakeholders, and so one of the ways they're looking to do that is by building relationships and engaging fishermen, and stakeholders, in a more informal setting that allows for two-way conversations.

I'm sure many of you have attended a public comment opportunity, or other sort of council meeting, and found that one of the most valuable things can be those one-on-one conversations that you're able to have with council members, and so, instead of having the typical formal meeting environment, where we're asking for public comments, and you get up, and you've got three minutes to sort say how you feel on a specific topic, and then sit back down, we're trying to create

an environment that will really foster conversation, and dialogue, between stakeholders and council members.

Like I said, open dialogue, and an opportunity for mutual learning, and so an opportunity for you all to learn from council members, but also an opportunity for council members to learn from you about what you're experiencing on the water.

The next objective would be to sort of broadly increase knowledge of the fisheries management process. You all, as AP members are, you know, integrally involved in this management process, but, from the outside, it can be a little daunting to sort of understand where the opportunity to get involved is and how information sort of flows from APs, through the councils, ultimately to amendments and to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Then, finally, an opportunity for stakeholders to bring concerns and observations forward directly to council members, and, again, that opportunity to have a conversation. Then, finally, sort of this objective for a way for council members to also share information on salient management issues, and so issues that are really at the forefront of discussions.

We wouldn't be holding these meetings always here in Charleston. The plan is for us to travel, and get back out into fishing communities, and try to meet fishermen where they're at, and so that's ultimately sort of the goal of this series of meetings that we're looking to start holding, and this would become a regular part of the council's sort of outreach and engagement process. This isn't sort of a one-off effort. This is something that we would start to do every single year, going forward.

One of the first things that we, as staff, as well as the council members, sort of decided to answer is what they would do with the information that would be gathered. Typically, when we're going out into the public, oftentimes there's a management measure the council is considering, and we're asking for input specifically on a management measure, and so there's a sort of traceable outcome, whereas this is much more open-ended, and we understood that, for stakeholders to even be interested in participating in something like this, they have to know that that information is going to go somewhere in the council management process.

Ultimately, the council intends to use this information to identify topics that need to be addressed that haven't been on their radar, and then, once they've got a bunch, you know, a bunch of issues on their radar, you have to set workload priorities. The council can only work on so much at a given time, and so what should their top priority be? What things are most important to have addressed in fisheries right now?

Then, finally, it's inevitable that, if there are active management actions going on, that stakeholders are going to come to these meetings and have input on those management actions, and so also using that information to help guide current discussions as well.

One of the things that I wanted to talk to you guys about today is, for a meeting like that, that's a bit more open-ended, and not quite as structured as your typical public comment opportunity, because it's not tied to a specific management action, what would you all, as AP members, need to feel like came from these meetings, in order for them to be successful? Then do you have any suggestions for how we can communicate to stakeholders, especially those that maybe have not

been as involved in the council process as you all, about the benefit of attending these meetings and getting to have those informal conversations with council members?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much. I think we have one late arrival. David, if you want to go ahead and introduce yourself.

MR. MOSS: David Moss, south Florida recreational fisherman. Sorry I'm late. Traffic on 95.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. One more.

MR. POLSTON: John Polston, King Seafood. A little bit of traffic in Jacksonville. Sorry.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you so much. Going back to the questions at-hand here, and maybe I'll just go ahead and get started here. When I go back to my community, from these meetings, and try and discuss the things that we talk about here, I'm not really sure that most people understand what the process is, and how long things take, and essentially why things happen the way that they do. I think that, for everybody, the different fisheries move in real time, and what we do here does not, and that's just because it's the nature of the beast.

I think that, for us to have good dialogue in real time, we need to be more prepared to answer questions that we get asked right then and there, like, you know, is there going to be a future for us, and I think a lot of people want to know if they're going to be regulated out of a specific industry, and so there's -- There's always been some kind of a wall up between management and participants in the different sectors, and so I think that, you know, if we could find a way to be more relative to the to the time, more relevant even, that might be a way to kind of get better interactions. Anybody else have anything to add on that? Chris.

MR. KIMREY: So, I mean, I agree with everything James said. One thing that I would like to mention to you, Christina, is, and I'm assuming this is across the board, but I know that, when I go back to North Carolina, there's a lot of fishermen that know I'm involved with fisheries management, as an AP, and the vast majority, whether it be federal or state level, the meetings I attend, the biggest problem is people will show up when they're angry about a management decision, but, if they're not, they won't show up.

When they're angry, and they show up, a lot of times, they don't understand the process, just like James said, and so I've discussed that with some of my fellow fishermen, that I put good faith in, and, really, it seems like to me that one of the biggest problems is people from each sector, that aren't involved with fisheries management like us -- You know, unless they're angry about something, they don't show up, and the reason they're not involved is because it takes a lot of effort.

It takes a huge amount of effort to even to begin to understand this process, and the guy that's trying to make a living, that's not upset with fisheries management currently, the vast majority of them are not going to put the effort forward that it takes to understand the process, and, by not understanding the process, you know, that is a huge gap between people, as stakeholders, management, and everybody in between.

I think that's the largest obstacle, is trying to figure out how to better educate the general public in each sector, so that they understand a little better as to what's going on in the management, and not

only will that bridge the gap, but I think in turn, if there were some way to do it, and I don't know that there is, I think there'd be a lot of positive feedback coming from stakeholders, if they just had a better basic understanding of the management.

I mean, there's people, that are senior to me, that I've had conversations with about just the basic workings of the southeast Atlantic, and like, you know, something happened with grouper, you know, or whatever, and it doesn't matter what fish it is, and I'm just having a basic conversation with them, and I'm talking about people that have been in the industry for a very long time, and they really don't understand at all, I mean, who's managing what, and I probably wouldn't either, if I hadn't put some effort into it to end up here, and so I think that trying to bridge that gap should be, you know, at the top of the priority list. I have no recommendations as how to do it, but that's the problem.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Chris, thank you so much. I believe we have Andrew Fish.

MR. FISH: I think -- I feel that's a great -- They're both great statements, and, a lot of my peer group, they want -- They'd like to think that you need to find a way, and not you personally, but you need to find a way to instill the trust. They don't really trust the process, and they don't really trust with what they see and what comes down the pipe. That's just my input.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Andrew. We have Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Chris, and Andrew. I agree with you all's points. One thing I would like to point out is even with -- You know, in South Carolina, we're fortunate, and we have the three largest fishing tackle manufacturers in the world, and so these decisions impact them drastically, and we have twenty-eight boat makers here as well, and it seems to me, to Chris's point, that, until it becomes a point of anger, and maybe, as an industry group, this is something that we should do a little better, and maybe work with you guys, Christina, to figure out how do we let the leaders of those companies know what the process is, and a lot of them do, but, again, you only hear about it when it's not going well.

American Sport Fishing Association, the Center for Sport Fishing Policy, and CCA, do a good job of giving them a high level, you know, what's happening at these meetings, and have always done a good job of it, but there still seems to be a lack of communication from the council itself to the industry groups, and which this costs, you know, a lot of times, a ton of money to, no matter what decisions are being made, and sometimes, obviously, helps them monetarily, as it does a lot of people around this table today, but I think that there's got to be some emphasis as well on some industry engagement.

How do we do that better, and I think, to Chris's point, if we do that better, especially with the three tackle manufacturers that are here, that that can bleed to some of their consumers, and, if we can figure out a way to talk to their consumers, whether that's through a social media campaign or whatever that is, that some of these brands might be willing to work with us on, you know, I think that there could be some tactical ways to make that happen.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, guys. I believe we had David Moss.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Yes, I completely agree. I think that utilizing -- Certainly, from a recreational standpoint, because it's such a, and pardon the bad pun, but a wide net to cast to catch everybody. Utilizing, whether it's tackle manufacturers, and the air quotes, fishing celebrities, and I know, a while ago, the council was working with like George Poveromo, when the descending device stuff first came out.

Utilizing people like that to be the voice, because, again, speaking from a recreational perspective, a lot of people listen to them, and there's a reason that these guys have shows, and podcasts, and, you know, social media accounts, and all this stuff, and hitting up those tackle manufacturers, who sponsor all these people, that's a good way to go to really, and, again, pardon the bad pun, but have the trickle-down effect, and let them disseminate the information, and the policy, and all that good stuff.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. I think we had Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I would say, commercially it's -- You know, most of the guys that have been it a long time, that they really catch most of the fish, they felt betrayed, I guess, for the last twenty, or twenty-five, years, and so, I mean, no matter what I say to them, they're just -- They don't think their voice is heard, and so I think it's incumbent on us, as fishermen, especially us commercial guys, to come in and try to tell them their voice is -- It's different than what it used to be. You know, the science is different, and everything is different, and maybe -- Maybe that's somehow of how we could get them to do it, but some of the -- Most of the older guys, I can't -- I can't get them here, or to the meetings. Anyway --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Randy. We have another comment.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. Just to touch on what everyone kind of is agreeing upon, I think that so many issues can be not only resolved, but prevented, with education. Last month, we hosted a -- Or council members hosted a fest fishing practices workshop in New Smyrna Beach, and, with one day's notice, we were able to get the workshop sold out, if you will, and it was at capacity, and, out of twenty-five people who are there, twenty-four of them were either commercial fishermen, for hire, local scientists, retail owners, and so these are these are people who already have a stake in the industry.

You know, speaking on behalf of the for-hire, and the charter, and the retail, and the commercial side of things, you know, and headboats are also regulated through recreational, and so it's all together, but the want is there, and I think we don't -- The communication issue is a big part of it, and I do have some really good ideas on how we can continue to get the word out, you know, at a cost-effective way to do that. I think that timing of it is really important, but the people are interested. The want is there, and so I think that we take whatever momentum we have and roll with it. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. We had one more panel member join us. Richard Gomez, if you would like to go ahead and introduce yourself, please.

MR. GOMEZ: Hi, Richard Gomez, charter-for-hire, Lower Keys. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard. We have Paul who would like to speak.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it would be helpful if the council -- These are some really good ideas, Christina, and thank you for the presentation. I think it would be helpful if the council considers what kind of critical mass they should have at these meetings to consider them successful and a good bang for the buck. I know -- I don't mean to be glass-half-empty, but I've hosted somewhat similar meetings on the outcomes of applied research that North Carolina State University has conducted, and I've been disappointed by my attendance.

This could be due to a lack of effort, on my part, to market some of these outreach ideas that I've put forth over the last twenty years in Morehead City, but, right now, of course, in the internet era, you can have a lot of noise from social media competing with your efforts, and so certainly this this sounds like a very worthwhile endeavor, but just, again, consider what kind of critical mass you're expecting, for meetings far and wide in our region, so you can get the most bang for your buck, and, along those lines, you might consider, you know, the carrot-and-stick approach. How can I draw people in, and get them interested in the fishery management process, and one way to do that is to offer some type of a nominal reward for attendance, whatever that might be.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Paul. That's great input. Go ahead, Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Just one thing to add to that carrot-and-stick approach is I think there's another way to give the carrot, and a meeting that's solely focused on educating folks about fisheries management is one thing, but, if you combine it with a seminar, or a presentation, that might interest folks, and, you know, I remember, years ago, when I lived down in south Florida, we had some folks that would do a monthly presentation on a different type of -- A different species in the Keys, and you would go sit and listen to local guides talk about how they fish for them, and, if you added something into that, a management component, I think you may reach a set of ears that you wouldn't otherwise get to reach.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you so much, Matt. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Just hitting on what Gettys was talking about earlier, you know, the reality is, to make an event successful, you have to make people want to go to it, and so it's is going to be that combination of the private sector, the public sector, manufacturers, internet, everything coming together, and now I'm not the guy, but, whoever is the person who can put all that stuff together, then you can have a winning program.

You can draw people in, and you can have people who are going to engage in a conversation that have interest in what we do every single day, but it's going to take something from all the sectors, which, as everyone well knows, when you try to get all those sectors doing something together, sometimes it takes a while, and the wheels of motion are very, very slow, but that's what it's going to take to make an event from a small few people show up to a real event, where you would consider it a success.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Cameron, and, just kind of to touch on some of the things that I've heard in this room already on this topic, and, unfortunately, I've been around long enough to where I've seen the angry people. They used to be the commercial fishermen, in the commercial sector, and they were always up in arms.

We were always up in arms, because we didn't know, or understand, why the rules were coming down the line the way that they were, and, as my career has progressed, and as fisheries management has progressed, that angry sector is seemingly, at least to me, in my area, the recreational sector. Regulations are being put quite a bit more heavily on the rec sector and getting out on your boat and going to catch.

You know, I mean, and you can take this for what it's worth, but the days of meat fishing are over with. You can't design a trip anymore, one or two times a year and go fill your freezer. If you're from -- You know, even if you're from the Florida Keys, and you only get a couple of chances a year to go fishing, you can't go and stock your freezer anymore, and so those people, that have that have withstood the fisheries management in the same timeframe that I have, those people are angry.

I actually reached out to about a dozen charter boat captains in the Marathon area, and Upper Keys, before this meeting today, and I said, hey, I can be a voice for you. You're really not represented here. You know, Richie, I know that you're from the Lower Keys, but the Middle Keys recreational and for-hire is not really represented here, and so I did reach out to those guys, that I've known for a really long time, maybe to try and, you know, break down the wall a little bit, and to get some of those guys to understand what it is that we do, and what we talk about here, and so, you know, that's another piece of the puzzle, perhaps.

Another thing that just kind of jumped into my head is maybe there could be an online forum, that is generated by the council, and that, if people want to hop on and post a question, or have a concern, they can just put it there. When it gets answered, by the council or by, you know, by NOAA, or whoever, and, you know, maybe have an industry expert from different agencies to go and answer these questions, where nobody has to leave their hometown. Nobody has to go anywhere. Nobody has to be patted on the back for showing up.

You know, maybe something like that might work. I know, when I want to learn something on a particular topic, a forum can always be a useful place. Thank you. Any other comments or questions? We would like to get to some more of the presentation, but a couple more quick remarks.

MR. GOMEZ: No, and just to say that I agree with that tremendously, because people don't want to travel, and people -- In my area, they're getting very lethargic. They're just tired of fighting the whole thing and, you know, struggling with the whole concept of management, and they've just given up on the subject, and a lot of that is because they're not going to attend these meetings, but a forum, to me, sounds like a wonderful idea, if, for nothing else, for them to voice their opinion, and, if they had someone answering the questions, that'd be a great thing.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Richard. I think we had one more. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: I'll be quick. Thank you. I think, to Richard's point, and some other points that were made, James, the online forum would be good. Has there ever been any sort of like angler summit, or anything that's been tried to be had over the years, like just something maybe once a year, or twice a year?

MS. WIEGAND: So there has been -- I mean, so there's been work outside of the council groups, like ASA have worked on summits. I will say the council has done -- The council specifically has done things like snapper group visioning, which was back in 2014, and I'm looking at Myra. That was before my time with the council, and then we just finished a series of mackerel port meetings, that have been sort of structured similar to the structure I'm going to talk about in the next few slides, but that's all that I personally can think of, in terms of like an industry summit from the council and not other groups.

MR. BRANNON: That's very helpful, and I think the ASA summit is this week in San Diego, but it's more getting the industry together. I'm wondering if there's a way for us to get some of the recreational and commercial people together, but one thing I would advise us on -- I'm hearing the word “lethargic” a good bit, and some of just the frustration, and the anger, is --

If we were able to pull something off like that, we need to have a few softballs out there, that the recreational and the commercial guys leave feeling like they've been heard, and they actually have something to take away from it, instead of walking away with disappointment, because I think that hurts our long-term engagement with the stakeholders, because, every time we do get them to the table, we're cutting them back again, and so there's not anything that we're giving them to feel warm and fuzzy about, whenever they leave, and so I think, if we do put together an event, or even a forum, we need to think about ways that we can positively impact the businesses, and the fishermen, and their meat lockers, at the end of the day, so that they'll want to show back up, if we need them to. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Gettys. I think we had David Moss, real quick, and then John Paulson.

MR. MOSS: To that, there's a program, and I don't know how many people are familiar with it, and I think most people are, called MREP, Marine Resource Education Program, which is not only completely free, and you can sign up as a recreational angler, or commercial angler, or apply, I should say. It’s all expenses paid, and it's usually in the Tampa area, greater Tampa area, although who knows what's going to happen now, and I think they've just recently changed it to one week straight, where they start off with all the science that goes behind this, and how they kind of come to making all these decisions, and then the whole management process as well. It’s a really fantastic program. If you haven't taken it, I encourage it but it's almost exactly what you're speaking to, as far as the summit goes. Obviously, it’s limited entry, to a point of who can take it, but, anybody that you know, recommend them to sign up. It's a great program.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. John.

MR. POLSTON: I think the forum idea would be a good idea online, but, I mean -- I may be wrong, but I doubt it, and the only two things you're going to get comments on is red snapper and shark. That's the two main topics. We all know it, and, you know, everybody laughs, but it's the truth. The only two things they’re going to bitch about the whole time is those two things, and I know we're doing what we can with the science and stuff, but, with that point being said, maybe if we could maybe get some input, every now and again, because, me particularly, I just hear what they decided, but no reasoning.

If we could get some input from the SSC, instead of just from the council. If there's something direct, if they have a public person, or something like that, say we've gotten a little further with this now, and this is what we're looking at, and, you know, maybe two years down the road, or maybe some form of hope, or no hope, whichever it may be, but I'm just throwing that out there, because I just don't think there's enough representation from the SSC, to any of us, to commercial, to recreational, to for-hire, any of it. I just don't, and that's my own personal opinion.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, John. Back to you, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I appreciate all of that input, and I think you guys have sort of hit on a lot of the things that the council is hoping to start working towards with this series of stakeholder engagement meetings, things like understanding of the management process and addressing what is clearly a lack of trust in the council from stakeholders

Sort of as I move forward with the presentation, and talk to you guys about the structure we've outlined for these stakeholder engagement meetings, I'd be curious to get your input on do you think the structure that's been laid out can help begin to foster some trust, understanding that building relationships, and building trust, is a sort of long-term goal, and not something that can be addressed by one single meeting, but hoping to sort of take one small footstep in the right direction to start addressing that, and so sort of keep all of those comments in mind as we go through this next part and talk about the structure of the meetings.

If any of you guys attended a mackerel port meeting, and I know some of you did, and thank you, the structure is going to look a little bit similar to you, and so we plan on these being sort of two-hour meetings from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at night. Certainly people could stay longer, to continue having conversations, if they so chose, but the actual sort of formal portion of the meeting would be that two-hour block.

Again, our goal would be to be in fishing communities, and so we wouldn't be expecting someone from Jacksonville to come up to Charleston to participate. We would be holding that meeting in Jacksonville, for example, and we would start off, just as people are arriving, talking to them, having staff, and council members, talk to them about why they chose to attend and what they were really hoping to talk about.

The point of doing this is so that, to the extent possible, and there's, obviously, a lot of planning that will go into these meetings, but, to the extent staff is able to, we would like to be able to sort of pivot, if there seems to be a topic in Hatteras, North Carolina, and everyone that's there says we really want to talk about shadow shark. Then hopefully staff would be able to pivot, to make sure that we provided an opportunity for them to talk about what they were interested in talking about that night, outside of what we sort of already had planned.

We'll start off with an introductory presentation, and this will be a presentation that's given by a council member. I know, oftentimes, you guys are at meetings like this one, and you see staff giving a lot of presentations. This would be different. It will be council members that are providing presentations, and talking to you guys, and staff will be there to sort of assist, but, again, this will really be an opportunity for you all to speak with your council members and representatives at that council table.

A council member will give a presentation that just sort of talks about goals and objectives of the evening, and how the night's going to operate, and then the first sort of meat section of the meeting is going to be these structured breakout groups. This is where, if you attended mackerel port meetings, this will seem familiar. We'll have attendees break out into sort of two different groups, and they'll have a facilitated discussion around sort of two predetermined topics.

Each group will get to talk about both topics, and then we'll have just a brief intermission, take a break, have some informal conversations, and then we'll get into the second portion, which we're calling sort of an unstructured breakout session, or a tabling session, and think, if you've ever been to like a fishing expo or anything, where there are a bunch of tables set up, and you can just sort of move in between, to talk about, or learn about, whatever it is you may be interested in.

This will be a seriously slimmed down version of something like that, but we would have, you know, three stations, sort of set up about various topics, where, during that chunk of time, you would be able to just sort of move around and go talk about whatever topic may be of interest to you, and, of course, council members are the ones, as well as staff, who will be available to have those conversations.

Then, finally, we'll have a council member just sort of wrap things up and talk about -- You know, thank attendees for coming, and talk about what the next steps will be, where that information is going to go in the management process, and then, immediately following the meeting, there would be a thank you email sent to all attendees. That would include sort of a bullet point list of some of the things council members learned at the meeting, as well as information on upcoming council meetings and opportunities for participation. Then council members, and staff, would all debrief, to make sure we're all sort of taking everything we've learned and compiling it together and talking about what went well, what didn't go well, and maybe ways that we can change and improve in the future.

There will be a summary report that's put together and provided both to everyone who attended, as well as, of course, made available on the website, and to council members, and we'll, you know, try to hype it up a little bit on social media.

Then, at the next council meeting, which would be the March council meeting for the round that's going to be coming up, council members that were present at each of those stakeholder meetings would take a moment, at the start of the meeting, to talk about what they learned from stakeholders and what sort of their biggest takeaways were from the series of meetings. Then, if there's any sort of like detailed information, that can be presented before each relevant topic, so we make sure we're sort of starting off the council meeting, as well as different discussion topics, with what we learned at the stakeholder engagement meetings.

Then, finally, we would make sure that summary report again is provided, so there is something lengthier, if people want to read it, in addition to council comments, and so, again, I'm going to talk about outreach, and how to help get people in the door, next, but, before we talk about that, you all have talked about sort of the lethargy, and, you know, frustration with attending meetings like this, and do you think a structure like that is something that people would be willing to participate in?

Do you have any suggestions for, you know, ways that we could consider, you know, maybe structuring the meeting differently, and ways that you would like information sort of presented at a meeting? What do you find most engaging? Is it a looping PowerPoint video, or is it just someone, you know, having a conversation with you, something written on paper, and, again, thinking about that structure, do we think continually holding meetings, and having those conversations -- Is that sort of the small step forward in helping to build trust long-term that the council's looking for?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Christina. Before we dive into this, I'd like to have the two panel members that just joined us introduce themselves, and who they represent, and what area they're from.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks, James. Chris Conklin I'm from Murrells Inlet, and always fashionably late, so I'm glad to be here again.

MR. BUFF: Scott Buff. I'm from Holden Beach Supply, North Carolina.

MR. CONKLIN: I neglected to say I'm a commercial fisherman from Murrells Inlet. I represent a small fish house.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, gentlemen. So what do we have for Christina? Do we have some ideas on this? I see some hands, maybe, and we'll kind of go over what's been put in front of us here. First, I saw Richard Gomez.

MR. GOMEZ: Christina, I got some bad news for you. I can't get these young people today to even pay attention to their fishery. They just want to go fishing, and they want to come home, and they don't want to fight for their rights, but they want to complain about them. It's a shame, but I don't -- I don't see that this being something that would work, just because the young people -- They've got a whole new agenda, and it's not about preserving their rights anymore. It's just about going and catching what they can, and coming home, and doing whatever else they do, you know what I mean?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard. I think we do. We had Paul and then David.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: My opinion is not quite as negative as Richard's, but I was about to say "ibid", but I modified that a little bit, and, Christina, the thing that concerns me the most about your meeting structure is the third block there in the structure breakouts, and you have a lot of people, like Richard said, that are already going to be hesitant to come to these meetings, and they're going to be tied up with their own personal lives, and professional lives, and so I think this is a really good opportunity for the council to outreach contemporary issues, and contemporary regulations, and potential updates to regulations, and SEDARs and that kind of thing.

I don't know if a lot of the public's going to be comfortable going to breakouts with people they haven't met yet, and they might not want to correspond with at all, and they might really want to see this as the council's opportunity, and perhaps the council should see it as the council's opportunity, to reach a subset of stakeholders, as we discussed this afternoon, that otherwise wouldn't be engaged, without requiring those stakeholders to add their own input at these meetings.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Paul. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. I'll kind of echo a little bit of what Richard said. It's not quite as bleak, but -- Christina, I'm sure I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, but people are going to show up because they're angry, and that's kind of it. They're going to show up when they're affected. That's certainly why I started to get involved.

I'm sure a lot of people here started to get involved because they started to see things that they didn't like, and so they show up, for lack of a better term, angry, and so any structure can work. This isn't bad. I don't mind the breakouts, but it's going to -- You're going to have to have moderators that are going to really help to kind of force a discussion along, as you just said, the gentlemen to my right over there, that -- A lot of people that don't know each other, that come already angry, it's going to be difficult to kind of get them going, and so you're going to need some moderators there that are going to push the discussion and get it going. Now, again, that's nothing that you don't already know. Once it gets going it's great, but sometimes getting that first little pushes is tough.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Just a couple thoughts. I think that, with the goal of the stakeholder engagement meetings, being to restore the trust, I think that's going to be really important that the leaders, and the council members, are people that, you know, are trustworthy, that they have those people skills to be able to literally engage, you know, and not sugarcoat things, but just be upfront and, and honest, and informative, and, like Mr. John here said, I think that offering explanations, or some type of, you know, future plans can help defuse, when folks show up angry, and, you know, hey I hear you, you know. I think that it's important that our leaders don't look at as people being angry, but they're caring, loudly, and these people are passionate, okay, and they're showing up because, because they do care, and, as far as the youth, you know, I can touch a little bit on our that part of it.

We are here, and we do care. I think that a big obstacle could be the sharing of the information, and the way we communicate these type of meetings. You know, we got a postcard in the mail for a mackerel meeting. Thirty-year-olds aren't checking their mailbox. They're checking their email, and they're getting their news from the social media, you know, Instagram and Facebook, and so, when the council posts, that, hey, we're having a meeting today, on social media, that's not going to get people there.

You need to have this planned thirty, sixty, ninety days out, for it to be successful, and another thing that you can do, leading up to is it, and this is just an idea, and like we touched on MREP, which, you know, is an awesome program. Unfortunately, it was canceled, so I don't get to go this year, but you could even do a campaign.

You know, I know that we use a lot of acronyms, and acronyms I feel like are scary to people. They have no idea what you're talking about, you know, FMP, AP, ad hoc, and what are you talking about, and I'm not going to come, because I'm intimidated, you know, and do a weekly social media campaign of what the heck are they talking about Wednesday, and explain what SEDAR is, and explain what an AP is, or whatever, and that, I think, is going to help with the engagement on folks, stakeholders, on the younger side. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. Did you raise your hand? Okay, and so we're going to go to Andy, Andrew Fish, and then I have a comment on things.

MR. FISH: Maybe, like in more instilling the trust, you can start with some transparency, as far as like the big topics, like sharks and red snappers. On the next stock assessment, there has to be three-and-a-half million red snapper, and they have to be average twenty inches, and then we will give you something. I mean, there has to be some transparency, and there has to be a target on a number that we have to stick to that seem to -- That everybody seems to pull out of the air. There's enough red snapper, and they're not big enough now, or they're not fat enough, or they're not long enough, or they're not old enough. Maybe, if there's some transparency on the sharks and red snappers, that there is a sunset at the end of this, that we're all being denied a fishery, that, when we reach these things, something may happen.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Andrew. You pretty much took the words right out of my mouth, you know, and like that would be a trust-building moment to come through, especially on a topic that we're all left with, you know, scratching our heads with, every time we leave here, and another thing, to kind of echo what Haley was saying, the outlets where our youth are getting their information -- We need to find a way that the information comes to them, that they don't have to search for it. I know, when I'm scrolling, the algorithm shows me what they want me to see, and I get a lot of fishing information, you know, through my social media.

I think, if we found a way to be at the top of those lists, you know, if different search words could get, you know, the information, put in front of people's faces, over and over and over, to where they want to engage, that might be more beneficial to the task at-hand here, rather than having, and excuse me Christina, but a rather outdated way to really get information into the minds of our intended targeted audience. Anybody have any further questions, or comments? I got Haley and then Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you. I don't want to beat a dead horse here, but I do want to reiterate a couple of things, and I think my initial take on this is it seems very much overengineered, and it may just be, you know, the ADD in me coming out, but I think it goes for especially the younger generation, and we could assume things in shorter snippets and to spend -- If we're looking to reach folks outside of this core group that are showing up already, I agree with the comments that have already been made. I think the approach needs to be updated, or more in line with how folks consume information these days.

Then the other comment I have is it that trust is something that's to be earned, and not taken, and something like this kind of paints a picture of trying to gain somebody's trust without the substance behind it, and we've already had comments on what that substance can look like, but there's got to be some meat to go along with the effort.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Matt. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: That's the other really cool thing about using platforms like social media, is it's all trackable, right, so you're given insight, and metrics, that tell you who your audience is, who has viewed it, what their age demographic is, you know, what the general location is, and so, you know, perhaps, for the amount, the cost, that it would take to rent a place to do a big meeting, you

take that money, and you put it behind a social media campaign, you can reach half-a-million people, you know, for the same cost, and potentially be -- You know, I'm not sure if it would be more effective or not, but, either way, you would have the metrics to be able to see your result. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That's great input, Haley. I think that that's a wonderful way to put it, and I think that you could eventually -- Even if you did spend the money initially to get the engagement, you could eventually have people willing to pay to be involved. You know, once you dangle something in front of them, that they want to engage in, they can -- They definitely want more. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and you and Haley hit on a couple of the points that I wanted to ask and make. It seems like, to me, this is a really well-thought-out plan, and I've looked ahead a little bit, and so I know we're getting into outreach questions, just like I was sort of hitting some things that I didn't realize were in here before, and so thank you for bearing with me.

My background is in public relations, and I've put on a lot of events over the years, and some very boring political events, and some very interesting political events, and this falls somewhere in between, if we can get the right people in the room, and I think that these are important enough issues that the agency, or NOAA itself, should look at putting a communications budget behind it, for advertising and public relations.

I hate to say this, as a former public relations consultant, but I think it might be a good idea for you all to consult and see if there's any agencies out there that would bring these new generation technology points to you, and I'm -- You all might already have a lot of that in-house, but, in my experience in the past, and working with different government agencies, it never hurts to have a second, or third, opinion and so I think with --

With what we're looking at doing here, I think it would be great for us to have a budget, for either a public relations or advertising firm to work with you guys, and really work on our communication points, and I think that that that would help a lot with what Mr. Gomez said and getting young people out there, but we've got to be in their hands.

We've got to hit them seven or eight times, where they're seeing it in different areas, whether it's social media, you know, and there's a ton of cool ways to do it, with OTT, over top television, with streaming devices, and, I mean, you can get lists that go straight into people that own boats, or have fishing licenses, and, I mean, there are so many ways to get targeted with this, and so I would like to see the council, as a whole, maybe utilize those a little bit more, and maybe that is reaching out and getting some help with it, but this is -- I think this is a good plan overall, and I just think it'd be great to -- I know we're jumping ahead to outreach, but that would be my feedback.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you guys. Christina. Jack Cox.

MR. COX: Christina, a quick question for you.

Oh, Jack Cox. Yeah, Christina quick question for you. Do you think you will get just as good of a turnout with the in-person port meetings as you would with an online web -- Like Webex or something?

MS. WIEGAND: I will say, in my experience, we've had more -- I would say, specific to mackerel, because that's historically what I've worked on, we've had more turnout in-person, at the mackerel port meetings, that we have during past webinars that we've held for various mackerel issues, and I was actually -- I sort of asked Chris if he minded if I put him on the spot a little bit, but he involved, and, Jack, I know a number of you were at the mackerel port meetings.

We were fortunate to have phenomenal turnout for those port meetings, and so I would be curious, sort of from your perspective, what it was that encouraged people to come out to those, and if there's a way that we can sort of replicate that, if there's a similar carrot that we could use for these stakeholder engagement meetings that might also encourage people to sort of come and participate.

MR. KIMREY: I can't speak for all the mackerel port meetings, but I did attend the Morehead meeting, and, you know, anybody that's been in Morehead, and there's several of these guys that are from Morehead, we're a small community, and there's a lot of buzz around town. Word travels fast, and so the attendees, the best I could figure, for our meeting -- I think a big part of that attendance originated from the social media stuff, but there was also the postcards that Haley mentioned, and then the whole word-of-mouth thing.

A big part of the people that attended didn't truly understand that the mackerel port meeting was kind of based around, and correct me if you need to, but based around discussing the future of mackerel. A lot of the people that attended assumed that they were meeting because they were trying to extend some sort of regulation on to mackerel, and so that was the carrot that was at our meeting.

They were showing up, once again, because they were upset with the potential of management changes, and they just assumed that, if there was changes, they were going to be negative toward them as a stakeholder. Not everybody, but a big number of them, because I don't know -- How many people were at that meeting? Was it forty?

MS. WIEGAND: Fifty-two.

MR. KIMREY: Fifty-two, and so, out of fifty-two people, and this is a guesstimate, I probably knew, personally, thirty-five or forty of them, and so I talked to him, and some of them before the meeting, some of them during the meeting, and some of them after the meeting. So, you know I'm not just guessing at why a large number of them showed up. I know exactly why they showed up, and that was it, and so that carrot was they were they were fearing infringement, you know, on their right to fish for mackerel.

Now, once they got there, a lot of them did enjoy the breakout groups, and it was laid out, and it was really cool. It was it was a neat little deal, and I think everybody there learn something, everybody that was holding the meeting, and everybody that attended the meeting. I thought that was good, but, as far as upping attendance in general, and this is -- You know, with these port meetings, and anything -- You know, it's already been said once that I hate to beat a dead horse, but it takes effort to understand management.

If you don't understand management, you're scared of it, as a stakeholder, and, until there's some way to educate people as to what's happening in the management world, and not to just be mad

when they see something, or hear something, on social media, or on the dock, or through an internet post or whatever, but to educate them to understand what's happening.

You know, I'm a great example, and I'll keep this real short. When I was younger, I did a lot more commercial fishing, and, you know, we killed a lot of stuff, and I can't be any more blunt than that, and I didn't think about management unless I thought they were about to, you know, take something away from me. As I've gotten older, much older, I started paying attention to what I was seeing, and I got concerned about some of the things that were happening, and that's how I ended up in management, and, so, you know, I converted from a kill-them-all to, hey, we need to pay attention to what we're doing.

I think a lot of the public would also be a little more easing in their frustrations with management if they just understood the process, and so the mistrust is coming from -- I think it's all the infringement on them, all of what's being taken away from, because they don't truly understand it, just like Andrew said, and one of the other AP members said, and, you know transparency, and I don't think it's a lack of transparency.

I think that figuring out a way to convey -- Take all the presentations that we see, and, you know, some of us mostly understand, that are long and complex, and just knock that down into something paraphrased, like Andrew was talking about, of, hey, you know, X number of fish, and this is where you got to be, and then maybe this will happen, and I know that everybody is very hesitant to do that, because the public, as stakeholders, will hold you to it, and, if you get it wrong, then you've amplified the problem.

I get that but, if they don't understand it, nothing is going to change. There's never going to be trust if both sides don't understand, and, right now, the majority stakeholders don't. I mean, it's frustrating to me, because I go back, and I'm trying to help people understand, and it's a daunting task, and it's not that I know a lot. I know just a teeny-tiny bit, and that is leaps and bounds ahead of what the general public understands and so I'm telling you that's the problem, is bridging that gap.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Chris. That was some incredible insights, and information, that -- I think that that's what we're looking for. I believe we had Chris Conklin, and then Richard Gomez.

MR. CONKLIN: Thank you. I was on the council, and we did a ton of port meetings for our visioning project, and I went to a bunch of them, and just some observations from those. The venue is extremely important on. It seemed like places that were way more informal, you know, tackle shops, restaurants, stuff like that, had a lot better turnouts than like say community centers, or, you know, just kind of dull places with metal chairs, and so that's one thing.

Then I'm seeing, in your document, that you're going to team up with CCA, and other organizations, and, well, why don't you ask them to donate something to raffle off. I think it would be a good idea, and it's probably like not in the council's budget, but, otherwise, you could like buy some swag to give away, and I don't know, but -- Or you could just give people that show up an extra snapper day or something, but, yes, you got to come up with some kind of gimmick to sell it to them, you know, and so definitely give them something.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Chris. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: It should be in the budget, Chris, because people like gifts. They want to get something for what they're giving, but just to -- I'm going to speak as a charter-for-hire guy for a minute. I mean the mad is pretty simple. Fishermen don't get many wins, and so the expectancy of losing something is always there. Whenever there's a meeting, they're saying, oh, what are they going to take now.

You know, just a quick example with the grouper down in the Lower Keys, and, I mean, the charter-for-hire sector is completely frustrated with the closure from January to May 1. When it -- Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it started with the gag grouper, and I don't want to change this subject, but I just want to let you know that that us, as fishermen, in the charter-for hire, we just deal with the next loss, and that's what it's all about for us.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard. All right. Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thank you, guys, for that input. I think that gives us a lot to think about on how we can structure this, and especially how to get people in the room, which is what I want to talk to you all about next, and so here's what we currently are thinking of for doing a, you know, sort of huge outreach campaign to let people know about these meetings.

The first is the typical stuff. We'll have a council website that will have information on why the council is doing these meetings, their goals, upcoming dates and locations, and summaries from past meetings, and then we'll also release all of our usual council-related material. We will have flyers, for each set of meetings, that will be emailed out to tackle shops. We do maintain a tackle shop database, and so, for tackle shops that we have, you know, email address contact information for, we will send them a flyer, and we'll send flyers with staff that happen to be conducting outreach events elsewhere, as well as providing it to our state partners.

We'll send out news releases from the council, and share those with other relevant agencies. We'll do a feature article in our *South Atlantic Bite*, and then social media posts and stories, and so a lot of the comments you guys have made here today will really help us sort of narrow down what we want to do for a social media campaign, but then we also plan to lean pretty heavily on sort of our, you know, fisheries community, and we would be working with advisory panel members, like you all, to help get the word out.

Like Haley mentioned, we have the Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program. People that have participated in those meetings, having them help get the word out, and sending the word out through our SAFMC Release newsletter, and other citizen science outlets, and we would hope to partner with industry groups, like CCA, the North Carolina Fishermen's Association, ASA, sort of et cetera, et cetera, any sort of industry group that would be willing to share information and encourage their members to attend on our behalf.

Working with media outlets, like Saving Seafood, as well as media that's been willing to sort of work with us in the past with posting information on citizen science and best fishing practices. For example, it also seems like it would be key to sort of start talking to some of those tackle manufacturers as well, and, if you guys have any sort of additional details on social media specifics that you think would be helpful, I'm happy to hear those.

I did want to sort of, before we get back into outreach input, let you know what we're thinking for the winter 2025 meetings, and so, because our staff is only so big, and we can only travel so much, the plan is to do two states a year, and we're going to start with North Carolina and Georgia, to try to get a, you know, sample of the coast, and we would be sort of holding these for a week long.

We would hold say four meetings in North Carolina, working our way up the coast, and it wouldn't be just one meeting in each state. It would be one week's worth of meetings in each state, and here's what we're thinking, and so, for the structured breakout groups, and those topics are still sort of TBD.

We'll be working with council members, in each state, to sort of help determine what is most important to anglers in that area, and then, for sort of the tabling, or unstructured discussions, one of the booths we thought of is federal fisheries management 101 and providing information to anyone who is attending on how the fisheries management process works and, you know, why sometimes it can be frustrating and move at a bit of a snail's pace.

We also plan to have some information on citizen science, and then another sort of TBD topic, based on what we think is going to be most important to anglers in those two areas, and so, to sort of wrap up the discussion, we would be interested in any more input you guys have on outreach avenues to get the word out, and then you saw a lot of those TBD topics. Are there --

You know, looking to you AP members from North Carolina and Georgia, do you think there are specific topics that fishermen might want to discuss, and then are there areas in those states where you feel like the council never comes in-person and holds a meeting in my community, or this community, and they really need to make sure they go there in-person and talk to those fishermen, and so any input you guys have on sort of those three topics.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Christina, thank you very much. I think that this is very good in bridging the gap between management and, you know, people who participate in the different sectors of the fisheries. I believe we had Gettys and then Cameron.

MR. BRANNON: Yes, sir, and I'll be quick. Christina, do you all have an allocated outreach budget for doing any sort of paid advertising, or is there anything that the council or -- Sorry for my ignorance on the budgetary process with council interdoings, but is there any -- Do you have what you need, or is there something more that the government could be doing, because, if we want people actually at the meetings, and if we're not just checking off a box to say we tried to hold them, we're going to have to spend money on it, and I don't know who makes that decision. I just think I would like to see the advisory panel give that recommendation, that there needs to be some paid advertising, paid outreach, behind this particular event, or events.

MS. WIEGAND: So, you know, there is money in our budget for some outreach, and it hasn't been budgeted to the extent of sort of, you know, sort of a large-scale financial advertising campaign. I will say there can sometimes be limitations to what the council can and cannot spend money on, and so things like that, as the council, we can't have provide, you know, like a rod-and-reel for to raffle off. That's not something we're allowed to do, because we use federal funds, and so there are some restrictions. I would have to really dig into it, to find out sort of what budget we

have to do a larger outreach campaign related to this, and then what sort of the stipulations are for that.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Gettys. Cameron, and then David.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, you know, Chris hit on a -- You know, when he said the snapper pass, I mean, it's genius. I mean, it would never work, of course, but it's a genius thing, because what the hell do fishermen want? They want to go fishing, period, and so, you know, you take your idea of the campaign, but you don't even have to take the campaign, and you have to give the fishermen want that what they want to participate in, which is going out on trips.

You can work some things where you have the carrot is they get to go on trips. Now, whether -- Then you have to work with stakeholders like myself, stakeholders like Haley, in the different ports, where we can do things, fishing and -- You know, we could we could scale it up, based on how many people participate in the, quote, unquote, prize, because, at the end of the day it's all marketing and sales, and that's what we're doing, right, is we're trying to get people to participate in the port meeting.

The way you do that is you give them something they want, which is to go fishing, and so you scale it up based on how many participate in-person, how many participate online, and then give them some type of reward. I mean, hell, I would be willing to do passes to go on trips and stuff like that. Why? Because it benefits me, and it benefits the fishing community, and it gets what you guys want, which is people to participate in the fisheries, so that we have a fisheries for the future generations.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Cameron, and just for curiosity sake, like -- Like could they even go so far as to do like a voucher for one extra snapper on your -- You know, on your trip, you know, and just something to think about. I'm not proposing it, but just like, you know, the limit is two, but if you have your voucher, you can take three, you know, and that would that would make a trip more efficient as well. We did have David, and then I'll come back to you.

MR. MOSS: So a few things, going to the budget, and, yes, the council, unfortunately, doesn't have a huge outreach budget, but organizations like ASA, CCA, TNC, and that's basically all that they are, and so it's imperative to partner with different organizations like that, to really help spread the word, and not to mention the fact that they already have bridged that, air quotes, trust gap, and like anglers listen to them, whether they should or shouldn't, and it doesn't matter, but they do, and just looking -- I was just looking, really quick, and this is no slight on the council, but the council has about a thousand followers on Instagram. CCA, in Florida, has like 40,000, and George Poveromo has like 30,000. Really, those are the people that need to be engaging.

The other thing to be careful of is -- Going back to like the snapper pass and whatnot -- I know, as you said, it's never going to happen, and we've got to temper the expectations, but one other thing to remember too is all this is great information, and it sounds good, but the unfortunate truth is there's a lot of things that anglers don't want to hear, that they're going to have to hear, and, if you just look at the State of Florida alone, right there's roughly twenty-one million people in Florida,

and about three million, or so, have a saltwater fishing license, and I understand that's on both coasts, and it could go either way.

So, for quick math, and I already did it, and so it's not that quick, but about 16 percent of the population as a saltwater fishing license, right, and there's 1,200 people, estimated, moving to Florida every day. That's another 200 people a day that want to access a resource. There's just not enough fish to go around, and so we can have all the best outreach capabilities in the world, but, at the end of the day, we, as regular recreational anglers, are going to hear a lot of things that we don't want to hear, and it's the unfortunate truth.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. I think we had Cameron, that wanted to reply, and then Tony.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I mean, back to your thing, and, I mean, I think the stakeholders in the pay-per-person trip and stuff -- I mean, we would be willing to -- I mean, I would be willing to do, with the companies I operate, work some kind of -- Work something out, at least with, you know, people in our area, to draw them in, and, you know, anything that the council is willing to put forth as an idea. Now, getting it moved forward from an idea to an action, that's a whole other ballgame, but, you know, you pitch it out there, and you see what sticks and see what works.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Certainly, Cameron. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Just, you know, what's the end game here? The end game is to get the public to like the council again. I mean, realistically, isn't that the end game?

MS. WIEGAND: So I'm not sure the end game is necessarily to get people to like the council again, but I would sort of broadly say that more participation in the process, both because -- I understand like building trust with the public, and trust is an all-time low right now, and building it back is going to take time, but, the more people we have participating in advisory panels, providing public comment, participating in citizen science, and our best fishing practices outreach, and all of that is more information that then comes to the council, allowing them to make decisions based on a larger body of information that's coming from stakeholders.

To me, and that's me speaking, again, I would sort of encourage, you know, you talk to your council members about what they see as sort of the ultimate goal, but, if I were to sort of lay it down in a sentence, it is building relationships with stakeholders to increase participation and input into the process.

MR. CONSTANT: You've got to -- I think the council needs to drop back and remember why they lost this trust, and why it got to this point, and a lot goes to say with what bits and pieces that everybody has been saying, and, Andrew, a lot of it that you stated, I've agreed with for a long time. The council took this fishery away fifteen years ago, fifteen years for red snapper, and it has taken all the air out of the room.

It's been gone for fifteen years. I mean, they've been given us two days, every now and then, to go fish, and, quite frankly, this past year, they gave us two days to fish, two days out of 365. Quite frankly, I wasn't even interested in it. I mean, I just thought that was just ridiculous. If they want the public to show up, let's talk about a two-month season. I mean we -- It's exactly what Andrew

was talking about. First, we rebuilt the fishery, back to its biggest that it has been in recorded time, and then they weren't big enough, they weren't long enough, they weren't old enough.

Well, what is it going to take to get a real season, because the angler, that we're trying to dial-in, also understands that that mortality needle cannot move if we're crossing it, but not fishing, and so, at some point, the council is going to have to give back to what they took fifteen years ago. That's my opinion.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Tony. I believe we have John Polston, and then Chris Conklin.

MR. POLSTON: Once again, I'm going to go back to -- I mean, everybody keeps saying, and maybe I'm wrong, but I'm pretty sure I'm not, because I was involved in it with the wreckfish, but back to the red snapper, and the council doesn't have the right to give you any more red snapper, and only the SSC does. Is that correct? The SSC has to do the science, and then you guys tell us what the SSC said they can allow, and isn't the way it goes, the process?

MS. WIEGAND: The SSC is the body that provides catch level recommendations.

MR. POLSTON: Correct. They make all the decisions, and so the point is -- I guess I'm trying to take a little heat off the council, but, at the same time, just tell it the way it is. I mean, this is just an opinion, but I think it's a good one. The only way I've seen all those, as you said, acronyms up there earlier, of the CCA and all the different recreational people and stuff, and there's only been one time, and I used to go to all the meetings. We're over in Orlando, and I met the guy, the head guy, from the CCA, and it's the only time I've ever seen commercial and recreational holding hands, is when they were raising red snapper to twenty inches.

Everybody was -- I won't say even against it, and a lot were against it, but, once that happened, and, I mean, this is going way back, but I'm just saying that, once it happened, that's what created this abundance that we have of red snapper. Once we had to keep throwing them back until they reached twenty inches, that's how we got to where we were, in my opinion. I've seen it commercially. At eighteen inches, my guys are fussing that they're never going to be twenty inches. Well, they did, and now we've got twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, and now they're saying they're not old enough.

Okay, but, to break it down to very simple, I think all -- Maybe the council could get all those organizations together, recreational and commercial, and possibly get a third-party science evaluation of the red snapper done, just like Jim Freeman and I did with the wreckfish. Get all the people together, and I promise you the funding wouldn't be a problem, because that's all you hear about, is people fussing about red snapper, and so, if all the recreational, and all the commercial, got together and did their own private analysis on red snapper, instead of fussing about it, and just pay somebody to do, like Dr. Shipley, I think was his name, or Shipman or whatever, over in the Gulf.

He did it, and he's the one that got them all the red snapper over there, is by them doing a private assessment. The government didn't do that. I know, but I'm saying it made it happen, and it could happen here too, but, once again, that's just a -- I think it's a good thought.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I just wanted to kind of reiterate somewhat of what John said that, you know, in my time on the council, I learned that the council is, you know, the face of -- You know, we've become the bad guy, but, in reality, our hands are tied behind our back, because of what we get from the SSC and from the National Marine Fishery Service, and so, really, it's not the council intent to try to, you know, take anything away, or do anything, but, at the end of the day, we're with all these, you know, secret buffers, and people putting the BS and BSIA and all that stuff, you know, we're not left with a lot, and we got to, you know, divvy it up between a lot of stakeholders, and it's a tough job. It sucks being the face, and having to be the bad guy, for sure.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Chris. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Yes, sir, and thanks for the comments. I agree with you, to an extent, that our industry trade groups have a role in the communications of what's going on, but, as a leader of one of our industry trade groups, and I can't speak for everybody else, we have to use our communications budget, when we're talking about bottom closures, and we're talking about ten-mile-an-hour, or ten-knot, speed limits on right for right whales, and so that earnest should fall on the federal government to help pay to tell the people, and tell the consumers, what's going on.

It shouldn't fall on our industry trade groups, because we have to use that when -- Unfortunately, that's when it seems like the, you know, people show up. I remember. a couple years ago, when bottom efficient closures were being talked about here, the whole room was full, and so we've got to come up with a more consistent communications plan, that starts from the beginning, and not just when we're looking for different outcomes, as different industry sectors, and so I do think that that does fall on the federal government, to figure out how to educate, and to pay for that educational standpoint.

That would make it easier, as an industry trade group, to tell everybody all the good things we're doing, and all the good things that the council's doing, because, as far as earned media goes, as far as mailing lists goes, as far as, you know, our own newsletters go, obviously, that doesn't cost any money, and we're more than willing to work and do that, but we have to use the paid media side of it when there is -- When there are issues that people have to show up for or their rights are being taken away.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Gettys. Getting back to some of these questions that are on the screen here, does anybody have anything specific that they'd like to, you know, add at this time? Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Winter 2025, and so that's over a year from now?

MS. WIEGAND: We're already working on locations to hopefully hold them in the January/February/March timeline.

MS. STEPHENS: Of 2025? Okay. You know, if the interest is there, I would certainly encourage effort to expand it to more than just two states. You know, from what I've gathered, there's going to be a lot on the line, in the next couple years, that could potentially change the way that we all fish, commercial, recreational, and for hire, you know, forever, and so I would try to expand it to more than just two states.

MS. WIEGAND: The plan is to do North Carolina and Georgia in 2025, and then, the following year, we would switch and do South Carolina and Florida, and then sort of back and forth into the future, because, again, this is supposed to become sort of a permanent part of the council's outreach process, and the reason we were limiting it to sort of two states at a time is this is an effort that's going to require a significant amount of staff time, which also has to be allocated to all of the, you know, amendments, management measures, best fishing practices, outreach, sort of everything else the council is doing, and so there is sort of a limited capacity to go to all four states in one year, but the plan is to make sure we are going to every single state. We're just rotating between the two sets, to try to make it work.

MS. STEPHENS: Just a quick follow-up, and, you know, maybe offer a webinar if, you know, folks aren't able to travel to these two states, because it sounds like, with everything in the pipeline, you know, a meeting in Florida in 2026 would be too late to get insight on topics that are important to stakeholders. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. I would just like to speak a little bit on some of the things that I've heard around the room, since we've been discussing this topic, and one of the things that David Moss mentioned was people are going to have to hear no. I know that, coming through as a commercial fisherman, and creating what I've created for my family and my business, I heard no an awful lot throughout those years, and this has been for more than twenty-five years now.

I've been participating in the fishery much longer, and I've pretty much become accustomed to the word. That being said, commercial fishermen, in south Florida and the Keys specifically, we're being phased out, and not necessarily by the lack of fish accessible to us, but working waterfront has really taken its toll on the number of commercial fishermen that can participate in the fishery in south Florida and the Florida Keys.

With that, the recreational sector has been able to exploit the resource, and pretty much without limitation, and so this sector is hearing no more and more often now than ever before, and, to the point, they're going to have to get used to it. I don't like it, any more than anybody else sitting in this room. I have plenty of charter boat captains that I respect, and I have a lot of my peers that share in this resource, and we run into each other all the time on the water, and we all know what's going on, because we see it out there.

We're charged with this duty to manage what's left of these fisheries, and, kind of going to what John was saying, maybe it's time that we do change the way that we've traditionally done this in the South Atlantic. Maybe it is time to get somebody else to tell us -- You know, to lead the horse, if you will, to where the council isn't completely handicapped, you know, based on the directive that is handed to them, and the science that's handed to them, and maybe a fresh set of eyes would be what's necessary here, and I'm not trying to cut in line, or get in front of anybody, but, you know, if there are more fish to be harvested sustainably, then that is the goal across all the user groups.

You know, we've got to figure it out. We've got to put our best foot forward, every step we take, and I think that, most of the people in this room -- I think we're all on the same page, and we want to do that, and there are lots of good ideas floating around, lots and lots. It's just getting that seed to start growing, and we have to find a way. Any other comments? Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, you know, James is hitting on something that's extremely important. We've all been sitting here for years and years and years, and pretty much saying the science sucks, and so, you know, maybe it is time for everybody to pony up. The way the technology is moving so quickly, and so fast now, and you can get so much more information in seconds, if you have the right tools. I mean, hell, I bought an ROV for thirty-grand, and you can put a whole GPS thing on it, and it can run patterns for you all day long, as long as you have the battery power going for it. Couple that with some AI, and it's picking out fish like that, if you want it to. The technology is there that we can get the information that we need to get good, realistic science information.

The bait and the traps and all that stuff, it's kind of old school stuff, and so it's now the time to make a change where the information can be gathered at a fraction of the cost, and, actually, you have better information than you ever have had before, if we take the steps now.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Cameron. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Yes, and I agree with Cameron. I actually sat in on a webinar, a couple weeks ago, with a technology called integrated monitoring, and it's where they put AI technology on the headboats on the west coast, and they also use it in Europe, and they were able to get some really, really neat, neat results, and so, if you have the free time, I definitely recommend looking into it, because I agree the technology is advancing, and it's there.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I've just got one more comment, because it's all -- You know, we've mentioned that there's kind of a disconnect between how the council actually works and how people view the management of the fishery, and everybody's directing their ire toward the council, when really the reason that the management is happening this way is because of the science behind it.

That brings me back to this fisheries 101, and educating the people who aren't going to be sitting in this room. It's the guys that come talk to me after I get done with a meeting and say, well, you know, the first time I came to one of these AP meetings, everybody envisioned us sitting around this table, and it's the commercial guys screaming at the recreational guys, and vice versa, and that's why the commercial guys are getting all the red snapper, and the recreational guys don't get any of it, and I said that's not how it is at all.

It all comes back to we've got to have good science that shows that the fishery is as healthy as it appears to everybody who's out there catching more red snapper than they've ever seen in their lives, and I think one important component of doing that is to educate the folks on how those decisions get made from a ten-thousand-foot level, because there's not a lot of people that have that ten-thousand-foot level understanding of how it gets made.

They don't understand that the council has to work within some pretty significant boundaries, and I think that the last thing I'll say on that is it ties us right back into where -- You know, to what several folks have commented on, and it's getting the folks engaged in improving the science, and why can't the recreational guys, and the commercial guys, who are both affected the same way by what's going on, hire a third-party to come out and come up with the data that shows a different picture, or better shows the picture that we see when we're out there fishing. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Matt, and, just kind of looking forward in our meeting agenda here, the MSE preliminary results -- You know, I think maybe we'll have some answers to what it might look like from a different perspective. Christina, was there anything else that you had on this topic here?

MS. WIEGAND No, and, just to sort of wrap things up, to let you guys know the next steps, we are working, sort of as a staff team, to review everything you just reviewed today. We'll be working with council members to identify some of those topics. I think some of the discussions that you all just had around the table have provided a lot of great ideas for some of the discussion topics we could have at some of these meetings, and, if you're interested in sort of seeing the final plan, we'll be presenting that at the December 2024 meeting. If you've got any additional questions, feel free to come find me. I'm happy to talk about stakeholder engagement meetings anytime.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Christina. Mike, are we looking to break here?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, before we break, I realized, as you all were going through your discussion, we didn't recognize that we do have three council members that are here, and so I just wanted to point out that we have Amy Dukes, a South Carolina council member, Kerry Marhefka, another South Carolina council member, and Tim Griner, a council member from North Carolina, and so, as you are in between sessions, if you don't know those folks, they would be great folks to talk to, because that's who the recommendations from this panel are going to be going to.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike. I'm looking at maybe ten to fifteen minutes, seated and ready to go back by 2:55.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Let's take our seats, please.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Well, while everyone's sitting back down, I'll go ahead and give a brief introduction to what Adrian is going to be presenting on. You all have been talking about how long it takes for certain things to get going in the management realm, and this is something we've been working on since 2021. It started probably in June of 2021, and really got initiated probably in June of 2022, and this is going to be some preliminary results from all that work.

It took two years to do the science for this, trying to get everything started, and what Adrian is going to be presenting on is some of the recreational findings for potential management measures for red snapper, gag grouper, and black sea bass, and the reason that we were focusing on the recreational side of things, and those species -- One is we're recognizing that, you know, there's some issues in the recreational fishery that need to be addressed.

Primarily, we were looking at red snapper, at that point, where we were noticing it was going to become a discard fishery, pretty much, and we're really struggling on how to get out of that management cycle that we're in, and so doing a management strategy evaluation -- Going forward, it's going to be shortened to MSE, and this is going to be looking at simulations to how

management could respond, given the amount of stock that's out there, and the effort that's going on on the recreational side.

We didn't focus on the commercial sector for this, because we really wanted to focus on the recreational sector. Once you start bringing in allocations, you're bringing in some big battles that we weren't necessarily ready to have, and so what we wanted to do is look at the recreational sector first and assume that the commercial sector is going to continue what it's been doing for the past few years, and so, Adrian, if you're ready to go, after that brief introduction, or if advisory panel members have any questions of me, of the process, on how this got started, or anything else -- I'm not seeing any hands, and so, Adrian, I'll send it over to you, if you want to unmute yourself.

DR. HORDYK: Great. Thank you, Chip. Thank you, Chair. I'm just going to confirm that you can hear me okay and you can still see the screen.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Adrian, if I could just jump in, real quick, I just wanted to note, for folks, that we did have to make a late update to the presentation that was online, and so, if you downloaded it before the start of this meeting, then you might want to just go back to the website, re-click the link, and that's what Adrian is going to be presenting today.

DR. COLLIER: Adrian, we could hear you, and we are seeing your screen.

DR. HORDYK: Okay, great. I'll get started. Good afternoon, advisory panel. Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update, as Chip mentioned, on the results of this MSE project that we've been working on for the last two years or so. The last few times we've met, we've discussed various uncertainties of the snapper grouper fishery that were to be included in this analysis.

Today, in this presentation, I'd like to present the preliminary results from this analysis. I'm going to first provide a little bit of brief background, just to make sure we all get on the same page, and then I'll describe the various components of the analysis, particularly the operating models and the management scenarios that were evaluated, and then I'll go over the key results, and I'll finish with a brief discussion of the main findings.

After the presentation, I'd be happy to answer any questions, and I would value any comments, and feedback, that the AP may have on any improvements and other things that could be added to this, used to improve this analysis, before the final results are presented to the council later on this year.

The overall objective of this project was to develop a framework for comparing the expected performance of a range of different management approaches for species within the snapper grouper complex. As you all know, the snapper grouper fishery is complex. It's got over fifty-five species, with a range of different life history types, and a management area spanning over four states and a commercial fishery, and also a large recreational sector, and so the main thing was that this MSE framework that we were developing had to be flexible enough to be able to handle this sort of complexity and encompass the key uncertainties.

The approach that we are using is called management strategy evaluation, or MSE. We've talked about this in some detail in the past. Just as a way of reminder, MSE is sometimes also called closed loop simulation testing. It essentially involves building a simulation model of a fishery

system, including all the uncertainties relating to the fishery dynamics, such as the biology of the fish stock and the exploitation history of the fishery, and then it uses that simulation framework to project the population forward with different management methods, with the aim being that we can compare the expected performance of different management approaches within a single quantitative framework.

There are four key components of an MSE. The first is the biological properties of a fish stock, and the second is the characteristics of the fishing fleet, or the fishing fleets that exploit them, and these two together are what's known as the operating model. It's a mathematical model that represents a hypothesis of the fishery dynamics, like how the fish population behaves, how it grows, matures, how it's distributed in space, and so on, and the characteristics of the fishing fleets that exploits those stocks. There can be many operating models. Each one of them represents a different hypothesis for explaining how the fishery system works.

The last two components are the management options to consider in the analysis, and so this can include any potential management actions that could be considered, such as a catch limit, size regulations, fishing seasons, and so on, and then, finally, some approach to summarize the performance. You need some methodology to be able to present these results in a meaningful way to the stakeholders. Essentially, this boils down to some way of being able to determine if some management actions are better than others and how do we determine what's better and what's worse.

DR. COLLIER: Adrian, you're breaking up a little bit. Are you on some external speakers?

DR. HORDYK: No, I'm not. Sorry. I'm on my regular headphones, which I don't usually have a problem with, and I haven't been having any problem with the audio coming my way. If it's a major problem, I can try and change the headphones, but that might take me a few minutes.

DR. COLLIER: No, and it actually just cleared up somehow.

DR. HORDYK: Okay. I'll try and speak slowly, at least. Please let me know if it becomes an issue. An important part of MSE is consultation with stakeholders, particularly to inform the most important uncertainties that need to be included in the model and to discuss the range of potential management options that could be considered.

We've met with the advisory panel, as you know, several times over the last year-and-a-half, both in-person and online, and we've also had similar meetings with the SSC, with the council, and also some public scoping meetings, and the discussion, and results, from those meetings have been used to shape the specific aims for this research.

There's two primary aims for this analysis that we're presenting today. The first was, as I mentioned, to develop the MSE framework for this fishery, a flexible framework for being able to ask some of these questions, and produce answers for them, and the second aim was to use this framework to build operating models for three key overfished stocks, and then to evaluate the rebuilding potential for those stocks under a range of conditions, status quo conditions, a broad range of alternative management options, and include exploration of the core system uncertainties. Those results can be used to examine the tradeoffs between rebuilding the stock and the changes in the landings and the discards for the different management options that we're considering.

There's four expected outcomes from this work. The first is to evaluate the suitability of this MSE framework that we've been developing, to essentially answer the question of is this framework suitable for trying to tackle these sorts of problems, and the second is to quantify the probability of rebuilding under a range of scenarios, and then to identify the management options that have the most promise, that appear to have the most promising tradeoffs amongst those different axes that I spoke about, and these management options could be explored in more detail.

Then, lastly, these results could be used to determine direction for further research, either to reduce uncertainty in some of the key uncertainties in the system, by doing further studies, or by focusing on particular management options and exploring them in more detail.

Okay, and over to the operating models. The last few times we've met, we discussed including -- Or doing the analysis for the red snapper and the gag grouper. Since we last met, we've added -- As Chip mentioned, the black sea bass has been added to this analysis. These stocks were selected because they're important species within the complex, and, also, the recent stock assessments for these stocks have identified them to be overfished.

The analysis has four fishing fleets, the commercial line, the recreational headboat, the general recreational, and a dive fleet. The dive fleet only impacts the, or targets, the gag grouper, and it's relatively small, compared to the other fleets, and so these results -- I don't show the results for the dive fleet in this presentation. It is included in the analysis, but it doesn't have any discards, and it's relatively small, so I'm not going to show it here.

The model has the ability to set individual harvest policies, catch limits, or size limits, or spatial regulations, and so on, for each of these fleets. For most of the analysis that I'll go through now, we've applied these management options, management policies, across all fleets in the same way. There is an exception for the general recreational fleet, which I'll mention a bit more, but the point I want to make here is there's a lot of flexibility in determining, or modelling, different management policies, different management regulations, for different fleets, and we haven't gone into that, or explored that dimension, in this analysis. At this point, we are applying size limits and so on across the three different fleets.

The most recent stock assessments for each stock were used to generate the operating models. We've talked about this in the past as well, and I won't go over this in any detail, but, essentially, the base case runs from the most recent assessments for these three stocks was used, was imported into the MSE framework, and so it had exactly the same stock dynamics as those were estimated in the assessments, and they were used to create a multispecies operating model. We refer to this as the base case operating model. It's essentially identical to the assessments.

We also had a set of sensitivity models, or sensitivity tests, that were developed, five of them. These were modifications of the base case operating model, in various ways. The first two looked at the sensitivity runs from the stock assessments, where the natural mortality rate was assumed to be lower than the base case, or higher, and so we reproduced those operating models as sensitivity tests in the framework.

The third was called reduced recreational removals, and this was to address a hypothesis, or an idea, that the concern that the landings and discards for the general recreational fleet has been

overestimated in the data that are being provided to the assessment, and so, for this run, the removals, the landings and discards for the general recreational fleet, was reduced by 40 percent for all three stocks, and the assessment model was rerun and then used as an operating model, a sensitivity operating model.

The fourth sensitivity test was called effort creep, and this is where we assume that the effort for the, again, just the general recreational fleet increased by 2 percent per year, and this could be in response to either more people joining the fishery, more recreational fishers joining the fishery every year, as we heard about in some of the discussions earlier today, or it could also be explained by increases in catchability, technology and so on, or a combination of the two things. This is trying to capture that.

The last one is recent recruitment, and this is where the recruitment patterns in the projection period were based on the ten most recent years, the ten most recent historical years, rather than the entire historical time period. The assessments estimated that, in the last ten years or so, the recruitment for red snapper has been higher than average, whereas the recruitment for gag grouper, and for the black sea bass, have been lower than the expected average, and so, in this model, in this last model, that pattern is continued in the projection years, rather than, as in the base case, essentially the recruitment pattern returns back to average in the projection periods.

A spatial structure was added to the operating models. This was not included in the assessment, but we added a spatial structure on top of the assessment output. We've seen this map a few times before, and nothing has changed here. I have the three geographic regions, in the colors, and then there's two depth zones. There is nearshore, which is defined as less than 100 foot, and offshore, which is defined as more than 100 foot. The recruitment occurs in the nearshore, and then the spatial distribution of the older fish was calculated based on the results of a spatiotemporal model that was fit to the SERFS survey data.

Okay, management scenarios. Our first management scenario is what we call the status quo, or SQ. This is where, in the projections, the fishing mortality -- Essentially, we assume it's a proportion for fishing effort, and it’s fixed in the projection years, and so it stays constant at the mean for the last three years and so, in these plots here, you're seeing, for the three stocks, red snapper, gag, and black sea bass, the fishing mortality relative to the reference point, the maximum fishing mortality threshold for each stock. In the grey is the historical period, which came out of the assessment, the total apical fishing mortality, and in the green is the projection period, and so it's projected forward under the status quo scenario, assuming essentially that fishing mortality is going to stay fixed at the current, or the mean, for the last three years.

Then the other management scenarios were modifications to this status quo management, and so there were four classes of management options. The first was full retention, and so this is where all the fish that are caught are retained, and so there's no discarding. This is equivalent to removing the limited fishing season for the red snapper, under the assumption that the fishing dynamics don't change significantly if that fishing season was opened up to be -- Or the restrictions were removed. This also assumes that there isn't any discarding, or any major discarding, due to bag limits.

The second one was the minimum length limit, and so this is where all fish below the minimum length limit are discarded, and they're subject to discard mortality, even if there's a full retention policy, and then the last two were spatial management options. Nearshore, which is just defined

as all the fishing effort, is shifted towards the nearshore region, and so, again, like I mentioned previously, this applies, in this model right now, to all the fishing fleets, although there is options to control this by fleet, and then the last one is offshore, which is just the opposite. Here, all the fishing effort is shifted to the offshore region.

The purpose of these sort of broad classes of management options is just to explore which approaches appear to have the most promise, and so things that don't produce any significant benefits, in this analysis, we wouldn't consider further, but management options that have some promise could be explored in more detail.

For example, like I mentioned, you could explore them in more granular detail by applying different variants of the management option to different fleets, for example, or different stocks and fleets. At this point, we're taking the much higher sort of view, and just trying to identify which approaches have the most promise, and in which directions policy should be going, could be going.

We looked at all the combinations of these management options, and so there was twelve in total. Status quo was the first one. Like I mentioned, everything stays the same, and the fishing mortality is frozen at the current level, and then there's Number 2, status quo with the full retention policy, and so, like I said, no closed season, and all the fish that are caught are kept. Then the status quo with a minimum size limit, and so on, all the way through to the last one, where it has the full combination of status quo with full retention, a minimum size limit, and all the effort shifted towards the offshore region.

We were also asked to explore a range of levels for a general reduction in fishing effort for the recreational fleet, and so there were eleven levels, ranging from 100 percent, and so this is where the effort for the recreational fleet remains unchanged.

It remains at its current level in the status quo scenario. It would be reduced down by 5 percent increments, down to the eleventh level, where the recreational fleet was reduced down to 5 percent of its current level. Again, this is just -- The idea to evaluate a broad spectrum, across a broad spectrum of different relative fishing effort, as a management measure, to see what the tradeoffs were across that space.

In total, this gives us 132 management scenarios that were examined. There's twelve management combinations and the eleven levels of the recreational effort, and so how to summarize these results. For this presentation, I've chosen three main ways to present these results. The first two involve projection plots. The first one shows a projection plot, and so a time series plot showing the median spawning biomass relative to the rebuilding target for the projection years. A related plot is to show, for the same time period, the median landings and discards and to see, essentially, what the tradeoffs are. There will be a tradeoff in the probability of rebuilding the stock. There will be a trade-off for that versus the changes, or the reductions, that may occur in landings and discards. The third one is to calculate the probability of rebuilding under these various scenarios.

The rebuilding targets have been determined for the red snapper and the gag. I believe they're both under rebuilding plans. I've got these documentation for the assessments, where they describe these as the rebuilding target. For red snapper, it's to rebuild, by 2044, back to the spawning biomass that corresponds with the target fishing mortality rate, F 30 percent. For gag, the rebuilding target is to increase the stock to above BMSY by 2032.

Black sea bass is not, as far as I understand, not currently under rebuilding plan, and so, for this analysis, it shows the same rebuilding target as the gag, the probability of rebuilding above BMSY by 2032, and this was based on some preliminary analysis that had been done elsewhere, but, like I mentioned, this isn't, as far as I understand, officially sort of under a rebuilding plan, and so these values could change.

I also report the probability of rebuilding above the minimum stock size threshold, which is a little lower than the rebuilding target, and so these points here just show how they're calculated. They're essentially 25 percent lower than the rebuilding target for red snapper and gag. For black sea bass, it's calculated slightly differently, and it's actually a little lower, again, in this case. It's one minus the natural mortality rate, multiplied by the biomass corresponding with maximum sustainable yield.

This plot, or, well, these three plots show essentially the results from the assessment. These are produced by the MSE framework. It shows the historical spawning biomass relative to the rebuilding target and so a value of one here represents the rebuilding target. We used BMSY for -- As I just said, BMSY, as I just showed in the previous slide, it varies a little bit across the different stocks, and the dotted line below it is the MSST. You can see, for all three stocks, the current year, the terminal year, is below both the MSST and the rebuilding target. Again, these are coming directly from the assessment, and so these aren't new results.

Now I'll turn to the particular results from this analysis. This plot shows -- There's a lot of information in this plot. I'm not going to go through it all, and don't worry, but I just want to describe what we're seeing here. On the Y-axis are the different management approaches. There's twelve of them. Status quo is on the top, and below is status quo with a full retention, and so on. These are the twelve different combinations of management options that I talked about earlier.

On the X-axis, this value of one, down to 0.05, is the relative effort for the general reduction, or, sorry, for the general recreational fleet, and so the value of one is it's staying at the same level, and each point on this X-axis is reducing the effort for the recreational fleet by 5 percent, all the way down to 5 percent of its current level.

The colors, and the values, show the probability of rebuilding to the rebuilding target by the rebuilding year, which I've just shown in the previous slide, and then the colors --- It's just color-coded, and so, the more red the color is, it's closer to zero. Values around 50 percent are white, and then, as they go increasingly blue, darker blue, the probability increases to one.

You can kind of see here, fairly immediately, that there's quite a range of different outcomes, under these different management scenarios, and I will go through a couple of them, I think the most important, or interesting, ones right now, although there are results produced for each one of these cells, and so, if you're interested in something that's not covered in this presentation, I can provide more detail on that later on.

I'm going to focus, for this presentation on four management options. The first, in green here, is the status quo, and so it's in the green for the red snapper, the gag grouper, and the black sea bass. Then I'm going to look at the status quo, where the recreational effort was reduced to 35 percent, and so that's there in this red color, and then I'll look at the status quo with the fishing effort moved

towards the offshore, in this purple color, and then, finally, the last one is the same fishing effort moved to the offshore, but also a full retention policy, and so I'm going to focus on these four in the next series of slides.

This plot shows the -- This is what we call a time series projection plot. In the grey line is the historical biomass relative to rebuilding target for each of the stocks, and so just the grey part of the -- The grey lines is the same plot that I just showed a little earlier for the results that came out of the assessment. The green line, for each stock, is the median, and the percentiles, of the spawning biomass in the projection period underneath this status quo management scenario. You can see, in this analysis, the probability of rebuilding to even the MSST is fairly low, or very low, for the red snapper, which the model predicts is going to continue to decline in biomass under the status quo scenarios.

For the gag grouper, the model is predicting a slight increase in biomass, but still well below the MSST, and, essentially, no chance of rebuilding to the rebuilding target. The black sea bass is a little different. Under the same status quo management scenario, the stock appears to rebuild fairly quickly up towards the spawning threshold. There's around a 56 percent probability of being at or above that by 2032, but you can see the stock starts to flatten of, and there's a low probability, about 15 percent, by the target year, which is that vertical grey dashed line, that it will rebuild to the rebuilding target. You can see that it still continues to rebuild after -- Go higher after the 2032, but it doesn't quite get up back up to the rebuilding target under these, in this scenario.

This plot shows, for the same management scenario, status quo, the landings and discards, the overall landings and discards for these three stocks. The solid line is the landings, and the green dashed line is the discards for the three stocks. The trends in the landings and discards match and follow the biomass. You can see where the red snapper biomass was predicted to continue to decline over the projection period. The landings, and the discards, follow suit, just because the stock is getting smaller.

Gag Grouper showed, under the status quo, that the biomass would increase a little, and the model was predicting, under the same fishing effort, the landings will increase proportionally. Discards are very low for this stock, and then, for the black sea bass, you can see -- We saw, in the previous slide, the biomass was predicted to increase quite significantly, quite quickly, and the landings and discards would follow the same pattern. You can see here that, similar to the red snapper, the discards, the dead discards, are considerably higher than the landings for the black sea bass.

This chart shows the same information, but it's now split out by the fleets, in the columns, the commercial line, the recreational headboat, and the general recreational fleet, and so you can see where these changes in the landings and discards occur by fleet.

This next slide, I'm just showing the same information, but now I'm only showing it from 2020. I've cut off the X-axis at 2020, and so you can see those grey lines are still the historical period, and then it projects forward. This is a way of just zooming in on the information that's probably most relevant, and so, from now on, when I show the landings and discards for these different management options, you'll see a slide that looks -- Or a plot that looks very similar to this one, and here it's more clear what the relative landings and dead discards are for the three fleets and for the three species.

This is the second management scenario I wanted to focus on. This is we're under the status quo conditions, but the only change is that the recreational effort was reduced down to 35 percent of its current value. That value -- I chose that to show in these results, because this was the first value, the first level, of the recreational effort, where the probability of rebuilding the red snapper reached close to 50 percent, and so you can see that on this plot on the far left.

The black dashed line is the status quo I just showed you in the previous slide, and so, without any other changes to management, this is what we expect the stock to do, on average, and here, where the recreational effort has been reduced quite significantly, you see, in the green line, this is what the predicted biomass would be, and so here there's close to a 50 percent probability of getting to the rebuilding target by 2044, and it's well -- By then, the stock is well above the actual management reference point.

There's less of an impact for the gag and for the black sea bass. The probability of being at the rebuilding target is still relatively low, but it is higher. In both cases, there was an impact of reducing the recreational effort that resulted in increasing the biomass, the rebuilding of the biomass.

This plot shows, again, the zoomed-in landings and discards by fleet and stock. The main thing you can see here is that, not surprisingly, a reduction in effort, for the recreational fleet, results in a reduction in landings, compared to the current level, and so you can see that in this immediate sort of drop down on the column furthest to the right, where the green solid line drops down for the recreational fleet, as the landings will -- The overall landings will reduce, because the effort is reduced. You can see the discards follow a similar pattern.

There's a large reduction in discards, with the reduction in fishing effort, and, over time, the landings rebuild, particularly for the black sea bass, as the population biomass increases. Even though the fishing effort is low, relatively low, compared to how it is now, for the recreational fleet, the landings are expected to increase significantly above, at least for the black sea bass, where they are currently. The other two stocks, the effort for -- Sorry. The landings for the recreational fleet will rebuild, continue to increase, but they are lower than the current level. For the other two fleets, the increase -- The landings for those fleets will -- The commercial and the recreational headboat are expected to increase, simply for the fact that there's more fish in the water now than there was under the other scenario.

The third management option that I want to look at in detail is where the fishing effort was moved towards the offshore region, and so deeper than 100 foot, in this analysis, and so, here again, the probability of rebuilding for red snapper was increased.

This is the first management option where, under status quo conditions, if all the fleets stay essentially the same size as they are now -- This is the only management option that would have a higher probability of rebuilding the red snapper by 2044. You can see, for the other two stocks as well -- Again, the dashed line is the status quo, and the green line here is the projected biomass under this management scenario, where there's no -- All fishing efforts moved towards deeper water, and you can see the probability of rebuilding is considerably higher, although you will see -- In the plots, you notice that the probability values are still a little low, compared to where the stock ends up after the rebuilding target year, 2032 in this case, and so these probability values depend a lot on the year. If that year was a couple of years later, the probabilities would be a lot

higher, and so I point that out, particularly for the black sea bass, whereas I understand it, the rebuilding year hasn't been determined yet.

If that was shifted to a different period, the probability would be significantly higher, but at least I think here you can see the -- Qualitatively, the results are quite clear that shifting effort away from the nearshore, and keeping everything else essentially the same, has quite a marked difference in the rebuilding potential for these three stocks.

Again, this is the landings and discards. I think the key thing to point out here is, for both the red snapper and for the black sea bass, is this decline, this quite marked decline, in discards, and so, by shifting effort away from the nearshore region, there is quite a decline in discards, dead discards. You can see, if we look towards the end of the time period, where, under these conditions, the red snapper -- The landings and dead discards would be assumed to be quite a similar magnitude, whereas, currently the -- As we know, the dead discards are significantly higher than the landings, and, for the black sea bass, we see something a little different, again, where, as the -- Over time, you start to see this pattern where the landings increase, and the relative dead discards are significantly lower than the landings, compared to currently, where they're the same or higher.

Then the last management option I wanted to look at was this same approach, where the fishing effort was moved towards the offshore, but there's also a policy of full retention, and so there's no discarding. This plot is quite similar to the one that I've just showed you, and, essentially, the probability of rebuilding is a little lower under this scenario, because you can imagine, when there is discarding, and some of those fish that are discarded survive and contribute to the spawning output of the population, but the --

Under a full retention policy, all those fish that are caught are taken out of the water, and so you have essentially a higher impact, and the fishing water has a higher impact on the stock, but you can see here the probability of rebuilding is still quite similar to what we saw in the previous slide, and so it has an impact on decreasing the rate of rebuilding, but it may not be -- Well, how significant that is depends on how the managers wish to evaluate these tradeoffs, because, of course, under a full-retention policy, you have much less of a --- Well, you have no dead discarding at all, because everything is kept, and, also, you expect quite a significant boost in the landings, particularly for red snapper.

Fish that were previously discarded now contribute to the landings, and get to be taken home, and so there's the tradeoff there. By taking more fish out of the water, you have an impact on the rebuilding potential, but you do increase -- We have a more positive impact on the landings that get taken out of the water, taken home by the fishers.

For the sensitivity tests, I just want to look at, really quickly, just two of those that had the most interesting results. That was Number 3, where the recreational removals were reduced by 40 percent, and the last one where the recruitment pattern was based on the ten most recent years.

This plot shows a side-by-side comparison. On the left is the base case operating model, to kind of abstract the assessment, and on the right is our run, where the removals, and so the landings and discards for the recreational fleet, were reduced by 40 percent, for all three stocks, and the assessment model was rerun.

The main thing that comes out of this plot is you can see that on the same -- For each stock, on the same Y-axis, the scale on the Y-axis, and you can see the reduced recreational removals operating model just predicts a lower sort of reduction in the magnitude of the stocks. Each of the stocks are lower levels, lower magnitude, on the right, compared to the left, but, if we rescale them, according to the reference points, the rebuilding target, and this is this next slide, and it's just been updated.

All that's done here is I'm showing the same information now plotted relative to the rebuilding target, and, here, because the model estimates the stock to be smaller, it also estimates it's similar, almost the same reduction, in the reference points, and so, when you look at these stocks relative to the reference points, to the rebuilding target, for example, it's almost identical to the base case analysis.

Just to go back over that one more time, the model where we reran -- Where there was a significant reduction in the removals for the recreational fleet, it estimates the stocks to be smaller size, and so the unfished level of these stocks would be smaller, in this scenario, but, when you compare it against the reference points, you get the same -- Essentially the same result, in terms of the stock status. They're still well below both reference points for all three stocks.

Here, I'm just showing the same status quo scenario, and management scenario, for this sensitivity operating model. I won't go into details, but, essentially, the quantitative results are slightly different. The probability of rebuilding, and the changes and landings and so on, are slightly different, but, qualitatively, the results are identical to the base case scenario, base case operating model, where the same sorts of management approaches had the most promise. Our status quo, you see the same thing here, and red snapper is expected to continue to gradually decline.

Gag grouper are relatively flat, and rebuilding in the black sea bass, and so this result tells us that this uncertainty could be an important uncertainty, for various reasons, but, in terms of which management approaches we expect to have the most promise, it doesn't impact -- This uncertainty doesn't impact the result. You have the same thing there in moving effort away from the nearshore to the offshore and/or reducing the effort from the recreational fleet was -- It had the most impact on rebuilding these populations.

The last sensitivity test was quite interesting, because this is where we look at a different pattern in the recruitment in the projection period. Here, you can see, as I mentioned, the assessments estimate that the gag grouper and the black sea bass recruitment, in recent years, has been quite a lot lower than average, and so, if that really was to continue in the projection period, then you can see you get quite a different result.

Under these conditions, the gag grouper, and the black sea bass, are expected to continue to gradually decline, and you can see, particularly for the black sea bass -- Previously, under the status quo scenario, the stock really rebuilt quite quickly, under the status quo scenarios, or increased, whereas you get something quite different here, and that tells us a lot of that increase is driven by the recruitment scenarios, and so, if you expect that recruitment will be lower in the projections, then you'll get quite a different result.

That kind of raises the question, and here I'm showing the same plots. As you can see, under this scenario, with the recent recruitment for the gag grouper and the black sea bass, there is essentially no way of rebuilding the stocks to the rebuilding target, by the target year, and so this raises the

question about, if this really is something that may happen, does this represent a change, a regime shift, a persistent change in the stock dynamics, because, if that is true, if there really is a persistent change in the stock dynamics, and the historical stock dynamics no longer reflect what's going on in the future -- In that case, it may be important, it may be necessary, to calculate different reference points and to calculate different rebuilding targets, and so the point here is --

I think, if this is a key uncertainty about what the recruitment dynamics will look like in the projection period, in the future, then this could be an important area for further research, to try and track those recruitment patterns, for example, because it can have quite a significant impact on what you would actually expect the stock to do, and also how it may impact the way that the stock gets measured. If things really have changed, maybe then the historical reference points are no longer valid.

Bringing it to the discussion, I've got just a couple of points for each of the management options. The status quo, as we saw, the red snapper had a pretty low probability of rebuilding, a decline in biomass, in landings, and still relatively high discards. Something similar for gag, although there's -- Under these conditions, there is expected to be a slight increase in biomass, and correspondingly in landings, and discards aren't really an issue. For the black sea bass, under the status quo scenario, it had a 15 percent probability of rebuilding the stock to BMSY by 2032, and increases in biomass and landings come with that, and still there is relatively high discards, because the fishing practices, the exploitation pattern, hadn't changed under the status quo scenario.

Essentially, the main takeaway from this is that rebuilding these stocks requires a reduction in fishing mortality, and/or an increase in the spawning output, and so you can essentially get either reduced fishing mortality overall, and that can be done, and, here, we looked at just the recreational fleet, to look at that general reduction in fishing mortality, or we can reduce fishing mortality on immature fish. Essentially, that's what the offshore scenario looked at, where it was to move fishing activity towards the offshore and reduce fishing mortality on young, immature fish.

We looked at the, like I just mentioned, reducing effort for the recreational fleet. This had the largest impact on bed snapper, a general increase in biomass, and in landings, overall landings, although, of course, with a reduction in landings for the recreational fleet, although we have -- I haven't looked at it here, but you could look at the catch rates there, and you can imagine similar landings, in terms of total number of pounds, with a much smaller fleet, would represent considerably higher catch rates, more catch per trip, which doesn't necessarily get reflected in the overall landings statistic.

Also, it would reduce discards, dead discards, particularly for the red snapper and the black sea bass, because most of those dead discards are coming from the recreational fleet. It had less of an impact on particularly the gag than for the other stocks, and this is because the commercial line fishery appears to have the highest catches for the gag, rather than the recreational fleet, as for the other two stocks.

We didn’t look at, in detail, the full-retention policy. We looked at it when we combined it with the moving offshore, but, if it was applied just by itself, it didn't have -- It had a short-term increase in landings, because everything that used to be discarded gets converted to landings, but it has a decreased probability of rebuilding. We spoke a little bit about this earlier. It's because all fish,

the caught fish, are now removed from the population, rather than a fraction that were discarded would survive, if they weren't fully retained.

Other options could be explored, to look at aggregate bag limits where, for example, a suite of species could be included in a single bag limit, or we could look at more variations of the closed fishing season, although that requires quite an understanding of how the fishing activity is expected to change with changes in the regulations for the open fishing season.

Minimum size limits, by themselves, they don't appear to be very effective, without a reduction in the discard mortality at least, and so, if there's ways of reducing the discard mortality, then the minimum size limits, assuming that they were reasonably well enforced, could have more benefits, but, as it is, they don't have a lot of impacts over the current practice.

Again, other options could be explored. You could look at fleet and/or area-specific size limits, and potentially also methods to reduce -- Although I know a lot of work has gone into this already, but potentially look at at least modelling what the impact of reductions in discard mortality would do.

Spatial fishing effort scenarios, they show, particularly for the red snapper and the sea bass, that shifting effort to the offshore region increased, had the largest increase in rebuilding. This was true also for gag, although shifting effort towards the nearshore had a slightly higher probability of rebuilding, and, essentially, this is because, for this stock, they were more equally distributed across the shallow and deep areas.

The largest impact for this approach is caused by the shift in the fishing mortality towards the older fish, and so decreasing the impact on the juveniles, particularly for red snapper, and this leads to an increase in the spawning output. It also essentially reduces fishing mortality on a fraction of the stock, and so this is why the coarse analysis, where we just shifted effort in one direction, had this -- It had this quite a -- Results compared to some of the other approaches.

The sensitivity tests, they really -- The main takeaway from that, I think, is the last one I looked at, that the assumed recruitment pattern in the projection period is highly influential, and it's very important, particularly if you want to take away quantitative predictions about probability of rebuilding and other things, because, of course, what actually happens in the future, how effective the sort of management methods are, and how likely the stock is to rebuild, depends, to a great degree, on what the natural recruitment pattern would be for these fish, and, if it continues to be -- For the gag grouper, and the black sea bass, if it continues to be much lower recruitment than we would expect, then the stock is much less likely to rebuild than under an alternative scenario where recruitment -- Which, over the next few years returns back to its average level.

Like I mentioned, these quantitative results are different, but, qualitatively, it's the same finding, to reduce overall fishing mortality and to shift effort away from young and small fish, and the final point I wanted to just make is that these operating models are conditioned on the recent stock assessments, and some modifications of those models, like I've talked about, and this is, obviously, another area of uncertainty that could be explored in more detail. If we had different assessment models, or we used different data in different ways, potentially you could have a different understanding of the fishery dynamics.

We haven't explored that so far in this analysis, but I just wanted to flag that as another thing that could be examined in more detail. That brings me to my last slide, and so thank you very much for your attention. I hope my audio wasn't broken up too badly during this, and I'll be happy to take some questions, and I'll pass it back to the chair. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Adrian. Certainly there was a lot of information there to process and unpack. None of it looks particularly promising, which I think that most everybody in this room kind of already knew. I'm not really going to try and say too much. I believe David Moss has a question, or a comment.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. If you could go back to slide -- Well, two of them, but Slide 43, to start, if you don't mind, and I promise this is a question and not an argument. It shows in there, if I'm reading this correctly, that we estimate recruitment to go down significantly, or fairly significantly, of -- Well, really all species, but, obviously red snapper is the one that we're looking at the hardest, and I'm curious as to why that computes, when we've seen that's one of the few species that we've actually shown good recruitment on over the last, whatever it is, five to ten years, really. I mean, a few of the snapper species, but, obviously, this is the one that we're looking at the hardest.

DR. HORDYK: Thanks, David. I should have pointed this out. I don't think I made it that clear, that, in this in this scenario, the recent models are using the recent recruitment deviation, essentially for the last ten years, to generate the recruitment for the projection. Just like you pointed out, for the red snapper, they've been higher than average, in the in the recent ten years, than previously, and so, in this case, the red snapper is doing more positive than it was in the base case analysis. It's because the recruitment is actually higher than -- It continues to stay higher than it does under the base case, where it returns to the to the average.

Gag grouper, and black seabass, are the opposite, where, under the base case scenario, we assume, essentially, that, over time, it returns back to the average, but gag grouper, here, and black sea bass -- In this scenario, the recruitment stays quite low, and so, for those two, the results are more pessimistic, and, for red snapper, the results are slightly more optimistic than the base case.

DR. COLLIER: Just to build on that a little bit more is, even though the recruitment is higher than on average, it's still the fishing mortality is too high and causing the population to go back down.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David, did you still have further --

MR. MOSS: I do, and if you could -- I feel kind of bad. I wrote down Slide 35, but I don't remember what my question was, but, if you go back to that, it might jog my memory. No, it didn't. Sorry. I don't remember what I was going to ask.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Anybody else have any questions, or comments, for Adrian while -- I don't see anybody's hand raised, just for -- Kerry, go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't know if we're going to get to talk to him, and so I wanted to ask, real quick, but, Adrian, when you separated inshore and offshore, were there, in essence, three zones, like state waters, federal near shore, federal offshore, or was it really just the two zones, inshore and offshore?

DR. HORDYK: In this case, it's just the two zones. It's just the nearshore and offshore. I haven't I haven't accounted for the state waters as a separate area.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. So I guess I have a curiosity question. With all of us sitting here on this panel, listening to this presentation, I find myself asking myself what exactly do we do with this information? We've been trying to develop a management strategy based on the best available science, and excuse me, and I don't mean to be rude, but this just seems to be redundant, when you're involving a panel that's supposed to be doing this already. If you're using the exact same science, the exact same stock assessments, how is how is this any different than what we've already set out to do here? How are we improving fisheries management, by using the same science, and I hope somebody has some sort of clarification on that for me.

DR. HORDYK: I can make a couple of comments. I'm not sure if I can you give an answer to that, but I think you're right. I mean, the idea of this framework, an MSE framework, is to test different approaches, and so I think the use for this, this tool, is that, if a group, such as the AP chooses -- Like suggests, or proposes, some different management approaches, and, for example, we've talked about size limits, or spatial closures, and, like I've said, in this current analysis, it's fairly coarse, but, if I chose something quite specific, what would it look like to have this size limit, for this fleet, in this area, or something like that? No one can tell you an answer to that, how that would be expected to perform.

Nobody can tell, and so the idea of developing a framework like this is trying to answer questions exactly like that, and to say, well, this is how we expect that to perform relative to something else, and so that's the idea.

The point that you kind of go back to, that it's the same science, is where -- I kind of touched on that in one of my last discussion points, that this does currently depend on the sort of paradigm of the -- It's based on the current assessments, which is the current science. That could change, and there was some talk I heard, in the early discussion, about developing an independent assessment model for a red snapper, or something along those lines. That's another axis of uncertainty that hasn't been considered here, and so, if there was alternative science, or other views of the stock dynamics, that could be incorporated into this analysis. That hasn't been done now, but the framework exists to be able to examine exactly those questions.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Adrian. Before I hand it over to David, who has a question, wouldn't it -- Wouldn't it make this presentation more complete if -- I know this is not your directive, but if you were the whole package and, you know, kind of take a look at the different stocks in the snapper grouper complex, and run models from a completely independent basis, instead of based on a bowl of cereal that's been sitting in milk for a long time?

DR. HORDYK: I mean, I'm not sure exactly how to answer that. I think it's certainly something that's worthwhile to explore.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'm sorry there, and you kind of broke up on me, and I think Chip has something to say.

DR. COLLIER: So you're absolutely right that this is based on the science coming out of the stock assessments. Our goal was to develop management measures based on the catch levels from the

SSC, and so we didn't want to develop another stock assessment that would come up with different catch levels, because we have the guidance from the SSC that these are the acceptable biological catch levels that we have to stay within, and we wanted to look at different management scenarios that would be best overall for the fishery, or least objectionable, I guess, to the fishery, in order to stay within the ABC.

We did it within the bounds that we're limited to, and it's not great, but that's where we are. If we came up with radically different numbers of catch, and different things like that, we would have to go back to the SSC, and I'm not saying that it's a bad thing, but then it would have to get reviewed by the agency, to make sure it's best the scientific information available, and so we did not want to have competing science models. We wanted to make sure our model was based on what was already accepted, and then move forward and develop something within the catch levels that would -- That the advisory panel could provide guidance on.

I know nobody is happy with these results. I'm not happy with these results, but this is where we are. If recruitment doesn't get better for black sea bass and gag grouper, we might not ever rebuild. Red snapper is very different. It seems to be doing better, but it's being caught, and it's a pretty easy species to catch. We've heard some advisory panel members in the past say that all you need to do is drop down a hook. If they're aggressive, you're going to catch them, and we hear people talking about being caught when they're trolling.

It's difficult, when you're managing these species, and then, you know, taking an even bigger picture, and throwing this into the ecosystem-based fisheries management, or ecosystem-based management approaches, and this is looking at three species at once, and potentially trying to figure out a best solution, and what Adrian presented here is there isn't a best solution. If you close down offshore waters, you're going to have an impact on gag grouper, more than you do on red snapper and black sea bass, and so we're having to weigh different options, depending on the species that are in the model, and we just wanted guidance from stakeholders on what they thought was best, in order to get here, and I don't feel like we have a final solution here, and one of the questions, that we want from the advisory panel maybe is, all right, Adrian said, you know, maybe for protecting some of the black sea bass and red snapper, we need to close inshore waters.

Well, obviously, we don't want to close all inshore waters. What would be a potential solution, that the advisory panel would recommend, that we could explore further, in order to make these populations maybe more sustainable, to make the fishery more sustainable, and so that's kind of what we want to get from the advisory panel. I know it's not great, but we would like to explore additional things.

I know, in the past, we had asked for some guidance on how to do this, and it's really hard to ask the advisory panel without seeing some of the results, right? You go into a restaurant, and the restaurant might say, well, we have meat on the menu. Yes, but what kind of meat? It makes a difference on what I'm going to order, and so we've provided you a little bit more guidance on what the menu is, and what the outcomes might be, and hopefully, you know, you can provide us more guidance on what you think would be best to go into this model to make a fishery best for, right now, at least the recreational sector.

AP MEMBER: Not the commercial?

DR. COLLIER: Well, right now, we're trying to address the issues within the recreational, but yes, if we can address some of the issues in the recreational fishery, I think the commercial fishery is going to come along for the ride, if we can reduce the number of dead discards in it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Chip. John has another follow-up.

MR. POLSTON: For the recreational, and commercial, as far as that's concerned, I believe, if they would stop fishing during the spawning months, that there's no way it couldn't help in the recruitment and stuff. I know I've heard the argument that it doesn't matter, and, if a fish is dead, it's dead, but I disagree. I think there's many more thousands of eggs that could be dropped from a spawning fish, and for both recreational and commercial, and all we have to do is get away from two months, and I would say probably June and July, and maybe even August, but, if you just got away from those months when you allow the people to fish, recreational and commercial, I believe that would increase the recruitment a lot.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John. Chip, I do appreciate, you know, you answering my question, and, really, I think it's the best available answer that can be given at this time. I just hope that everybody is actually processing all of this, and really understanding that we're in a scrape, and we need to stop killing fish that don't need to die, and the red snapper has been the poster child for dead discards, and I don't know how to break the cycle. We've been stuck in this cycle for as long as I really can remember, and we have to find a way out. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Yes, I completely agree with what you said, James, and this goes back to the discussion we were having before the break on the science is the science, right, and the data is going to be the data. Whatever we give it, whatever the inputs are, that's essentially going to affect the outputs.

The unfortunate truth is that it's giving us the information that none of us wanted to hear, and I think, when we were initially presented with this MSE, when it was first going through, a couple of years ago, we were all kind of hoping that it was going to be like some magic wand, that it was going to give us something, you know, behind the curtain, that we all wanted to see, and it was going to paint some rosy picture, and the reality is a reality. As you said, we need to stop from killing all these fish, and I don't know what the answer is, other than what's in here, which is reducing effort, and it's not like I'm an advocate for that, but that's kind of the only output that's coming that I see.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: When I was initially appointed to the Snapper Grouper AP, I thought of some ten-thousand-foot kind of birds-eye opinions, or observations, that I could bring to these types of meetings, and we're wondering how do we get out of this conundrum, and I've been in Morehead City for twenty-three years, and I can unequivocally say there's two starter ways that are lacking, education and enforcement.

I fish, on average, two or three times a month, which put it at roughly thirty times a year, and, over my time in Morehead City, I've been stopped one time by law enforcement officer. As far as education, when you go to these boat ramps, and there's very few boat ramps, or maybe none, and

I don't think any I've seen in North Carolina, that have rules, or guidance, on using barotrauma mitigation devices.

There's no boat ramps, for example, as points of access for recreational anglers, that have any information on using circle hooks, and the requirements for using circle hooks, north of -- What is it? Help me, but is it 28 degrees North latitude in this fishery, and so I keep on coming back to these birds-eye thoughts, these ten-thousand-foot thoughts, of education and enforcement are lacking, and, in my opinion, virtually nonexistent in some subregions of our South Atlantic region. Thanks.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Paul, and I think you would get a lot of people in this room to agree with most of what you said there, and it's good input. Thank you. Anybody else? We've got Jack Cox, and then Randy McKinley.

MR. COX: I mean, I'll say something that's not really popular, but when you've got to do things like this, and you got to mitigate some of these species that are getting hit hard, and maybe some folks from Florida will know this better than I do in North Carolina, but maybe some small inshore MPA areas that will enhance the fish habitat could be something to potentially look at, but, like John was saying earlier over there, about the, the spawning biomass and increasing the larvae and so forth, and some of those spawning lots, I know, for the red grouper species, if we had extended that through May, I think that would have helped somewhat, but, you know, it's - - Other than decreasing effort, and fishing days, and those are the things that I try to think about, outside of, you know, trying to take small fish and raise them. I think they've done some of that, Paul, with black sea bass, and putting them back into the stocks.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jack. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I mean, I -- It just seems like some of these discussions, even like with the pink snapper and I'm focused on the black sea bass, and, I mean, what if it's -- If it's outside the council's control, or outside of our geographic area, and what if these fish are just migrating north? I mean, no matter what we do, it's not going to save the black sea bass.

I mean, I know the whole shrimp industry has changed in North Carolina, the way the shrimp have moved up north and stuff, and the white shrimp, and the brown, and it's all different, and so, really, the problem may not just be the mortality rate on these, on these fish. It could be just shifts, that we can't control, and it's just seems like penalizing the fishermen so much for that is just -- I know we can't take that into account, but maybe more work with the Mid-Atlantic, and, I mean, evidently, they've got tons of them. They keep getting more quotas, and killing our prices and stuff, but, specifically, I was talking about the black sea bass. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Randy, that's interesting that you bring that up. Just, you know, for me, I'm wondering what species is going to move into my zone next that I can target. You know, I mean, that's kind of what my approach is. It's, okay, you know, we dwindled -- You know, maybe the biomass for what I target is moving to another place, and maybe somebody else will catch that, and, well, what's going to move into my area that I can harvest, and continue with my legacy, and, you know, maybe it all won't be doom-and-gloom, but we haven't -- At least in the Florida Keys, we haven't seen that yet.

You know, maybe there will be a real commercial wahoo fishery, you know, in the next ten years, and, you know, maybe something will come in that will help fortify our industry, and we'll be talking about managing other species, and so it's interesting that you brought that up, because I've kind of had my sights set on something along those lines as well. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Thinking about this big picture, what John said is -- I don't know if that would work, easing into this situation, or easing out of it, but a closure around the spawning season, and you're still going to have your grouper from December 1 to May 1, and then maybe a summertime for these others, but, from the looks of that, I don't know if that would be something the council would consider moving into this, or is that something of how you get out of it?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Tony. I believe we have Haley, and then Richard.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. Just some fishing insight, and scope, from what we see in Ponce Inlet. Black sea bass used to be our bread-and-butter on the headboat. We would catch them all day, every day, ten years ago, and the deckhands would be walking back to the fish box with a sea bass on each finger, sea bass gloves. I think we've caught maybe a total of ten sea bass this year, and, on the spots that we used to catch sea bass, we now catch sharks and goliath grouper, and so how much -- You know, when we talk about this ecosystem-based approach to management, how much of that is going into account, you know, what's eating what, and is it really all the fishing effort, or is there something else that's contributing outside of our control? Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely. They're wonderful questions to ask, and hopefully we can find some of those answers. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: James, I was thinking maybe that square grouper industry will pick up again.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'm with you on that one. We got the boats for it. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: As we move forward, exploring these different management strategies, you know, and I've just got to say that a bottom closure, to the northeast Florida area, would be completely detrimental to any of our for-hire, and especially our headboat fleet. Headboats are not equipped to be able to troll. With the cost of fuel, you know, when you look at your prime costs, what you can charge your customers to go fishing for, and how far you can travel, and a bottom closure would absolutely put the remaining headboats that still exist completely out of business.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley, and I can appreciate you echoing what Cameron's sentiment has been for a number of years here. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I would like to say, Chip, that was a good job explaining this whole situation a minute ago, and, along with Haley was saying, I agree that, at least when this -- You know, if a total closure came about, it would really devastate the entire east coast, and what I'm afraid would happen would be it would turn into a big real estate grab, and the real estate would take over, and we'd have condos everywhere, and that you would -- Finding a dock,, ten years from now, may be impossible.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Tony. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Yes, you're right, and I have been saying that for a long time, and so, if we do come up with closures and stuff, you know -- I mean, the hard fact is, you know, for the headboat, the larger than six-passenger charter industry, I mean, there's got to be a niche. There's got to be a niche cut out, or we're all just going to be out of business. I mean, you know, that's just the way it is.

I mean, you know, if that happens, then the property that I own on the waterfront -- I'm going to offload it and retire, and then I guarantee you that nobody is going to ever open a fishing company there again, and that's for sure, and so, if we want to maintain fisheries for the masses, you know, all this stuff has to -- You know, all this stuff really has to be considered, and looked at, because, once I'm gone, Haley's gone, whatever, there's nobody who's going to be able to -- One, they're not going to be able to get the real estate to have headboats going out of, and it's going to absolutely wipe out, and eliminate, for the blue-collar, lower-income person to even go enjoy what everyone sitting in this room enjoys, and that's just the hard cold facts of it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Cameron. John.

MR. POLSTON: Just something I said earlier, and I agree with a hundred percent of what you said, but, unless we get some new numbers -- Unless we get new numbers, what you see in front of you is what's going to go down. They are going to close it. There's no doubt. There's no question about it. It's going to be closed for recreational fishing, and so, unless we get some new numbers out there, that's what's going to happen. I mean, it's right there in front of you. I mean, I live in Daytona Beach. If no more recreational fishing that goes on there, and I've got a business, a seafood business, but, if it doesn't -- If something doesn't happen, and new numbers come out, that's what is going to happen.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Of course, I agree with everything that Cameron and Haley and everyone's been saying about bottom closures. I don't think that that needs to be reiterated again, but something that Randy brought up that, that brings me back to the conversation we had in the spring about black sea bass, and the fact that technically there's not overfishing, in some ways, and that there's just a migration pattern, and I think it was you, Mr. Chair, that recommended, in that meeting, that we look at different verbiage, as opposed to using "overfishing", when there does look like there are other contributing factors that might help us, to Randy's point, not penalize the anglers, or the headboat captains, if black sea bass have just moved out of the way.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Gettys, I think is that is a great point, and I did -- You know, I was looking for a different classification of, you know, undergoing overfishing, and being overfished, and I stand by that. You know, I think that that verbiage needs to be added. Unfortunately, it doesn't change the problem that we face, and, along with what Cameron was saying, you know, with, you know, if there isn't a niche carved out for the headboat sector, you know, it'll never return. I mean, truly, it won't, and, honestly, I think, you know, commercial fishing, as a whole, is in the same boat as, as that.

I'm thinking here -- You know, I'm sitting here thinking like, okay, and let's just say we did what most bass fishermen do, and we go out, and we catch our bass, and we release them, and, you know, you have a fishery.

Unfortunately, it doesn't change the dead discards, you know, when you're talking about red snapper or any of the, you know, fish harvested, or caught, in over a hundred feet of water, and so no fishing is the only answer, based on the science that we have, and, for a nationally-shared resource -- Forget about just giving it to the wealthy, the people that can afford to be on or near the coast, or can afford to trailer a boat from wherever in the country to get offshore, but you're talking about a resource that essentially is gone. What we're saying here is that the oceans in and around -- You know, the waters in and around the United States are empty, or on the verge of being empty, and we don't have a fishery. That's some pretty scary stuff. David, and then Paul.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Again, and I'll bring it back to the conversation that we were having earlier, when Christina was up here, and, as was just said, if, if we don't get better data, then this is a reality. It's not that anybody wants this, and I certainly don't, and, Cameron, like you said, you know, once the toothpaste is out of the tube, and you sell your property, that's not going back to -- Whether it's a headboat or a commercial boat or whatever, and like that working waterfront is gone. The only thing that that's clinging to it right now are the few people that are still holding onto it, but unless we, as a group and larger, advocate for more and better data, this is going to be the reality, and there's nothing we can do about it, unless the data gets better.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Paul, and then Richard.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Again, this is piggybacking on the other comments this afternoon, and I feel like we have the tools in our toolset, as fishery managers, and biologists, to try to come up with some solutions, short of where the MSE that was presented this afternoon has taken us, which, of course, is reduced recreational fishing effort, which we all would like to avoid, and for very good reason.

I recently conducted a study that found that 93 percent, and this should get published within the next few months, if I'm reading the tea leaves right, but that 93 percent of gut-hooked, deep-hooked red snapper go on to die after release, and we have a pretty good precision around the estimate that the 93 percent of gut-hooked red snapper go on to perish after the release, and so we know a simple method, that we can invoke, that, again, is on the books to reduce rates of gut-hooking in red snapper, and other reef species, is to use circle hooks.

Again, we have these tools on the books. We have these regulations on the books, through all these council amendments over the years, over the last two, three, four decades, that are meant to address reducing discard mortality in this fishery, and it's -- I just share everybody's frustration that these rules are in the books, and if they're followed, and if they're adhered to, they're going to reduce the numbers of dead discards, dead discarded red snapper, and other reef species, and, unless the rules are followed, then it's not going to work.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richard. Thank you, Paul.

MR. GOMEZ: I'm super confused on this, because, I mean, I've been to a lot of these meetings, where we're talking about everybody catching more red snapper, and, just putting that discard thing

aside for a minute, I'm not hearing everybody saying that they're catching less red snapper. I'm not sure why, all of a sudden, we're talking about possibly having no fish, when -- I'm just speaking to the red snapper, where our fishery in the Keys is much better, and all I've been hearing, at a number of these meetings were, hey, we need to be able to catch more red snapper, and there's red snapper everywhere, and now, all of a sudden, I'm here in this gloom-and-doom, and I'm pretty lost on this one.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well, Richie, I basically was saying, if we don't have a better jump-off point with the data that we have available to us, the best available science, we're not -- We're never going to have a different outcome, that the pathway that we're on is going to be no fishing. I'm not saying that there's no fish. What I'm saying is, if we don't change the trajectory of where we're on here, with better science, and better numbers, that that is generally accepted as best available science, then we're not going to be able to accomplish anything for the benefit of your everyday fishermen.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, and so it goes back to science. I get it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, guys. I'm sorry. I know that I'm new, but I'm just having a really hard time believing what I'm seeing, because, you know, every red snapper that we catch on our headboat swims away, when you use the proper technique, when you use the proper gear, when you follow the rules, and you do your dehooker, and you have your circle hooks. They live, and I just -- Like SEDAR 73, March of 2021, and SEDAR 71, April of 2021, is that the -- This is generally a question, to help me understand, and is stock assessments, from almost four or five years ago, the best available? Is it? Is this how it works?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Maybe Chip can chime-in on this.

DR. COLLIER: Unfortunately, we don't get stock assessments on a more regular basis like that, but, yes, those are the most recent stock assessments that we have for red snapper and black sea bass and gag grouper, and so, yes, and, even though they were published in -- I think red snapper was published in 2021, with data through 2019, and so, when you go back to the terminal year of the data, it's even longer, and so it is unfortunate that that's the condition that we're in, but, you know, that's what we're having to deal with.

MS. STEPHENS: I guess just a follow-up question. Can we do better?

DR. COLLIER: So we're hoping so. SEDAR, the stock assessment process, is going through a revamping right now, where we're hoping to get at least a stock assessment once every six years, with a potential update maybe in between, or I'm not certain what the assessment type will be, or interim analysis would be, but that could be every three years, and so we might be able to get things on a more regular basis.

That's our hope, but, if we do that, that also means that we're limited to a certain number of species. I think it was going to be twelve to fourteen species would be able to be done through that process, and so we manage over fifty species, and so what do we do with those other species? That's the other big conundrum. It's going to be species like gray triggerfish, potentially, or white grunt,

other important species, or potentially important species, for headboat fisheries and other recreational fisheries.

MS. STEPHENS: Just a fun fact, to try to liven up the room. We're catching red snapper in the river in Ponce Inlet. We're catching them at the jetty. People are catching them three miles inshore, but, from the public fishing docks, on dead shrimp, and a piece of a kid's gusher candies, and that's what the red snapper are eating, and so that's all.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley, and, before I hand the floor back over to Paul, I would like to kind of go along with the enforcement theme here, and most of the people that I represent in my area, both charter, you know, headboat, recreational, commercial, like myself, there is no enforcement. It's just -- That's everybody's biggest complaint, and now I've got complaints about industry professionals, when they're involved in an accident, and there's not even a follow-up investigation, to see if the captain was under the influence of drugs or alcohol, if they had done their due diligence in the consortium, if they had -- You know, if they had checked the boxes that they were supposed to check to be an industry professional, and we've got problems. Paul, go ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just to follow-up on Haley's comment, just to remind everybody that she's practicing, on her headboat, the idealized handling and release methods, and so you're going to -- With your subsample of fish, you're going to get really high survival, and you're practicing best methods. Unfortunately, that doesn't represent, or probably even come close to representing, the average handling and release practices that the average recreational fisher engages in, or perhaps the majority.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Paul. I'm looking around the room. Anybody else have any additional information? Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. I'm just thinking ahead, and, you know, as a fishing boat owner, as a parent, I think that it's so important that, whatever we do now, you know, to follow through, to ensure that our children have the opportunity to fish. You know, like Mr. Paul said, if you do the right thing, because it's the right thing to do, and, if you do it the right way, and if we have accountability measures in place, you know, I think that it would at least help, but, by not doing anything right now, it's not going to make it better.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. All right. I don't see any other hands up. I guess we'll move on. Mike, is there anything else that we want to try and tackle today? Is there anything else we want to tackle today? All right. I guess, as of 4:30 on day-one, we are adjourned.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, Adrian.

DR. HORDYK: Thank you, all.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on October 15, 2024.)

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OCTOBER 16, 2024

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Town and Country Inn, Charleston, South Carolina, on Wednesday, October 16, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Good morning, everybody, again, and let's get this thing underway. I believe Chip is going to kick us off this morning, with some discussion about where we ended yesterday with the MSE.

DR. COLLIER: I just wanted to check with everyone, to make sure I was listening properly, to ensure that what we potentially proceed forward, within the MSE, is what you guys were intending us to go forward with. Large-scale area closures are -- Not a fan. You guys did not want that. Potentially some small areas, inshore, to protect some potentially spawning habitats for some of these species.

I also heard potential seasonal closures, and I just want to make sure that -- Because sometimes it can be confusing what we mean by seasonal closure. Within this project, what we're thinking for seasonal closure, is it would be closure to all snapper grouper fishing, and so, if we're talking a two-month season, do you guys actually intend it to be a two-month season for snapper grouper fishing, or just a two-month season to possess these certain species, and then I did not hear many comments in regard to size limits, or anything like that.

They didn't seem to be that effective during the MSE, and so that didn't seem to be all that effective, but maybe something like a twelve-inch size limit, or a ten-inch size limit, for something like black sea bass, where you're finding some smaller fish inshore, and that does provide them some protections, and so those are some of the thoughts that we had, coming out of yesterday's meeting, and, if I'm completely off, please let me know.

Then definitely I heard quite a bit about education and enforcement. Those are some big issues to address, and then also try to get better science. You know, you're going to be hearing about Amendment 46. That's really trying to address better science, trying to get some of the recreational numbers a little bit better, and so let me know if I was off-base on any of this stuff, and if there's anything else that we need to consider for the management strategy evaluation.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Chip. I believe we have Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: Good morning. Thanks, Chairman. Chip, I had a question about that. You mentioned is it a snapper grouper closure, or it would be the entire species, the fifty-five species, and it would have to be. I was going to say how could we do it any other way, and, as far as the size limits inshore, and I guess in state waters, but that would be state regulated, and am I right?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John, or Tony, and we have John, and then Chris.

MR. POLSTON: Maybe I didn't hear it, but, if it is going to be open for the -- Fishing-wise, I had mentioned, yesterday, about spawning closures. I personally think it's pretty important, and, if it is open, to not be open during the spawning time, which I think, you know, two months, or three months, whatever the science is on that, but I didn't hear you mention that. Maybe you did, and I didn't hear it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Was that directed at Chip, or were you looking for an answer from Chip on that one?

MR. POLSTON: Well, he was -- I think he nodded, but --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, I wrote it down.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right, great. Thanks, John. Chris, and then Andrew.

MR. KIMREY: So I sort of have a question we might want to briefly kick around, and we don't want to start a half-day conversation, but, I think, before you start talking about doing a complete snapper grouper closure, all fifty-five species, I think we need to kick around the -- We have to have access to something, okay, and so, when you do a complete closure, that's hugely scary, to a lot of people, and so we need to kick around -- If you remove certain species, the ones that are deemed less abundant, that, in itself, is going to alleviate some of the pressure.

There's going to be a huge number of people that just aren't going to bottom fish, and so, you know, I think we might want to kick that around the room a couple of times, to figure out a way to isolate the differences in, you know, release mortality and all that, if we remove certain species, which is going lower the number of anglers targeting the SG stuff, versus a complete closure.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right. I appreciate that, Chris. Andrew.

MR. FISH: If -- Although nobody likes it, but, if you were to close it when amberjack is already closed, gag groupers already closed, red groupers already closed, meaning March and April, or -- You know, gags are, obviously, closed January through April, but, if you coincide it with things that are already closed, maybe that would be an easier pill to swallow for some, and maybe worse for others, but you could go do something else for two months. I don't know what, but it's all bad.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Andrew. We got John, and then Matt.

MR. POLSTON: You were talking about, as far as closures, and I know we're talking about recreational, but, obviously, I think, on the commercial side, golden tilefish is also managed by the grouper snapper complex, and totally out of the realm of anything that we're talking about here as far as the depth of water is concerned, but, if they push that on to commercial also -- I mean, wouldn't that actually shut down golden tile fishing as well, whatever months it is? We've got to be careful of how we word that, I guess is what I'm saying.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Indeed. Thank you, John. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I just want to point a clarification, and I may have misheard you, when you had your introductory remarks, but I think there's been the discussion thrown around of a two-month closure, and not a two-month season, and I thought I heard you say a two-month fishing season, which is not what I think I've heard anybody suggest.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Matt. We've got Paul, and then David, and we'll get to Gettys. Thank you.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I feel like the talk of the closure is perhaps this is the last stop before the trainwreck occurs, and so this is like going for the jugular. This is big potatoes here, this kind of decision. I think there's something everybody's trying to avoid. I just ask the council to consider whether a complete closure is even going to work, and so we've had a complete closure in other areas of the zone for a while, and those are called marine protected areas.

Does anybody have, and I don't -- I'm not putting anybody in the hotspot, but ,does anybody have an idea of whether these complete closures currently known as marine protected areas, whether that's indeed a closure? What's the compliance rate with that closure? What's the compliance rate with not snapper grouper fishing in those MPAs in our area?

Until we have an idea of those rates of compliance, or lack of compliance, going back to my enforcement -- Or questions about enforcement yesterday, but, until we have rates of compliance in those MPAs, I don't think we should be going for this closure idea, because we have no idea of the rates of compliance, or lack of compliance, with these closure ideas.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Paul. Before I acknowledge David to take the floor here, I did want to have one more panel member kind of introduce himself. He wasn't able to be here yesterday. Go ahead and introduce yourself, where you're -- Who you represent and where.

MR. RANNEY: My name is Steve Ranney. I'm from Hilton Head Island, and I'm a charter captain, recreational charter.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Excellent. Thank you very much, and feel free to raise your hand anytime, and I'll acknowledge you. Go ahead, David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. At the risk of being the bad guy here, it's important to remember why it is that we're here, or what the data is saying, and this is almost 100 percent dead discard issue, right, a discard mortality issue, and so the unfortunate truth is that what -- At least what I remember the MSC suggesting is that shutting down just a couple of species, and saying you can't keep amberjacks, or you can't keep gags, or you can't keep red snapper, but you can still fish for other things, isn't going to solve anything, is the unfortunate truth.

What the MSE is suggesting, what the data is suggesting, is basically nobody is allowed to go out fishing, bottom fishing, and so weigh that very heavily as we think about, even for a couple months, as Haley was saying yesterday, you know, with the headboats, and, if we close down a couple months in the summertime, and those headboats aren't allowed to operate, and that's predominantly what they do, that's detrimental to them, right, and so, as we think about minimizing economic impact, and all these other things that we're tasked with through Magnuson, these are all the things that we have to take into consideration.

If we're going to think about, and I'm just spit-balling here, because that's what we're doing, I guess, but maybe look at closer to the winter months, you know, January and February, in that timeframe, when shallow-water groupers are already closed, when it's tougher for particularly the people up north to get out, when the weather is worse. If we're going to shut down for a couple months, and absolutely zero bottom fishing, maybe, instead of the summer, we look at something like that, but, again, remember, as we talk about closing down in concurrence with some other species, the unfortunate truth is it's probably not going to make a difference, if people are still out bottom fishing, period, because this is all a discard issue.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. I have Gettys and then Chris and Cameron.

MR. KIMREY: The problem I see, David, with this wintertime closure, is, to lower release mortality, dead discards, you have to lower the number of fish that are caught incidentally, and, if there's not a huge number of people fishing during the winter months, you can close it, but your discards aren't going to go down, and that's why I say we need to tread lightly on this, because, I mean, effectively, to lower the discards as fast as possible, you need to have a closure during the time there's the most hooks in the water, which is everybody's high season. I'm saying tread lightly on this one.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Indeed. Thank you, Chris. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, I mean, I think everybody's talked about it a lot in the rooms, you know, this discard fallacy that so much of it is dying when it hits the water, and I think Paul alluded to , yesterday, that, you know, if done right, most of it makes it, and it makes it back to the bottom, and so, you know, I mean, I really have a hard time taking this, that, hey, we're not -- We're looking at a potential shutdown for timeframes to stop fishing, because of the mortality, especially in the Carolinas, when we're fishing in fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty feet of water, when most of that stuff makes it, and it makes it fine, and so this is now -- You know, now we're looking at regional. We have to look at each area regionally, and see where they're bottom fishing, and what their survival rate is on mortality, and then so fine.

Then let's say you shut down grouper snapper. Fine. I'm going to do shark fishing and fucking spot fishing. I mean, I'm going to keep going fishing, because that's what I got to do to survive. I'll go shrimp fishing. I don't give a shit. That's just the reality of it, and so, you know, you're going to close it down. You'll knock a lot of people out of it, but some people got to do it to survive, one way or the other. Either that or we just go spearfishing, and no bottom fishing at all, and we select everything we get, and we have somebody on coms saying shoot that fish for me. No problem.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Cameron. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Just to sort of reiterate Cameron, I can't imagine even thinking about complete closures, unless you split it up geographically, because I can't imagine the Keys would be the same -- When the fish are mostly being caught at the same time, versus North Carolina. I can't imagine not doing it geographically, and I know that they've never wanted to do that, but I just think that that would have to be a consideration, before you shut everything down. It would devastate. I mean, I just can't imagine that, but anyway.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Randy. David, and then Cameron again.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. My understanding was, when this has been brought up at council and NOAA and whatnot, is that -- It's area closures, and the predominance of it is going to be off of northeast Florida, and so from -- Don't quote me, or, well, I guess we are quoting me, but from Daytona to like the Jacksonville area, and some major geographic set within there is where most of the problem is, and that's where you would see the closures. Either way, again, as everybody has said, we need to tread very lightly, because it's going to economically affect a lot of people, a lot of businesses that are in that area.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Cameron, and then Richard.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So I sat on one of the boards that came up with the MPAs, back X number of years ago, and so, you know, the reality is have those been studied, and have those been looked at, and do they work or do they not work? You know, I think somebody alluded to the fact of, well, hey, we already have these MPAs, and what is the effectiveness of the MPAs we already have set, and I don't know the answer to that, and I don't know if there's been a study on it, to really see how effective they were, before we talk about closing down for months at a time.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Cameron. I think David had a response to that, and then I'll get to you, Richie.

MR. MOSS: There has been, just recently, I think one trip for Georgetown Hole, to take a look at that, off of South Carolina, and one trip off of Warsaw Hole, which is off of Key West, and there is scheduled to be another couple of sampling trips, off of both, or in both of those areas, and I know there is one off of North Carolina, and the name escapes me, off the top of my head, and so they're looking at it, and they're running through the analysis right now, and, actually, you might be presented with it sometime next year.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Richard Gomez.

MR. GOMEZ: I'm just going to put this white elephant out there one more time, just to get it on the record. I mean, for the last three or four years, we've been talking about how the red snapper is becoming very prevalent, hard to avoid, even down in the Florida Keys, where people hardly ever caught a red snapper. They're all over the place, and here we are talking about this for all these years, how good that industry is, and then we have some guy that presents yesterday, and, using six-year-old data, and tells us that we have to do something more, and something different, and, I mean, to me, we're not being heard. We're not being listened to.

When we come in here, as an honest group of fishermen, and tell everyone what we're seeing, and then these scientists get in a group, and they get data, and I understand the difficulty of their task. I get it, but, if you're believing us -- If the scientists are believing us, how can they be standing behind a product that, number one, is six-years-old, but, number two, is obviously skewed, and it shouldn't be used to make laws that we have to live by, to make a living. I understand scientists have to make a living. I get it, but if your data -- If you hear us at these meetings, and you understand that your data isn't working, why must we suffer anyway? That's it for me.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richie. I'm pretty sure that we all share in your frustration on those points.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, and I just want to get it on record, because I know a lot of things are coming down the pike, and we need to have everything on record at these meetings.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely, and I know that, for everybody here, and I think I can say that pretty clearly, that we want to retain access, and what that access looks like is really what -- You know, it's what we're debating here, and we're stuck in a really vicious cycle, with the red snapper, between dead discards and potential retention. I think it would be bold to switch from a dead discard program to a retention program, but I do think that would make sense. I think the science that has presented itself -- That a retention would make sense, and I think that we have to find some way to shift from the dead discard being a problem to learning how to manage retention. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and let me preface what I'm about to say with I know that this is probably not the forum for discussing congressional intent. However, the forum for discussing congressional intent is the United States Congress, and I want to point out that, as late as -- Or as soon as July 11th, 2024, Congressmen Russell Frye, Bruce Westerman, and John Rutherford, along with about twenty other members of Congress, wrote a letter talking just about this, about the one-day season already, and so I just want the folks in the room to know -- You know, to know, and to understand, that the legislative intent is being looked at by Congress, and this is something that has been taken all the way to the top. I mean, when we hosted President Trump last year, a large discussion with him was red snapper. Democrats that we've hosted with our organization, we've talked about red snapper.

You know, I just want to put it on record that this is a congressional issue that folks are ready to fix, and we have a great delegation in South Carolina, including Senator Lindsey Graham, Congressman Frye, and Congresswoman Mace, that have gone to bat for us over and over again, and did back in 2021, or 2022, whenever it was that we first discussed bottom fishing closures, but, man, if we go down this route --

I say all that to say that we're going to be playing with fire with those folks, and, you know, those are the appropriators, and those are the ones that have put the money aside for the great red snapper count, that I think still supposed to be done in 2025, but I think, looking at it globally, and understanding exactly what levers to pull, and where all we are, and what our role is in this process, I think we have to keep in mind what was the congressional intent of what we're doing here today, and was it open for full closures, just like the Endangered Species Act and putting a speed limit on boats, and so I'm going to leave it there, but I just wanted to say all that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: For clarification, are you talking about Magnuson-Stevens Act itself, and potential changes to that?

MR. BRANNON: Yes, and just pointing out that we do have -- There are a large group of legislators, heavy hitters in Congress, that are worried about this issue, that are on record with numerous letters, calling out the science and saying it needs to be better.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I appreciate that. Any more hands on the topic here? We've got Haley, and then Matt.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. I think that a bottom closure is an answer to a problem that we don't have, okay, and, if that is a route that we go, it's not going to work, because the surrounding areas are going to suffer greatly. You know, when we talk about fisheries, and management, it's about finding a balance, and, you know, regional closures is going to make it even worse.

It's a terrible idea, and I do not support any type of bottom closure. You know, a two-month bottom closure -- From an economic standpoint, for headboats, we have to run year-round, okay, and two months would be a make or break, and so, when you talk about folks -- You know, we're taking blue collar people fishing, and we're taking doctors and nurses fishing, and it has a huge impact, when we talk about EEJ considerations, and bottom closure is not the answer.

Like Paul said yesterday, when you practice, and utilize, the best fishing practices, that we're required to do, and we have to have circle hooks, and we have to have descending devices, and we have to have venting tools, and, when you use it, the fish survive, and so why aren't we doing that? It's the word that no one wants to hear. It's the accountability. There is no accountability, and so, if no one is forced to do it, they're not going to do it, but, if you do, then it works.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Haley hit the nail on the head. First of all, I agree with everything that Richie said, and, Haley, in that, I don't think -- You know, the fact that bottom closures have been tossed around doesn't mean that I'm in support of it by any means, but the big problem is the enforcement, and the compliance, in my mind.

I mean, we can tell people to do, and we can tell people not to fish for the next three years, and, if we can't stop them from fishing, then what good is that going to do anybody, and what are we doing with our resources? How are we allocating our resources, to actually help the fishery, when we know what we're doing is not going to be complied with? I think, if we increase compliance with what's already on the books, we might see a bigger difference, but I know this isn't -- You know, we're not in the business of deciding how we increase enforcement, or allocate funds towards enforcement, versus whatever other resources are needed, but I think that's the big problem, is enforcement.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Matt. I've got Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: So here's the other white elephant again, mortality versus retention. I mean, obviously, making rules on the research that we have on the mortality rate isn't really doing much for us, since every year there's more and more fish out there, and so, if mortality is such an issue, then why are we doing so much better?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. I've got Cameron, then John, and then Chris Conklin.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So I think, with this talk of full bottom closures for a month, I think we absolutely have solved the question for yesterday of how do you fill the rooms with people who

are interested in the fisheries? Just let the word slip out there that, hey, we're looking at shutting down the ocean for two months, and every damn one of the meetings will be slam-packed, every time you hold one.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Cameron. John.

MR. POLSTON: I know I'm just talking about the obvious here, but I've got to, as you said, get it on the record here. Well, when all this started out, they were saying there was actually no red snapper in the ocean, and everyone that fished knew there was, but that was actually the statement that was made. There was X amount of fish that was actually -- They put a number out there that was left in the ocean, and everybody knew that was wrong, and so they hired -- It's Florida that I'm speaking of, and the state put together a team and started hiring our commercial boats, or not commercial, and I'm sorry, but the charter boats to take them out, and the guy that headed all that said -- He went to the federal people and said there's -- Everywhere we went, inshore, offshore, everywhere we dropped, we were very successful.

They said, no, no, we do know now that there's more snapper than we said there was, but they're not long enough, and then the next thing they said was they're not old enough, and I think that's where they've stopped at now, that they're not old enough.

My point is here we are talking about closures, complete closures, or basically complete closures, and nobody that is fishing is seeing what the science is saying, and so how can -- If you have people that are counting on us for their living, how can we swallow the pill, when we're basing it on six-year-old science, I mean, and the government is not going to do anything about this. They don't care. I know I've said it before, but I really, really feel that industry, recreational and commercial, need to get together, and do their own private assessment, and take it to the SSC and say this is the best available science now, and, if it makes sense, and it was done by the right scientists, they're going to have to accept it, and that can be done a heck of a lot faster than going through the process that we do to try to pass laws, I can promise you that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John. I believe that that type of input is exactly why you're sitting there. We've got Chris, and then Richard.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks, and so I think we have a huge problem with the numbers. If you remember the switch from MRIP to FES, and those are the numbers that really put the BS in BSIA that is creating this problem that doesn't exist, or makes it look a lot worse than it really is, and the council -- If we could continue working on the recreational fishing permit, to shrink the universe of actual, you know, inputs of anglers into that, it would reduce -- Or at least have a great effect on the amount of effort shown in these assessments and stuff like that.

I encourage the council to continue working on that, and it would be -- I'm losing my train of thought, and it would -- Stop looking at me, Amy. So, if we shrink the universe of anglers, by implementing what Florida has already done to get a handle on how many people are actually going out, you know, after these snapper grouper species, instead of just all these people that are fishing off of bridges and then inlets and stuff like that, it would give these numbers a lot more credibility, and I believe it would show that we actually don't have an issue, and we don't need to do any of this stuff.

DR. COLLIER: Chris, when you're saying shrink the universe of anglers, you mean for the survey, and you don't mean actually restricting access to recreational fishermen, correct?

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, that's right. Just get a handle on how many people actually are going out there, because I think the numbers are BS.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I've got Richard, and then Paul, and then Chris.

MR. GOMEZ: So, I mean, what I see, and correct me if I'm wrong, but I see a success story with red snapper, that fishermen had a whole lot to do with, and we should be talking about what we're going to do for the fishermen now, and not what we're going to take next, and, when we talk about bridging the gap between the rule makers and the fishermen, and, you know, you could do all the Facebook, and Instagram, and anything else you ever want to do, but it's not going to do what it's supposed to do. If we continue to suffer, even through a success story, I mean, how could we ever -- When I go back to Key West, what do I say, that, hey, guess what, you're catching a whole lot more red snapper, and that's awesome, but you know what they want to do to you now?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard. We've got Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I'm just going to beat a dead horse here, and I'm going to go on record and actually -- Don't throw snowballs at me, but I'm going to stump for the science. The science is working, guys. The science is unequivocally working. I took a trip, and, Jack, you probably don't remember this, but I took a trip with Jack Cox, when I was a little green around the ears about the snapper grouper fishery in the U.S. South Atlantic, which we should all remind ourselves is one of the most difficult fisheries in the entire world to manage.

This is the poster child of the U.S. South Atlantic region, and this is one of the most difficult issues that fishery managers have to wrestle with in the entire world. I took a trip with Jack, in 2008, or 2009, and that was my first encounter with the red snapper. I had never seen one before in my life at all, and I had been working at NC State for a few years.

Here we are fast-forward fifteen or sixteen years, and Jack, and Chris Kimrey, and others in the room that fish in Onslow Bay, North Carolina, can testify to the fact, like others in the room that fish in other sections of our region, red snapper have increased tremendously in abundance, and fishery scientists that come up with tools, like descender devices, like venting tools, like circle hooks, and demonstrated that these tools work, but they only work -- Again, I'm beating a dead horse, but they only work if they're used and if those rules in the books are enforced.

We have good science. We have good science, and the MSE is showing that the red snapper is recovering. There's some painful steps I think to undergo, as we've all discussed, to get at the full recovery, but the science is showing that the red snapper is showing the positive effects of whatever we all in the room have done over the last fifteen or twenty years to bring it up to this point.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Paul, and I'm going to acknowledge Chris Kimrey here. I think, alongside of what your point is there, this panel has raised questions about -- Because the red snapper has become more prolific, and we don't know what effects they're having on the other stocks, as far as eating, you know, potential snapper grouper, when they're in their infancy, as fry, and so, I mean, you know, yes, the science is working, you know, but I think there are a lot of

layers to it as well, you know, to really understand why other species are in such decline and red snappers, you know, are prolific. I mean, I think we're being told that the dead discards are why we can't harvest them, and yet the numbers are still there, and, you know, it's tough. I have several people that I want to acknowledge, but go ahead, Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just to follow up there, and thank you for that comment, James, and we're in a conundrum that Gene Huntsman, and some of you might know that name, and he's a retired, a long-retired, fishery biologist at the NOAA lab, and he wrote a paper, in 1999, that -- Essentially, the distillation of the paper is the problem -- The issue that gets red snapper into trouble is they're dumb, and they taste really good, and they're really slow to mature, and so we're seeing signs of that recovery right now, and so we should keep that in mind. They're dumb, and they taste good, and we can't do anything about that. The slow maturity, we can't do anything about that, except we're biding our time, and the MSE shows that, if we bide our time, there's going to be recovery of this species.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Paul. Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: So I'm assuming -- This question is directed at you, Chip, and I would ask you to paraphrase, but, going back to Chris Conklin's comment about the shift from MREP to FES, and what was done to mitigate all that error with the dead discards, and all that stuff, and I remember us talking about it, but I never heard anything afterwards.

DR. COLLIER: So, for red snapper, when we're looking at landings estimates, and we're going to be talking about some of the landings for red snapper coming up in a little bit, the landings from Florida are coming from a specialized survey. That accounts for probably 90 percent of the recreational landings. It's not MRIP.

The discards are coming from MRIP, and what they're talking about with the changes in MRIP is they changed on how they did the survey. In the past, they had used a telephone survey, in order to do interviews of recreational fishermen. They realized that they were getting down to maybe a 2 to 3 percent response rate. Part of that was people were seeing caller ID, and they didn't recognize the number, and so they weren't responding, and so they transitioned over to a mail survey. The mail survey actually has increased uncertainty associated with it, in relation to the previous telephone survey, but the estimates are less biased, according to them.

For most species, what this has resulted in has been an increase in the catches, particularly for the shore-based mode. That can go up -- For some species, that went up ten-times. For private recreational, it did go up a little bit. For charter boats, it's a different survey, and so that's not being affected, as far as the catch estimates for that, and so how is that being incorporated into the stock assessments?

They're incorporating the variance for these different surveys into the projection analysis, into the uncertainty analysis, but, when they're doing the basic fits to it, they're reducing the amount of certainty, to make sure that they can get that model to work first, and then they go back and rerun the model with the full uncertainty, to get that envelope. That's the process that's working. I don't know if that helps you with it, but, unfortunately, the numbers that we have for the recreational fishery are the numbers that we have, and we have to use something for those discards, and that's what's being used for red snapper, is the MRIP, yes.

MR. KIMREY: So no mitigation on error, and just roll with it, is what it sounds like to me, right?

DR. COLLIER: So it depends.

MR. KIMREY: There's an example of bad science. Sorry, and I'm not trying to be, you know, but that's what that is. You know it's wrong, and you still have to roll with it, and so that was all.

DR. COLLIER: So I do want to reiterate that, something like scamp grouper, that is not as common as red snapper, in years where they had unacceptably high error estimates with it, they did do smoothing techniques to fill in. They would take one year, the year previous and the year after, and smooth in between, in order to develop an estimate, but red snapper -- The error estimates for that were acceptable, and so they were under that 50 percent PSE, as recommended by MRIP for use, and so that's what they used in the assessment.

MR. KIMREY: But it will eventually level out, right, since the mail-in survey -- What's the timeframe for it to correct itself, I guess is the question I'm asking.

DR. COLLIER: You know, it all depends on the species, how often it's intercepted, and so let's say something like 2020 was there, with COVID, and a lot of error estimates went up, and so it's -- Hiccups to the system are never going to level out, and then there's the ongoing research that's occurring right now with -- Within FES, it's trying to look at the potential -- Some of the bias associated with the order of the questioning, or the questions that are in the survey, and so they're looking at that right now. There might be new recreational estimates that come up with it, or new recreational estimates that come out, but, for right now, these numbers are the numbers that we have, and those are the ones that we have to use, going forward, unfortunately.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, both Chip and Chris. I know that we're moving in a bit of a zigzag formation here on this topic. I do have several people in queue, and right now it's Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: I'll make it quick, but, yes, basically, if the states could get a handle on how many people are actually going out there, it might show -- Instead of FES, or MRIP, or whatever numbers we're using, you know, ten million recreational anglers, and it could shrink the universe down to a million. Think about what that would do with the discards, and I'm not saying that it's bad science, because I met the guys in MRIP, at the program before, and they're running a great, you know, experiment with the numbers that they have, and they have to use the inputs that they're using, and they're proving that this is, you know, a scientifically-sound method.

I mean, I'm not disputing that, but what I'm saying is we're putting garbage into an equation, and we're getting garbage out of it, and, if we had a much more finite universe of recreational anglers to put into that, it would greatly reduce the discards, and you put that into an assessment, and, wow, the things it could tell us. Then, you know, at the end of the day, it's all about accountability.

We have two sectors of our fishery, the charter/headboat and the commercial, that have to fill out daily reports, and trip reports, and we're held accountable through the Fisheries Service, and then we have this other sector that doesn't have to do anything, which, you know, it's not their fault, but -- I've said this many times before, but if we could -- You know, states have a -- They know how

many deer hunters are in their state, and they know how many waterfowl hunters, dove hunters, and we've tried this at the council before, and the feds kick it back to the states, and the states don't want to do it, and they say the feds need to do it, and it's just kicking it back and forth. We have an amendment in place and it's, or not in place, but we're working on it, or the council' is working on it, and I think they should continue to do that, with a sense of urgency, and make that a priority, so that we don't have to be, you know, backed into a corner to do stuff like this.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Chris, and I really don't mean to jump ahead of anybody, but just, along the lines of what Chris is saying, you know, for hunters to acquire the proper credentials to go out and be able to hunt, there are gun safety programs that they have to, you know, finish, and have certifications for, and there are certain education protocols that are met before you're issued a license. If we did shrink that universe, as Chris is saying, and identify all of the participants in it, you know, maybe some of those basic requirements would help save a lot of fish's lives. I have Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: It's coincidental, but that's exactly where I was headed, with what Chris just said. You know, it's all -- This is directed at the recreational angler for a reason, and not to diminish what's happened to the commercial side, but I've been sitting at this table for going on six years now, and we've talked about recreational permitting since the day I got here, and probably long before, and, for the life of me, I can't figure out why it hadn't happened. It's like you were saying, what you just stated, and we have turkey permits, and we have dove, and duck, and we could do this in the state, or fed, with as simple as a stamp. You could buy it at the post office, like we did in the old days.

I sit on the board with Julia, and this is a product of Amber Van Harten, and there is SciFish in place. That's going to collect the data and we are headed towards a recreational permit, which is going to give us a headcount, but we literally took the data out of that scenario, when this entity owns the data collector. I don't understand why that isn't applied in this. If you're going to ask for this recreational permit, we need the headcount. We need it bad, because we're looking at sitting here closing down the South Atlantic, when we have the tools in our tool chest not to do it.

I've often stated, and I've stated at this table, that I personally do not believe in closures as a management tool. A closure means throwing the white flag. If we're going to manage the species, we need to manage it, not close it, and, if we close this bottom -- Think about it, guys. We've had snapper closed for fifteen years, and when are we going to get it back? I stated, yesterday, that, in my opinion, if it's closed two years, that there'll be a land grab on the coast, and that we won't see commercial docks anymore, and I truly believe that.

In the same time, we could produce something statewide, as simple as a stamp, for twenty-five dollars, and then have a mandatory class to get it, that will show you how to use SciFish. SciFish is a very easy app, by the way, just to collect the data on what you're catching, and that should be a mandatory thing for the rec sector.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Tony. I've got Jack Cox.

MR. COX: Just, you know, it's -- Red snapper is certainly a success story, but a lot of our species -- Most of them are in decline, and the science is telling us that it's because of, you know, the dead discarding, and, you know, that's -- Whether we want to or not, you know, that's what we got to

work around. We can try to figure out other ways, but we've got a serious problem in the fishery, and I hate to say it, but a lot of our fish are in decline, the stocks, and, you know, these guys are -- You know, I hear what everybody's saying, that we've got to have the recreation reporting. We've got to know what's going on, but, also, I think about so many of the fishermen over the years, in public comment, are talking about the sharks, and so there's other factors involved.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jack. Before I acknowledge both Gettys and Scott, I would like to just kind of make sure that we are wrapping up the panel's view of the MSE report, and just kind of make sure that we have our ducks in a row, as far as putting that issue to bed and how we feel about that.

I mean, and, essentially, maybe what we're asked to do here is to say if this is something that we want to continue following this type of model run, or if we want to continue our same knee-jerk reaction, based on best science available, that we always have, and do the same delayed process, until the federal government tells us we can't do it anymore. I mean, it kind of seems like that's where we're at. We're at a threshold, at a crossroads here, where either we're going to be told that there's no fishing, or that we're going to be able to kind of do things the way that they've always been done, and kind of keep as much access as possible, until there are no fish. I don't have the answers, but I think that we need to kind of wrap this portion up. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and it's very obvious that the large majority of the table all shares the same sentiment on how drastic these bottom closures would be, but it seems, to me, that there's a problem with our data gathering, and it used to be landlines, right, on the surveys, and there was a time, in political polling, in the scientific political polling, which is kind of laughable, but, on the scientific surveys, and scientific polling, and political polling, it used to all be landlines too, but I will say, in the past probably eight to ten years, that has shifted, where they're using text messaging, where they're using cell phones, and then our other method of gathering information is in a mail survey.

You know, you pointed out, Chip, 2020, and, I mean, the Postal Service was a mess then, and so we probably lost all kinds of data then, and so it seems, to me, that we're just in an archaic land of data gathering, that other industries, and other science, has gotten in front of, and I think we've really -- If we want to have good science, we've really got to nail down on this data-gathering method, because sending postcards in the mail, and calling a landline -- I mean, I don't even know how many people around the table here have a landline, unless it's at your business, and, you know, the other thing is we have very willing participants on the survey.

It's not people that we have to twist their arm to ask who they want to vote for, or if they're for a property tax increase, or decrease, right, and this isn't a penny tax call. This is people that want to go fishing. These are people that if we said, man, we're going to send you a text, with a legitimate survey, that is going right back to NOAA, I mean, that is how we get people engaged, and that's how we make a difference and have better numbers.

I just -- It feels like we're stuck twenty or thirty years ago in how we're doing things, and, if we're that far behind on the gathering process, then it obviously is going to show more voids in the science, and so I just -- I would encourage this group, and encourage the council, and encourage NOAA, to really examine what are best practices for data gathering, because this is nowhere near that, at all. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Gettys. Scott.

MR. BUFF: Thank you. I've been gone for a while, and I've been in here about five hours, and my head is about to explode, and so I don't even know where to start, but I've been on both sides of this fence, and, just like with Haley, I agree with them. They're head boats, and I've done that, many years, and they're really limited to where they can go, and, if you take those two months out of their season, and that's their margin to break even or lose, and I also agree with Jack. You know, I've been in this for twenty-five years, and fishing today just -- We used to catch 2,000 pounds of fish every week, every boat, and we run six boats, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Where I'm at, you used to be able to walk on commercial fishing boats and shrimp boats. You could just about walk from one boat to the next, and now all that is gone. The fish houses, there were ten or fifteen within five miles, and they're gone, you know, and just like me, and I'm sitting here right now, with all these boats and permits, and a million-dollar piece of property, to beat my head against the wall, to maybe break even, or come out of pocket $50,000 a year, and deal with all of it. I'm here because I care, and just like Tony said, and I think that guy, and I can't remember your name, but all of you -- That guy right there.

At the end of the day, all the waterfront is going to be gone. I was fortunate enough, about five years ago, to buy my property, and I had a struggle just to get it, because there's no programs to help do that, you know, and I think that's something else, and I know all this is completely off-subject, but my head is about to bust, and so, you know, I don't have the answer, but I can tell you that the fishing -- Yes, the red snapper is unbelievable. You can't go nowhere, at our place, without catching all of them you want, but the rest of it -- You know, our bread-and-butter is beeliner and triggerfish, and I never thought I would see the day that we couldn't catch ten boxes of triggerfish and ten boxes of beeliners, but we're lucky now if the boats come home, for five to seven days, with ten or twelve boxes of fish, and I don't know if those fish are migrating, and I don't know if they're overfished.

I don't have the answer, but I can tell you that, for what we've seen in the last four or five years, that -- It's just like Jack says, and nobody wants to admit it. You know, I've done this for twenty-five years and you could go take those two-day trips, and now there are four-day trips, and then they’re six-day trips, and the bottom line is the fishery -- There is a problem. You know, some of them, yes, it's great, and the red snapper is everywhere, but -- I don't have an answer, you know, and I've been on both sides of this, and I don't know what the right answer is, but you're dealing with people's livelihoods at this table, and that needs to be thought about as well. Thanks.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Scott, that's much appreciated, and, honestly, I can tell you that none of that was off-topic. I think that, you know, how this organism lives, and breathes, is everything you just mentioned, and we can all appreciate that. I’ve got David, and then John.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. James, I agree with you that and, you know, that old saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result, and we're having the same conversation. This is my second run on the AP, and, when I first started, we were having this conversation about rec permitting, and rec reporting, and whatnot, and this is just a very little bit of history, and, when we first started, we were talking about rec reporting, and how the rec

sector needed to be accountable, and everybody on the AP agreed, for the most part, but there was some pushback.

Then it was kind of negotiated down to at least some sort of rec permit, just as Chris had said, to at least identify the universe of anglers. It was kicked up to the council. The council, at some point, thought that it wasn't -- Or had said that it wasn't a priority, and I don't mean that in as negative a way as it sounds, but it's just there's only so many things they could cover in a day, and that wasn't one of the priorities, at the time.

Then, a couple of years ago, everybody's hair was on fire, and they started up the rec permitting question again, because, of course, the species -- Or at least I thought everybody's hair was on fire, and now it appears that our whole body is on fire, and so now we're going down this road again, and it is a bit frustrating that we saw this coming, quite a while ago, from the rec sector anyway, with reporting and accountability, and we didn't do anything then.

I do have a question for Chip. With the MSE, can it look at, and I don't know if this is something done straight through MSE, or if that's just about stock size and biomass and whatnot, but can it also look at economic impact, what a closure would do? Are there enough inputs there to take a look at that?

DR. COLLIER: In an ideal world, it could look at that, but I don't know if we have the location information to really narrow that down, either from the recreational side or from the commercial side.

MR. MOSS: Gotcha, thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, David. I got John Polston, and then Haley.

MR. POLSTON: You guys were talking, a little while ago, about retention versus discard, and, just to that point, I was thinking, you know, the last meeting that we had, they had the graph up there, and off the -- From Jacksonville to the Cape, they're saying we have major, major problems with black sea bass production. They're not saying it's overfished, because they know it's not, because the numbers are not showing it. It's not overfished, but there's no fish there.

I think, and I think a lot of the guys in here that see it, and James hit on it, and called it fry or whatnot, but fish depredation, fish eating fish, and there's no question that red snapper eat baby sea bass. You guys see it when you charter the boats and stuff, and it's a major problem because the red snapper, okay, from Jacksonville to the Cape -- They catch more there than anywhere else on the east coast. I mean, that's by the graph they showed us last time, and that's also the area that we're having problem with black sea bass, the exact same area.

That's not coincidence, and so my point is, if you're having discards, and that's all you're counting, versus retention, if you were to get some of those snapper out of the water, you would have less fish depredation with, for example, the black sea bass. It's just a point that could possibly be pushed, to push the retention, versus discard, I mean, in my thoughts, you know, so that's -- I just wanted that on the record.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It's kind of the reverse domino effect, you know, and you're kind of standing them back up by knocking other ones down. I think that's kind of where you're going with that. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. An interesting point that was just made about the economic impact. Just speaking for the headboats, and our SEFHIER requirements, we use a program called VESL, and, if you're not familiar with it, we have to report the number of every single day, every trip, every day, the number of passengers, the number of paying passengers, how much it costs, how much fuel you burned, your coordinates of where you fished, what the price of fuel was, what you caught, what you released, everything.

You know, it's just hard for me to wrap my head around how we have certain sectors with all of this accountability, and the information that we need to make these decisions, but not across the board. So it's an option, because we have to do it. It's there, and then I guess a question, for the MSE that we're talking about here, and please forgive my ignorance, because this is a genuine question. The presentation that we saw yesterday, is that like a subcontractor? Is that -- Is that exclusively who is giving us the reports? Is it just one company, or entity?

DR. COLLIER: Adrian works with Blue Matter Science, who is a contractor. They are using the stock assessments developed by NOAA, through the SEDAR process, in order to inform the analysis. Does that help?

MS. STEPHENS: Yes, absolutely, and would it be a consideration to, you know, maybe send out reports to other agencies, or other parts of the country, just to, you know, see if it's consistent, because it feels like we're putting a lot of eggs just in one basket, and taking what they say, and I don't know.

DR. COLLIER: The way that that analysis is being developed is it has a technical team to provide comments and try to get the best information going into that model, and so the other part of it is this group here is the kind of the stakeholder advisors for it, you know, providing them guidance on what management levers should be triggered, which one is going to be best. It's hard to know what's going to be best as you say, hey, think about this, and this is what we want to protect the most, and so that's what was presented. This is the first stab at it, and it's going to come back to this group, and get more comments, as it's being refined, and things are going to change.

It's going to be used as an evaluation technique, and then the final part of it is it's going to be reviewed by the SSC, to make sure it's based on the best information that's available. It's not necessarily going to go through a regional review or anything like that, and we don't have the funds to send it out for that kind of review, but we feel that the SSC is capable of reviewing it and providing good feedback.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. That does answer my question, and I guess I was just curious if -- You know, I'm assuming it's like a computer model, and matrix, a make-believe world, that all of our make-believe info gets put into, and if there was other make-believe models that we can maybe try.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, both Haley and Chip. You know, listening to this, and kind of -- If we're going to be brainstorming, and really kind of redefining what the box is, and what's

inside of it and what's outside of it, I can't help but think about, for the private recreational sector, you know, excluding commercial and for hire and all of those components, headboat, if we were to do a clean-slate approach with the rec sector, private rec, and basically said that you can't go fishing unless you check these boxes.

The boxes are, you know, your fishing licenses, your ability to use descending devices and venting tools, and having the knowledge to participate in the fishery, both on a state level and a federal level, and you have to be open to some sort of reporting, whether it's like a mandatory survey, you know, once a year, once a quarter, and, if you don't check those boxes and you didn't report any landings, you don't get renewed the next year.

It's just that simple. You can't just say I want to go fishing, but I didn't go fish. You know, if we did take a clean-slate approach, and then plug that into the MSE computer model run, you know, what that might look like for the recreational sector for red snapper and black sea bass and gag grouper, and I know that what I'm saying is not popular, because it really cuts the legs out of a lot of -- You know, out from underneath a lot of participation, and a lot of money, but, if we're here asking the questions, you know, could we generate some sort of report on what that -- You know, a model run on what that might look like if we did make those requirements in the private rec sector. I've got Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: James, that's literally exactly what I had written down, and so the universe is already defined for the professionals. We've got the headboats, we got the commercials, we got permits, and we know what to do, and so that's a whole other animal that's already in place, and so, you know, if we're going down this road, and looking at closures for timeframes, there should damn well be an exemption, or something, for the people who are already in there, who have already been vetted, and who already have the permits in place. We should not be cut out and eliminated.

Literally, like Scott said, like we will be fricking eliminated, if we have a long-term closure on the commercial or headboat side. The rec side, we've always tried to work together. I mean, you know, with the way things are coming down, you know, it looks like there has to be some type of division, to keep some fishing going, and then we need to let the recreational side catch up and plug those numbers in, and, with that being said, I'm not saying, you know, you can't go fishing.

The recreational side, let's face it, you got less than six people that can do multiple styles of fishing. They can troll, and they can do a whole bunch of different stuff, whereas, you know, commercial guys, headboat guys, hey, we got to target certain fish, and certain species, that are in demand, and that's just the reality of the business we're in.

I don't know how it'll go, or how it'll play out, or if Scott and I will still be in business in two years, but, you know, I mean, I'm just laying it on the table, that, you know, the universe is already defined, and there's a set of that universe that already has the knowledge, and the ability, to make things happen for the good.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Cameron. I do have David and Tony here, but I believe Mike wants to say a couple of things.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to give a little bit of perspective on this process, and kind of the aftermath of the follow-up, what happens with the MSE, in terms of how it fits into management. What you saw, with the presentation yesterday, was kind of the first set of results, and an MSE -- It runs different simulation models. It puts out different scenarios, management under these different scenarios, and what it could look like. The scenarios that we plug into the MSE can change, and Chip is taking, you know, notes right now. I'm guessing Adrian is probably still listening to this conversation, and taking some notes, in terms of how can we change, you know, adjust these scenarios.

What happens, as you run these types of processes, is you start out by defining your limits, your extremes, and so you see there's a goal that we are legally required, that the council and NMFS management is legally required to hit, in terms of getting the biomass to reach this point, from a Magnuson perspective, and so what type of measure gets it across that line, and that doesn't mean that that measure is exactly what's going to work, but you're finding out what's that boundary. How do you set that boundary, and then, from that point, once you've set your boundaries, then you can go back into it, and you can make tweaks. You can say, well, we have a cumulative effect from this change, plus this change, plus this change, and that may not be one single extreme change.

It may be an accumulation of three small changes, and so I do want to put that perspective out there, that it doesn't necessarily translate into management of one giant change. It could be several things that are coming in as a package together that each contribute towards this overall end goal. I just wanted to put that out there, because I definitely hear there's a lot of concern around the table, and that's what happens when you see the extreme figures, but the extreme figures are to define these are the boundaries, that this is the goal that we're required to achieve, and this is -- You know, if we took the extreme case, this is what would get us there.

Now the next step is we kind of refine this a little bit more to figure out, okay, what can actually work, from a management perspective, to also get us to that type of goal, and so there are definitely more conversations that will be had. This is not the end final. We would still -- If anything were to change, we would have to go through a whole amendment process, and so keep in mind this is iterative, and we will continue to have more conversations along this line. This is not the final say in any of these discussions.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike. I do think that that does help. I just can't help but to ask and, you know, with making those changes, you know, and let's say, you know, we have our extremes, and then we set out to make changes. How do we then know what those changes are going to look like, without having time going by and still coming back to the same way we've always done things is, where we take a look at, you know, who is producing what, and who is releasing what, and kind of base the management on those figures.

I think we still come back to the way that it's always been done, even when we make these extreme model runs, and we have these projections, and outlines, of what it could look like under these scenarios, and there are still some major factors that aren't being included in there, like population density on the coastline, you know, and what that looks like has an effect on our fishery, from Florida all the way to the Carolinas, you know, and so the models are great, and having the definitions of the extremes is great, but we still can't do our fisheries management job without seeing and knowing what's being caught, and what's being killed, and all of those things.

I mean, I think that, if we're allowed to continue as fisheries management, and we still have our jobs, essentially, we still have to have the best data around. We have to do better with that, because none of this is going to mean anything, in my opinion. I think we had David.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wasn't sure if that was necessarily a question, but yes, I completely agree, from the standpoint of we need to continue working towards better data. We need to -- You know, even the data collection programs that we have, getting more, I guess, refined detail from those data collection programs, reducing the uncertainty that surrounds our estimates. We're always going to be working with estimates. None of these numbers are ever going to be perfect, but what we can do is we can reduce uncertainty, and there are different types of things that can be done to do to achieve that end, things like defining a universe for a recreational program.

A lot of a lot of the engagement that the council does with the public is also one of those avenues that encourages people to participate and possibly contribute to those data programs. When you have more people that are contributing to things like MRIP surveys, instead of throwing them in the trash, that's one of those ways that the uncertainty gets reduced, because you get more numbers. If you have -- If you try to come up with an estimate with ten numbers, versus coming up with an estimate with a hundred numbers, the one based on a hundred numbers is probably going to give you something more accurate, and so those are different avenues that that can be worked on, and certainly other estimation techniques -- Yes, all that is getting worked on in the meantime.

Right now, the MSE was establishing a framework that we can plug numbers in, and we can see different scenarios, and we can look at these projections in different ways and, moving forward, the plan is to potentially be using this in more formats. We can plug in newer data, as we go through future rounds of this, but for this round, for what we have to work with right now, that's the assessment that we have. There will be another assessment, and that's actually a future agenda item that we're going to need to get to today, but there's an assessment coming up for red snapper that that you all will continue to have some conversations about, and so I wanted to point that out.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Just to temper expectations a little bit too, when it comes to the rec reporting stuff that we've talked about, and I know I said that the council didn't see it as a priority, but, even when they did, and they were discussing it, and Chris alluded to this earlier, and it needs to be said again, but there was a lot of volleyball back and forth between who's going to do it, the feds or the state, and blah, blah, blah, and it's really -- As I understand it anyway, it's still in that limbo. Like they have talked about it at the council level, but they still can't figure out who is going to administer this, and it's kind of, you know, that Spider-Man meme of everybody pointing in a different direction, and they can't figure things out. As we continue to discuss this, remember that too, that, even throwing it out there, they still can't figure out where it's going to come from.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. I got Tony, and then John.

MR. CONSTANT: Thank you. I want to point out that, first off, the recreational sector does not want permitting, I mean, but, sitting here and looking at what we're looking at, and everybody that is rec here is promoting -- They're saying, you know, we need to do this, and I'm saying that,

sitting at this table, you can see the obvious need for the recreational side to have ownership, but it is the path to the solution, and it's very well in this game right now. It needs to be addressed.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Tony. John.

MR. POLSTON: My question actually is for Mike. I appreciate the fact that you pointed out we maybe we don't need to do one big thing, and that a lot of little things could add up to get where we need to be. I appreciate the fact that you said that, but my question is, by what I understood, and what I've heard about the lawsuit and amendment that's going to be coming down, if this isn't accomplished by the first of next year, and are we not basically out of time? That's my question.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So those -- What you're speaking of is the secretarial amendment that has been that's been directed for the agency, from National Marine Fisheries Service, and that is separate from what the council does. That is not a council amendment. That is something that's being that's being enacted directly by the agency, via Department of Commerce, and like that is that is something separate from the council process.

At this point, the council itself -- Like the council does not know what will be included in that amendment. I know one of the things that was pointed out, relative to Reg Amendment 35, that was considered by the council, and it was approved, and then it was rescinded, and it didn't go into place, and one of the big key differences between what the council was trying to do at that point and what the agency is required to do by their directive is the council was trying to address overfishing of red snapper, whereas the agency is directed to end overfishing of red snapper.

That's a big difference between -- You know, just two words are different, but it's a big difference between those things, addressing it, meaning reduce it, you know, reduce the amount of fishing mortality, as opposed to end overfishing. That means that there is a defined line that the agency is going to need to get under, from their perspective, and there's a lot of -- There are a lot of questions, at this point, until we get a little bit more information about what is being considered in that secretarial amendment, but that is something that the council will be updated on. It's not something that the council controls.

That is something that's going through the agency, and so I don't have a whole lot of answers, as far as what that's going to look like, but I do know that though that piece of information, of the address overfishing, reduce overfishing, versus ending overfishing, is one of the key differences that got brought up in the September council meeting.

MR. POLSTON: Thank you, but I guess the point I'm making is if -- Let's just say, for the devil's advocate, if the agency says there is going to be no more fishing, because you haven't ended overfishing, and how are we ever going to know when we get back to the point, which I believe James said before, and how will we ever know, if nobody can't fish anymore, if the overfishing has been ended?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, I know that there will still be fishery-independent surveys that collect data. Those will still run, and I imagine our other data collection programs, and I can't give a definitive answer, just because I don't know it, of all the programs that would be running concurrently in that management scenario, and what that management scenario would look like, and so I don't have a great answer for that just, because I don't know it at this point.

MR. POLSTON: Well, thank you for what you said.

DR. COLLIER: Just to build on that, the MSE is the type of framework that would be used to analyze, to make sure that you're not going to cause overfishing, and so, if some actions go in place, then we have to determine what actions can be taken after that to make sure that overfishing does not occur again, and so the MSE is a simulation framework that could that could help guide new management decisions as things are changing.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, gentlemen. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: A quick question for Mike. Do we know, and you might have already hit on this, and I apologize if you did, but do we know what the conversion rate, or the success rate, is on the mail pieces that we've been sending out for survey, or the council has been sending out for survey? I mean, do we know what the discard rate is of the of the survey?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Are you speaking about the MRIP survey?

MR. BRANNON: Do we have any concrete data on how many people are getting the piece of mail in their mailbox, filling it out, and sending it back in, in comparison to the whole universe that we're sending it to?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would have to check with MRIP, and so that's not a council program. That's National Marine Fisheries Service, and that is run through the Office of Science and Technology, and so I could check with the MRIP program, and see if that's a piece of information that they have, but I don't know it off the top of my head, just because I don't work with that program.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, guys. Scott.

MR. BUFF: I lost my train of thought a while ago, when I was talking, but where I started at is what plays a part in the changes that's been made since this was done? I think you said it had been six years, and so how does all of that account in where we're at today? That's something that I would like to know, and, also, I wanted to touch on what Jack said too about the shark issue. The sharks are horrendous.

I don't know where I read it at, but, a couple of years ago, and I think it was the *National Fisherman,,* but it said all the protected species in the world eat more than the ACL was in one year and one day, and that's pretty hard to believe, and so that was printed in the *National Fisherman* a few years ago, and so I would just like to know, you know, how that plays a part in where we're at today, the changes that we're trying to make now. How does all the changes, in the last five or six years, play to where we're at now, as far as what we're using for data?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I think Chip could probably answer that the best.

DR. COLLIER: I don't know about that *National Fisherman* quote, and so I'll look that up. Then, as far as the simulations with the MSE, you know, it's based on the last stock assessment, with

projections going forward, and the goal of this is to compare all these different alternatives. It wasn't necessarily to get the most up-to-date information right now.

We are going to update it, as new stock assessments are completed and we get new management and catch level estimates, and so those pieces of information will be updated, but it's definitely not based on last year's data. We do look at trends, in species like red snapper. We're seeing increased trends, but, for black sea bass, we're still seeing very low abundance of black sea bass in the trend analysis, and so these species can be going in different directions, and we're going to incorporate as much information as we can, and the latest information, where it's possible.

MR. BUFF: On this reporting stuff too, like Haley said a while ago, we do two reports every week for everything we do, and plus we've got an annual vessel report on income, outgo, anything we spent, and plus we take observers now, probably every three months, for every boat. It's way more than it used to be, and so I know, on any Saturday, you go by the boat ramp, and the boat ramps are packed full, and look, I'm not blaming recreational, and so don't take this the wrong way, because I've done both, and I do both, but, at the end of the day, those ramps are packed full now, and I don't know how you get that data. I don't have the answer, but, you know, the commercial side has to report everything that we do, state and federal, and so somewhere we got to get that information, somehow, some way.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, guys. I've got Gettys, and then Jack.

MR. BRANNON: I'll be quick. Just kind of following up on my inquiry with Mike, and this is interesting. I went to NOAA's site and pulled up the MRFSS participation time series, to pull the participation numbers, and I double-checked this, and triple-checked it, and so I'm not reading this wrong. On the chart on the website, the earliest year you can find the data from is 1981. The most current year that you can pull participation numbers from, on this particular part of the survey, is 2016, and so, publicly available on NOAA's website, the latest that we can pull some of the numbers that Mike I was referring to looks to be 2016.

DR. COLLIER: So just a correction on that. That's the old -- MRFSS is the very old survey. There is data, participation data, through 2023, and 2024 is up on the website.

MR. BRANNON: When you when you click on it, and maybe this is just something they need to take down, but when you click on "participation survey", on the main website, it takes you to that still.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so we still use, unfortunately, MRFSS for tracking some of our species, and, just to -- I'm trying to remember the actual response rate for the mail survey, but it's somewhere between 20 and 40 percent. I feel like it's around 25 to 30 percent, and so it's in line with other mail-based surveys. FWC is using a mail-based survey for their recreational estimates. They're getting slightly higher than what's being observed in the federal survey, but it's still around 30 percent, or maybe 35 percent, and so it seems to be an effective way to get it, but, yes, you're right that the response rate isn't 100 percent, and so it could be it could be improved.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. Jack.

MR. COX: Mike, a while ago, you were saying something about just about everything that's done here is done in estimates. I don't know if you were talking about the commercial fishery, but, for twenty-plus years, we've been highly accountable, just like Scott was saying, on the dealer and federal reporting on the fishermen side, and so that should not be estimates. That should be, you know, real data that -- You know, we wouldn't be having a lot of these conversations today, if ten years ago, if we had recreational reporting, that the council was trying to do at that time, and here we are, ten years later, still trying to figure out what's going on.

On the shark conversation, I think only one time the council has asked HMS, or sent a letter talking about, you know, the shark issues we're having in this fishery. I don't know if HMS ever responded to that letter, but, you know, as much conversation there is about sharks on the South Atlantic, the council needs to do more, to get some kind of response from HMS, to get more fishermen fishing for sharks.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Jack. I think that, if we can put the final touches on the way the panel feels about MSE, maybe we can jump into today's agenda.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you all for those comments. It was good. I'm glad we clarified everything. It was a great discussion, and we're going to do our best to get all this stuff incorporated into it, and you'll be seeing it again. There's going to be a final report likely presented to -- Or there's going to be a final report presented to the council in December. That's not going to be the final item. That's not going to be the final thing we do with MSE. It's going to be updated on the inputs, but, as far as a contract, we have to have a final report, and that's what it's going to be. From there, we're going to continue working, and bring it back to this group, and get their input.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Chip. I think I'm going to turn it over to Mike, and we're going to do a quick update here, and then we'll take a short break.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This should not take too long. This is just going over the update on recent amendments for the Snapper Grouper FMP. You have a document in your briefing book. It is Attachment 4, and, for a lot of these, Jessica kind of hit on the recent developments for several of these items, and so I'm not going to go over necessarily all of what Jessica covered in her update yesterday. I'm going to be focusing more on what's been completed within the last six months since you last met.

Right now, there's still --The joint commercial logbook amendment, that was submitted prior to your last meeting, that's going through the NMFS rulemaking process right now. It hasn't been implemented yet, but it's working through that process. That is past the council at this point, and so NMFS is working through that, to get it implemented. That's not as much an update from the last six months, but just letting you know that that's still going.

Amendment 48, modernizing the wreckfish ITQ program, hat was approved in June of 2024, and, if you take a look at that attachment, Attachment 4, there's a summary of the final preferred actions from the council. I'm not going to read through all of those. You all have talked about those at various times throughout AP meetings, but it's just kind of closing the loop on some of these amendments. That's what the council put forward to the Fisheries Service to be implemented, and, as you can see for wreckfish, one of the reasons why I'm not going to read it is because there were a lot of actions included in that amendment.

Next. Amendment 46, and Jessica gave the update yesterday. In June, we had feedback from the advisory panels, and some further discussion that happened in September 2024, talking about the MRIP revisioning. The next time that the council will discuss Amendment 46 is going to be at the December council meeting, and so you can be sure to tune in. I know that's one of those topics that came up a lot within the last discussion, talking about some of the future management actions.

Amendment 55 was approved in September. Similar to the wreckfish amendment, you can take a look and see what the preferred actions were that were selected by the council for that amendment. That one dealt with scamp, yellowmouth grouper and the group of shallow-water groupers that -- We kind of colloquially called them the OSASWGs, the other shallow-water grouper complex.

They kind of had to get respecified, because yellowmouth grouper was getting taken out of that group, and it created a new complex of yellowmouth grouper and scamp together. but those other shallow-water groupers are your rock hind, red hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, and so it's just defining that complex as well.

Next, the council also approved Regulatory Amendment 36. This dealt with gag recreational -- Gag and black grouper recreational vessel limits, as well as on-demand gear for black sea bass pots. You can see the summary of the actions right there. There were only two actions in that amendment. That one was a bit shorter, but you can note what those final actions were.

One of the things that did kind of come out of the discussions within that amendment was that the council would be looking a bit more into how the recreational vessel limits that have been talked about for several species and how those apply to headboats, vessels that are carrying more than your standard six-passenger, or six-person, type of group, and so that's being handled kind of in a more general discussion, separate from that amendment process, but it's also not just looking at gag and black grouper. It would be kind of looking at a more general policy for snapper grouper fishing, and staff -- Right now, we're working on a report to take a look at at least some of the initial data surrounding that type of issue.

The next snapper grouper -- This should be Amendment 56, and not Reg Amendment 56. That's the black sea bass assessment response. You'll hear more about that tomorrow, and so I'm not going to dive into that. We also have the recreational for-hire limited entry amendment. Jessica touched on that one.

The SEFHIER improvement amendment is one that I do want to highlight in this update, because we are looking for members for the Ad Hoc For-Hire Reporting AP. We would be looking for for-hire stakeholders that could participate, and give some information, on how compliance with the SEFHIER program can be improved, and so we would be looking for anybody that would be interested in volunteering for that. Please follow up either with me, or with John Hadley, kind of in a break, or following the meeting, and we can get you -- We can talk to you about the process of applying for that AP.

That is all I have, as far as the snapper grouper amendments, kind of the work that the council has done in between the last few meetings, and what staff is working on in the background related to the fishery management plan, and I can take any questions that folks have.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike. I think, for almost all of the stuff that we went over just now, that the AP has weighed-in heavily on all of those topics, and hopefully the council knows exactly where we stand on them, and then we can move forward in the best possible way. Anybody have a comment, or question? It doesn't look like it, and so, Mike, thank you for those updates, and I guess we'll take a short break. We'll resume no later than 10:20.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, everybody, for returning to your seats. I'm going to hand it over to Chip, who's going to do the red snapper fishery performance report.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so this is the similar app that we provide you all for the fishery performance report, where we try to give a summary of the information that's available. This morning, as I was thinking about this information, some additional ideas popped in my head, but, luckily, Wally is going to be given a presentation later today, and so he has incorporated, in that, some different, some additional years of information for the indices of abundance, and, also, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center has created this new app called SEAFiSh, and that provides additional indices of abundance, and so, if you want additional information, that will be available.

We're going to start off on red snapper today. In order to operate this app, you just click on the link that's incorporated into the overview, and you should be -- It should pull up for you. You can select which species. I only have two species on here right now, and I'll go to the landing page. This is what the landing page will look like. This is the previous red snapper fishery performance report, and then we're going to click over to the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel.

The first one that comes up is just looking at some life history information, and so how do red snapper grow, and they are a pretty fast-growing fish. By age-five, we're looking at about a twenty-seven-inch fish, and so that is a fairly fast-growing fish. We've got a length-weight equation, if you want to convert the length of the fish to the weight, and we also have information on how quickly they mature, and so I said about a twenty-seven-inch fish is a five-year-old, and you're seeing about 100 percent of those are mature, and so they are maturing at an early age. Even at the earliest size, or the smallest size, here, there is a portion of them that are mature.

So going from the life history information to the abundance information, and this is the abundance information that was used in SEDAR 73, I think. I'm sorry, and I'm getting the numbers confused for all the different stock assessments that are going on, but this was the most recent red snapper stock assessment, and so this information was pulled from it. You can see the chevron trap index, where, basically, as you all have been saying, you're seeing a tremendous increase in the overall abundance of red snapper through time.

There's also a commercial index that was incorporated into it, as well as, down over here to the left, a headboat index. Those two indices stopped around 2009. That's when the fishery was essentially closed back then, and so it's hard to track an index of abundance based on landings if you're not allowed to land the fish, and so that's why those two indices of abundance were ended.

We also have a headboat discard index, and that's looking at fish less than -- I believe it was twenty inches, in order to be able to incorporate all the fish over time, and so you can see the discard index

for the headboat, and then, finally, we have this video index. That's the most recent part that was added into the fishery-independent survey, and what they do is they attach a video onto the traps, of these Chevron traps, and they created index of abundance for those, and, once again, you're seeing a pretty substantial increase in red snapper through the time series.

Landings information, for this, you can click on -- It usually starts on commercial first, but you can click on commercial, recreational, or combined, depending on what you would like to look at, and you can see the trend in landings. In the last few years, you can see that the landings have been capped for the commercial fishery. It's basically meeting the ACL, and that's when it's closing. We also have landings by state, in orange, or red, depending on how well you can differentiate colors, and I'm not very good at it, but the vast majority of the landings are coming from Florida.

Then I have number of commercial releases. This hasn't been updated since the previous stock assessment, and so I do need to incorporate those, but the discards in the commercial fishery -- We're only looking at around 20,000 fish, and so it's not many releases reported in that.

On the recreational side, we have landings, once again, and I will fix this Y-axis, so it's more readable, but, if you go down here, this is the exact same information, and just separated out by state, and you can see the recreational landings, in 2019, were around 500,000 pounds. In 2020, it was around 300,000, or 400,000, pounds, and then dropped off a little bit more in 2022.

In comparison to the 20,000 fish I was reporting on for the commercial side, we're looking at three million fish on the recreational side, and so it's a very different estimate of discards in the two different sectors, and then, if you want to look at when the fishery occurs, when landings generally occur, you're seeing the spike in July and August, and, as you all know, that's when this fishery now opens, and so that's when we should expect to see landings, and so, even though this graph is here, and I do it for all species, it's not that informative for red snapper.

We do have revenue and price, maybe. We only have it for the commercial fishery, and so, if it comes up blank like that, that's because I had recreational clicked, but what you're seeing, over time, is a general increase in the ex-vessel dollar value for red snapper, and you also see the adjusted price for red snapper.

Then we also have data on economic impacts. This is for the commercial fishery, and you can see it's basically been increasing over time, as well as for the recreational. You're seeing a decrease in sales, we're seeing a decrease in income, and then a decrease in number of jobs. With that, that's the information I have, that we pulled together for these fishery performance reports. If there's additional pieces of information that you find that you think would be useful, please let me know, and I can try to incorporate that information, but I'm going to hand this over to Mike, so he can go through the questions for the fishery performance report.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Chip. Switching over to the fishery performance report questions, and this is in your briefing book, and I believe it’s Attachment 5, and so there is a stock assessment coming up for red snapper. That is SEDAR 90. That's going to be getting underway kind of towards the end of this year, the beginning of next year, and we'll go through that process.

This assessment is going to incorporate a few different new forms of data. Probably the one that has the most, I guess, attention towards it is the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program. That is kind of the analog, on our side of the coast, of something similar that was run in the Gulf, which was the Great Red Snapper Count, and so the Red Snapper Research Program -- The sampling for that, I believe, finished up, or is finishing up, this year, and that information is going to be incorporated into that assessment.

Part of the assessment process is what we're going to be working on today, the fishery performance report. This is the opportunity for the advisory panel, representing the stakeholders, to give some information that will go to the assessment panelists, as well as the SSC and the council, so that all of this information can be incorporated into the assessment considerations and any follow-up management that would happen after the stock assessment.

The last fishery performance report was completed ahead of the SEDAR 73 stock assessment, and so I do want to note where that is within that app. If you click on the fishery performance report app, you'll see the red snapper FPR from 2020. You can click this button right here, if you have Adobe to download the PDF, and you can take a look at what was said at that time.

In the past, we've kind of looked at some of those previous answers, and, you know, seeing if anything has changed. For red snapper, there have been a lot of a lot more conversations, surrounding that species, than there have been for other species in the snapper grouper FPR, or in the snapper grouper management plan, and so I figured, for this, -- It is an update, but we are going to take a look at the full suite of questions and see what can be -- What discussions are generated concerning what the fishery looks like from you all's perspective.

The way that this works is I'll pose several categories of questions, and you don't necessarily need to go through every individual one of these questions, but what these are meant to be are discussion prompts. What do you think the fishery looks like from the perspective of, for example, Number 2, from the perspective of fishing behavior, or catch levels that you're observing, and note, for red snapper especially, we're talking catch, and not necessarily landings. We're talking about landings, caught and released fish, and all of that is brought into the discussion. Then there are some questions, within each of those categories, that can possibly prompt some discussion that we can maybe fill out.

These questions have been looked at by the analytical team for the stock assessment, and so we normally have a standard set of questions, and we send it to the assessment scientists, and we say is there any type of additional detail that is red-snapper-specific, or any other -- Whatever species we're talking about, but is there any detail that's red-snapper-specific that's not captured within these questions that you are interested in knowing, so you can consider that when you're developing the assessment model, looking at the data, all of those things.

The additions to the standard set of questions are those questions that are highlighted in yellow, and so those were asked by the assessment scientists. Those probably are some that we would like to get a little bit more direct answer, because they don't have necessarily the -- They don't have the information, at their disposal, to address those questions, which is why they pose them to you all. That being said, we can start kind of going through the process of these questions.

The first step is kind of an overall have there been substantial changes to the red snapper fishery since 2019, which would be the terminal year of the last stock assessment, and, if so, can you put a time and what was the change that you observed within that time period?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay, Mike. Great. I think that we'll just kind of go down this like a list, and, if anybody wants to comment on any of these particular questions, based on what they're seeing on the water, I think now is the time to do that. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: In the Lower Keys, and I'm sure the Middle Keys also, you know, we continue to see more red snapper in our area. Then I wanted to ask you a question, Mike. When we give you statistics like this, and we've been doing this for a while, does that go into the analytics? I mean, how does that figure in, because, if it does, and we've been doing this kind of question-and-answer thing, it just doesn't -- It seems a little off that we keep coming up with science that doesn't suit us very well.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so this isn't the only piece of information. It's one of many pieces of information, and the job of the assessment analytical team is to look at the collective, all of the information, and to develop the best model that they're able to develop in portraying what the population would look like, and so this is one piece of many pieces of data, and I can't necessarily explain decisions made by an assessment panel from, you know, the previous assessments, but the way that this works in is when --

Especially when they're looking at the data sources, if they see something like an outlying data point, or something that, from a numbers perspective, looks off, this is one of the places that they'd be able to see a written record of this is what the stakeholders said that they're seeing. There may be some explanation for that off data point, or that weird trend that they're seeing. There may be something within the fishery that would explain that, and then they can adjust appropriately.

I do also want to point out that there is a pretty integral role that the stakeholder observers can play in the SEDAR process, and I know several of you have participated in SEDAR processes, as stakeholders, and I definitely would encourage you. I think the representatives for the data workshop are Andy Piland and Paul Nelson, but there will be other -- There are other steps of the process.

I can't remember who is participating at each step for red snapper, but, as you participate in the SEDAR processes -- I really encourage you that, if you are one of the stakeholder observers, to please show up for the meetings, and please, if you see something that looks weird, even if it's a question that you think sounds like a, you know, a question you may not want to ask, ask the questions within the assessment process, because that will make that will make the people in the room -- That will make the assessment scientists either explain what has -- You know, what's been done, so that you can get perspective from what they're seeing, or maybe they see something and get an explanation from you that might help inform that model a little bit more.

That is the place where there can be, within the room of getting these models built, some input from the fishermen. That's the whole reason why the stakeholder observers are in the SEDAR process, and so I definitely would encourage participation in that way, as folks are assigned to those roles.

MR. GOMEZ: Thank you, Mike. I just want you all to know I'm not trying to pick on scientists. I'm just looking out for my industry. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard. I think that, you know, consistencies in what we bring to the table here, and, if we're not bringing any new changes to what we're seeing on the water, and if we can continually say we're seeing more red snapper, more red snapper, more red snapper, then, ultimately, in the next assessment, barring some sort of outlying event, then that next assessment should reflect that, and our consistencies, and what we say here, or at least I'm hoping. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: In the Carolina waters, where I'm fishing most of the time, in the last five or six years, I guess we're still seeing substantial thirty-six-inch snapper, on a regular basis, but I am seeing a lot more juvenile, and I'm calling a fifteen-inch to twenty-inch snapper is a juvenile, in our waters, because they're they used to be rare, but they're abundant.

I think the bigger change that I've noticed is the triggerfish have been lesser and less, because they're more targeted. We still have vermilion, but I feel like that's going to dwindle soon as well, because, between -- The recreational angler is targeting the other species, because they have to target something.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Tony. Go ahead, Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: This is not an observation, but a question, and maybe Wally, and the rest of the crowd that does the chevron trap survey, can help answer this, but it's interesting to me, and please help validate this or not, but, at least for the Carolinas, even though the red snapper index has been increasing over recent years, it doesn't seem like there's a range expansion to more shallow depths on the shelf, at least in North Carolina. I'm not observing that, and maybe Chris, and Jack Cox, can weigh-in as well, but that strikes me as something that maybe we should consider adding to the list that Mike is developing right now.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I see hands all over the place. I think I saw David and Cameron and Randy.

MR. MOSS: Anecdotally, range expansion, I would say that it is occurring, and, James, you could actually probably speak to this too, but I was down in Marathon, a couple of weeks ago, and we were trying to catch vermi, and we're catching red snapper, on some of the vermi spots that we usually target.

Then I know, just north of me, and so I'm in Palm Beach County, and, kind of at the north end of Palm Beach County, into St. Lucie and Martin County, the Fort Pierce area, they're catching them in fairly shallow, at least shallower than what used to be, and so, you know, it used to be like 180 feet ish, and now it's in shallower, and so it's hard to quantify that you're seeing more of them, because there were so many a few years ago, and there are still so many, and so it's like is it 100, or 105, and I don't know, but probably more.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'm waiting for my ball of yellowtail to turn red. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, you know, thirty years ago, we wouldn't in the Carolinas, and this is the North Carolina and South Carolina borderline, and I wouldn't see them much in shore of twenty

nautical miles. I mean, we've been working on some artificial reefs, three miles off the beach, and, you know, you've got juveniles all up in there. They're all over the ten-mile range, which is like sixty feet, and so I think their range, from where we are, has moved almost to the beach as far as expansion goes.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Cameron, and I think Haley kind of mentioned some of that yesterday, that they're all the way to the shoreline, and even inland some. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: In reference to North Carolina, I know that we're sort of in the middle, in the back of Onslow Bay, and there never has been as many as to the south, towards the tower and up north toward Morehead, but definitely some showing up in thirty, forty, fifty foot of water, seven, eight, ten miles off the beach, that traditionally you do not see them, and so there are some juveniles showing up there, and snappers moving in shore.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Randy. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just touching on what you just commented on, Randy, for these observations in shallower water, do these tend to be your smaller red snapper, smaller fish in shallower water, or same size range?

MR. MCKINLEY: I would say under ten pounds. Smaller fish.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: We got Paul, and then David again, and Tony.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just a reason -- Just to clarify the reason for my question, and I'm glad that I facilitated, or I think I started a discussion about the potential expansion of the depth range, is because part of that MSE included a component where the scientists, the consulting scientists, evaluated a potential closure area and how that might look with the MSE rebuilding timeline, and so that's just what prompted my thoughts on why a potential range expansion should be added to the list.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Wonderful. Thank you. David.

MR. MOSS: Just to respond to Mike's question, yes, it's -- Shallower are going to be the smaller fish. You can go offshore, well, further offshore, and catch the bigger ones, but it's like nobody even bothers, or I shouldn't say nobody, but you don't bother anymore, because you know what you're going to encounter, and so, in some of those deeper waters, that we target other things, we don't even bother dropping a hook anymore.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. In Ponce Inlet, we are seeing an incredible abundance of these fish everywhere. Like we said yesterday, fish have even come up into the river, into the intercoastal. You can catch small fish, small red snapper, thirty miles out, you know, less than ten pounds.

You can catch thirty-six-inch fish, on your half days, ten to fifteen miles out, and so I don't know that there's a specific area, or habitat, that they, you know, love. I don't think it matters if it's deep

or shallow, big or small. There's a huge, huge abundance of these fish, and they're not only living on the bottom. Whenever they see something, it's almost like they come up to the surface, and so you can catch them, essentially, on -- Just put your bait in the water, at the top of the water, and you don't even have to drop it down, and you're catching thirty-two to thirty-six-inch fish on the top.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. John.

MR. POLSTON: Just to add a little bit to what Hailey said, I've been in, you know, the commercial end of it, with Kings Seafood, and my commercial red snapper fishermen, especially some of the guys are a little bit -- Well, we're all getting a little older, but they literally -- They troll them up now. They don't even stop and anchor up anymore. They just go to a king spot, where they may catch a kingfish, and they catch their -- You know, they catch their seventy-five of pounds red snapper, and then they basically come troll back to the house, and that's that day. They don't even -- To add to what you're saying, they don't even bottom fish them anymore. They literally troll them up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John. I think that, you know, mutton snapper kind of react the same way, in the Keys when guys are king fishing and so, I mean, it's a similar type response. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Paul, I think you really brought up a good question. And, if we notice what's going on, how big of a range we're talking about, and Sebastian and I are at opposite ends of the state. He's far north, and I'm far south, and most of my bottom fishing is in 150 feet or so, but I enjoy spade fishing with local, you know, kids and things, in the early spring, and we're catching a lot of snapper while we're spade fishing now, twelve miles out, which I pretty much have never done, and these are fifteen-inch, or twenty-inch, fish that we're catching. Twenty would be on the larger side, but they're abundant. To go along with what Haley's saying there, it doesn't matter where you go, you're going to catch them.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That's good information. Thank you. Steve.

MR. RANNEY: I'm from Hilton Head, very close to Beaufort County, and I was just on the water yesterday, and I was in thirty foot of water, and I could not get away from them, and it's really frustrating, when you pull something out, and everybody says, I love to eat those. I do too, but I can't keep it. So I was a good boy yesterday. I wasn't an outlaw, but I think some of these regulations -- It makes you become an outlaw because you're like, all right, I'll kill one, and nobody will know, but there's got to be a change, to where we can still do something, you know, and I'm hearing things about -- I'm just recreational fishing. I'm a for-hire boat. I'm a six-pack, and I've been doing it over twenty years.

I'm seeing in places that, when I first caught them like, four, you know, or six years ago, and I thought what are you doing here, and I've never seen you here before, and then I caught another one. Oh, there's a bunch of you all here, and I caught a couple of nice ones yesterday. They weren't twenty inches. They were way better than that, but they went back, and I've got all the stuff. I've got all the venting, and the descending, and I've got all that stuff, but the idea that you're going to get some of these rednecks coming out of the woods in Carolina to sign up, to tell you

what they caught, and that they did all these regulations things, that ain't happening. You're lucky they got a license, and they're running right off the ramps.

Anyway, the question about have I seen a change? I've seen a huge change. They're just everywhere, and, even though I'm black sea bass fishing -- How did you all's scientists figure out that they only grow to twelve-and-three-quarters inches? How did you all figure that out, because it changed to thirteen, and every fish I catch is twelve-and-three-quarters. I'm a carpenter too, and so I can measure pretty good, but I don't know how you all scientists did that. That's brilliant. I'm amazed. You know, I just bow down to you all, but there's another idea that maybe there's something else we can do about other fisheries, because I've heard this talked about too, and I have the same concerns, and what about the forage fish?

Not just the black sea bass, but what about the other fish that they're eating, you know, the smaller reef fish, the white sea bass, or what do you all call them? Sand perch, and there's all kinds of different names for them, and they're getting crushed too, because I'm not seeing any of those either. You know, the whiting have gotten to be -- I mean, it's being affected by -- It's affecting everything, and so we're studying one fish, but there's a big trickle-down. The question of have I seen a big change? Yes, I have. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Steve, and that's what we're looking for, absolutely, and I think we can all share a lot of those frustrations, and hopefully we can get it sorted out. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: I just had a question for John, because it made me real curious. When you say they're trolling up that limit of seventy-five pounds, I mean, how deep are they when they're -- Are the fish coming right up top? How deep are you fishing when they come up top?

MR. POLSTON: Well, in general, our king fishing area, and, I mean, obviously, you can catch them wherever there's structure, but the party grounds, out in that area, are about eighty-five foot of water. That's a major fishing area, what we call the party grounds, and that's eighty-five foot, right, or less.

MR. GOMEZ: So you're trolling on top, and are you using planers? I mean, they're coming right up?

MR. POLSTON: They're planers. They're using their planers and just going in the areas where there's kings and as well snapper, but they don't -- My point was they don't have to stop to bottom fish for them anymore.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, gentlemen. Andrew.

MR. FISH: I king fish as well, hard gear, which is the trolling with a planer and a cable, generally thirty feet, a forty-foot cable, three lines of troll, sixty feet of mono behind the paravane, and a lot of king fishermen, a lot of our reefs, we can't even fish for kingfish. Otherwise, we're going to lose our bait to a lot of red snapper, and so a lot of king fishermen have to avoid getting too close to the actual rock, or they'll catch red snapper, and go through a lot of bait to catch three or four kingfish.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Andrew. Jack.

MR. COX: I feel like I need to give a little input from the Morehead City perspective. I fished probably twenty times last year, and not as much as I used to, but it seems like, when that water is still below about seventy-eight degrees, and it's still cool in the spring, we catch a lot of red snappers, in the six to twelve-pound range, in that sixty to about a hundred feet of water, plenty of them, all you want, especially when that water's cool in the spring of the year.

Then, as that water starts to warm up a little bit, and it starts to get hot, you know, we don't catch that many, and I don't know if that's water-temperature related or because there's been so much interaction with fishermen, but just my observation last year, and it's been pretty consistent for the last, I don't know, five or six years.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you for that input, Jack. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. Just a little bit more insight. When we were red snapper fishing for the season this past year, we were basically free-lining baits, okay, and it's just hook-and-line. There's no swivel, no sinker, and you're sight-casting them, like a redfish, and, where we're catching them, there's not even any structure on the bottom, and, if there is, it's a tiny rock, as big as that table, and so, you know, I feel like there's more red snapper than there is habitat. They're just exploding. I see Mr. Mike typing away, but, you know, you can add on there in sixty feet of water, with minimum, minimum, gear.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Hailey. Any other discussion on this? Maybe move down to fishing behavior and any other changes we've seen there? Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Like I said, these fish have become curious, right, and I know that Mr. Paul said that they're dumb, and they taste good, but it seems, to me, like they -- It's almost similar behavior to a billfish. They see the wake of a boat, if you're trolling, or pulling up to a spot, and they come check it out. Like, it almost seems, to me, like they are learning, like the behavior' is changing, and I don't know if it falls into this particular bullet point, but even the smaller fish are like fat. They're not skinny little fish. They're beefy, you know, ten, fifteen, twenty-inch fish. They're hardy. They're mean. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That means they must have a steady diet of something. I think, as we're moving forward here, if you kind of scan some of the questions, and points, that we're being asked to answer, and, you know, maybe just preface your statement with exactly which one that you would like to add your comments on, and we can push through this. I mean, I think the sentiment is pretty consistent here, and so if we can kind of narrow down to some of the questions that they're asking. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: It says, you know, has your effort shifted, and it has definitely shifted. Where we used to target, we don't, but I think a lot of this growth pattern of territory is simply foraging for food. I think the bigger fish have claimed the reef, and so the smaller ones keep moving in, and I have seen that too, Haley, where there's fish on one rock, just as big as that table, and, quite frankly, there was not much bait on it, and so I think the reason they're curious is because you're a food source, and I think it's more food directed, because they're not there for the fun of it. They're there to live, and, if you don't eat, you get eaten, and so I believe they keep traveling, because simply they're looking for food, a food source.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Cameron, I'm going to get to you in just a second. I just have like a cross-species evaluation on what both of you are saying. I'm seeing yellowtail snapper built the same way, in the ten to twelve-inch size range, and so fish that I'm throwing back, they -- Before they've even come to, you know, like really feed for any amount of time behind my boat, they are stocky, fat fish. A lot of them will have an anal prolapse. Like just -- They've been absolutely gorging themselves on whatever, and are you guys seeing any of that with the red snapper, like where their butthole is popped out?

MR. CONSTANT: You know, I think I might've seen one fish, in the last couple of years, that way, but in the majority of it, I think they're hungry, and aggressive, and their lack of food is what makes them keep moving.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: In regard to descending devices, I texted one of my captains, who runs one of the headboats, and I just asked him, you know, how many red snapper did you throw back all season that you think didn't make it? So this is, you know, running eight months, five trips a week, multiple -- I don't know how many people, fifty, sixty, a hundred people onboard, and, you know, his response was we threw back eight to ten that we saw as dead discards, and so, you know, when I hear the numbers, and discards, and percentages, and stuff like that, I just think it's so blown out of proportion. Now, granted, he does use descending devices and uses proper release techniques, and so, for what it's worth.

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. SEBASTIAN: So the question was eight to ten out of how many fish, and, I mean, they're thick as thieves up there, and so I'm sure they're catching -- I don't know, ten, fifteen, twenty a day, every day they go out, and so a minimum, percentage-wise.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks for that input, Cameron. I got Richard, and then Randy.

MR. GOMEZ: Just to talk about Number 2 on the second bullet point, you know, we've never had a red snapper fishery in the Lower Keys, and, even though we're catching a lot more accidentally, we continue to not target them, because we can't bring them in anyway.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Bring it down. I wanted to do the other highlighted question of, you know, where does it rank in terms of preferred species, and, I mean, being in retail and stuff, I mean, it's so important to have access to good fish in your market and trying to keep away from imported stuff, and it is so important to have that.

You know, commercially, a seventy-five-pound trip limit, like North Carolina, is not really targeted, because, I mean, they may catch them on the way out, or come back in, just where they're at, but it is important, especially with the gags closing early this year, which I know that won't affect it next year, but, anytime you can spread this stuff out, and just have -- You know, provide people that really want fresh local seafood, and it's always important, and that's why I've always

been a proponent of having some kind of bycatch allowance for most of these fish, but I know that's not -- It's never gone anywhere, but it is a very preferred species to target, when it's in, and to be able to have. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Randy, that's certainly a good point, and, you know, when our local fish aren't available to be sold on a regular basis, it kind of cuts our legs out from underneath us, as far as how we market that and really show the quality difference between domestic and import product. David, and then Cameron.

MR. MOSS: As far as targeting, at least in south Florida and to the Keys, as Richard said, nobody targets them, but that doesn't mean we don't run into them, and I know we had said, a while ago, like in the Tortugas, what used to be kind of our mutton waters, are now red snapper waters, and there's a lot of people that are getting really frustrated, because they can't catch much else, and they know that they can't keep them, and so on and so forth, and then -- Not that this necessarily belongs here, but what's also affecting people not wanting to go bottom fishing -- It's a combination of the red snapper and the sharks. If you do hook into something that's not a red snapper, chances are it's going to get eaten on the way up anyway.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, David. We got Cameron, and then Haley.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, you know, I sent out that question to my captains, and so here's the response from the guy who went out yesterday. No joke, I caught ninety American reds. One didn't make it. Another captain says, of all season, 100 percent of what I caught, and maybe 2 percent did not make it, and these were always the largest ones, that had to fight the hardest to go back down, and so that's -- You know, that's where -- One of my big gripes is the percentage.

You know, since all of this comes back to the American red snapper, with dead discards, I'm just not -- I just can't believe the numbers. I mean, these are guys -- Yesterday, ninety fish, and one went back in that didn't make it. You tell me the numbers that we're putting on here, and getting ready to cut the legs out from other fish hunters, right, and that's just not possible.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Cameron. I still think that, you know, we continue that discussion about industry professionals, and the numbers that we see are different than the general population. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. In regard to considerable changes in fishing techniques, we used to tell our customers to reel slow, so that their fish wouldn't come off. Now we tell them to reel as fast as they can, because, if you don't get it, your red snapper on the surface, which they're already there, guess what else lives on the surface? The sharks, and so I know that this is a conversation, and this isn't the particular vessel for it, but, you know, being able to report when there is shark deprivation, when you see a fish that has been, you know, caught and handled properly, and released, and then it just gets eaten by a shark. I think that's important. I know that we're working on it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just a quick follow-up. As far as the reeling slow, that you were previously telling them, is that to mitigate barotrauma or is that -- Or was there any particular motivation for

reeling slow previously, and now it has kind of switched, and, obviously, because avoiding the sharks is the motivation for the faster reeling, but was there any particular motivation for telling them to reel slower?

MS. STEPHENS: Yes, so that they can enjoy fighting their fish, and so that they have a better chance of landing the fish, you know, and not necessarily -- We see it with the snapper, and you don't know, at the time whether you have a grouper or snapper on your hook, on the bottom of the ocean, but it's -- You know, we tell them to reel as fast as they can. We don't really have an issue with barotrauma in the depths that we fish.

Very few red snapper come up with their swim bladders up, you know, and you can look back on the reports, you know, that we caught forty fish, forty red snapper, forty were vented, and forty swam away. Like Mr. Sebastian said, barotrauma isn't really an issue, and, if it ever is an issue, we're equipped with the tools and resources to mitigate it immediately, and so I think it all just comes back to the mortality rate and the dead discards. There's not the percentage of dead discards. We're not seeing that on the water. It just doesn't add up, from what we're seeing on the water, versus what is being estimated. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley, and I think, as far as, you know, any relatively inexperienced, or novice, fishermen go, they're not particularly smooth with their motions with a rod-and-reel, you know, and so, if they kind of take their time a little bit, they may not pull as many hooks on fish that they hope to land. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: I mean, every meeting we have, we end up talking about sharks. You know, just in the Keys in one year, there's been four or five attacks, I believe, and, in my life in Key West, I heard of one attack when I was a teenager. A girl I went to school with got her leg bitten off.

Then we talk about the sharks eating all our fish. I mean, this is a question for the scientists, and will this ever be a serious discussion, to bring back a commercial fishery that targets sharks more, because they're becoming more and more prevalent, and now not only are they eating our fish, they're eating -- You know, they're attacking humans more than ever before, if I'm not mistaken, and correct me if I'm wrong.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Richard. More people in the water, the more shark attacks that they're going to be, you know, with the amount of sharks that we have out there, but, yes, it's always -- You know, it's always an issue at these meetings. We always bring it up, and it is definitely a problem.

MR. GOMEZ: Just a follow-up, and I didn't hear anything from Mike. I mean, is there anything going on in the council that could be something for the future?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not that I could come up with. I mean, one of the big things is that is something out of the council's control. The council does not manage the shark fishery. I think it was brought up earlier, possibly by Jack, that there may be some potential avenue for interaction requests to HMS, to NOAA Highly Migratory Species, but that's the section of the agency that manages sharks, and I know that there's been a lot of attention towards it, but it's mostly been from outside of the council's sphere of influence.

I'm not sure if that's something that can be brought up, and we can definitely put it forward, you know, as a concern that was brought up repeatedly from the AP, and state it to the council again, and see what they're able to do with it. We can look into it, but there's nothing active right now, and the council does have limited influence, because they do not manage that fishery.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike, and kind of to speak to some of the stuff that Jack was talking about, about possibly getting maybe the public's perspective to change on the way that we go after sharks on a commercial level, you know, if we were able to shift the harvest of sharks to a more positive outlook, we might be able to turn them into a little bit more money, you know, value to the fishermen, and, you know, maybe streamline that fishery some, to where the public doesn't see it as an attack against nature, rather than creating a balance that we once had, that is lately, in the last ten years especially, has been a real imbalance. That's just kind of my thoughts on that, you know, as it pertains to sharks. I do have three people on the list. I have Haley, Matt, and then John.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman, and, yes, just to touch based on the predators, you know, out of Ponce Inlet, in addition to the sharks, which I know aren't regulated at the South Atlantic level, but the goliath grouper are a huge problem in our shallow-water reefs and our artificial reefs. They've been protected for a very long time. They love to eat everything. If you hook into what you know is going to be a snapper, or a grouper, and then, all of a sudden, that rod almost gets ripped out of your customer's hands, you know exactly what just happened.

It was a goliath grouper, and our friends that dive, who go down there and have eyes on the reef, will tell you there's hundreds, if not thousands, of these giant 300 or 400-pound goliath grouper, and how much -- So, when we talk about ecosystem-based approach to management, how many fish do you think it takes to sustain a goliath grouper, and there's thousands of them, and so it's really, really hard, I feel like, and the word we always come back to is balance, but it's hard to have management for all these different species when our top predators have been protected for ten, fifteen, twenty years.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So maybe fisheries management has created more of an imbalance than harmony. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I just wanted to go back to one of the -- Well, I mean, I eventually hope we get back to a few of the specific questions, but I think it's important to note, for my region, which is Georgia and South Carolina, that red snapper ranks high in terms of the preferred species, the target. People want to go out and fish for them, but we just can't.

You know, we get one or two days a year to fish for them, and the wind's blowing, and you can't make it, or you can't get off of work on a Friday, and you can't go after them, but people want to catch them up here, and they just don't have the opportunity, and so I wanted to make sure we answered that question directly, and hopefully there's a few more we'll get back to. If we don't, I'll probably bring them back up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Matt. John.

MR. POLSTON: (Mr. Polston's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John, and it does directly tie into what's being asked here. You know, the sharks play a major role in the red snapper fishery. Anybody else have any input on any of these bullet points here? Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I want to make a couple other points. One, that I'm reading through these bullet points, and I think it's important to point out, because there's been some comments made that, you know -- I don't necessarily disagree that it's going to be hard to get the good old boys that come out of the sticks to go offshore fishing a couple of times a year to report, but that doesn't mean that -- I don't think it's a valid assumption that, if they're not reporting discards, that means they're dead discards, and I think the headboat folks can probably speak to it more than anybody else in the room, but not every fish that comes up has barotrauma, and there's a lot of discards that swim down to the bottom just fine, and so I don't think that assumption should be built into any model. I think people don't want to report just because they're fed up with the management process.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Matt. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Along one of the notes you made, and so there Even if some -- Whether somebody reports, or doesn't report, that doesn't necessarily mean that any discards that would be estimated for that trip would be assumed to be dead, and so the discard mortality rate for red snapper, I believe, is 20 percent, and so what is estimated is, when you put in all of the effects of some people are using the descender devices, and some people aren't, and, when you put all of that together, that the estimated survival would be 80 percent, and so four out of five fish would survive. One out of five would die, and four out of five would survive. That's what's estimated from the number of releases. Now we have a really high number of releases, and that's what has been estimated for the last assessment, but that's the assumption that's going into it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So, out of that three million fish, 2.4 million would have made it, and the rec sector -- I think we saw three million fish is what the rec sector had interactions with.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Was that the discards or the dead discards, because like, if it's the number that's coming -- It was discards? Okay.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So I have to wonder -- Of those 600,000 fish that are presumed dead, those are the fish that are really holding up any retention, right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay. Thank you. Anybody else? Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just coming back to this question at the top of the queue right now, and what proportion of discards do you release with a dissenter device, and I've argued that these data are really badly needed. I know we're talking about, or the SSC, for the next assessment update, has asked for this information, but I found, in a survey of headboats in Moorhead City, North Carolina, and I know we're talking dissenting now, but, for venting, there's only about 10 percent of surveyed person-to-person -- An in-person survey of headboat anglers that know about venting and know how to use it properly.

I think this proportion of discards that are released with descender devices, as far as red snapper goes, is probably pretty low, and I'm hoping, over the next six months, I can recruit a couple of undergraduates, and it probably won't be in time for SEDAR 90, but I'm hoping I can recruit -- At least for North Carolina, recruit a couple of undergrads just to have a look into this, and, associated with those in-person surveys, ask the anglers what depths they commonly target in their reef fishing activities, because, as Cameron said earlier, the survival, or mortality, however you want to look at the equation for red snapper, is certainly depth-specific.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Paul. I did have Tony, and then Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I have a follow-up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right. Go ahead, Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: This is just a quick follow-up. My question for you is are you recommending-- Is the recommendation that you use that descending device regardless of whether you see signs of barotrauma? Okay, and so go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and so that would go into - I'll point to the best fishing practices person over there, Ashley Oliver. She's the person that you can go to for this information, but the best fishing practices would not say to -- Like, if there's no sign of barotrauma for that fish, the best practice, in that instance, would be get the fish back in the water as soon as possible, to reduce its time out of the water, and so only use that when you're seeing the signs of barotrauma.

MR. MATTHEWS: Right, and that was kind of a rhetorical question, because I think there's, as is the case with everything we talk about, there's a few more layers to the onion that we need to peel back, because to ask the question with what portion of the fish do you use a descending device on, and, well, if you're fishing in twenty-five feet of water, it would be zero, but that answer shouldn't be factored into the equation of compliance with the best fishing practices, because there's no reason for somebody that's fishing in shallow to be using a descending device.

I think that the point I'm getting at with that is that the analysis needs to factor in that there's a big portion of the recreational anglers that are fishing that don't have the boat to reach the depths that require them to be using a descending device, and that's the point I was trying to make.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Yes, and I was on Paul as well. There's a tool, right over there, that Ashley and the SciFish -- The app is in the toolbox, ready to use, if we make it mandatory to use, that collects that data right there, whether you use the descending device on it, which would give you that exact figure, if it was applied, and, along the lines of depths on barotrauma, I've got a friend who got a $250 ticket from NOAA for fishing in forty feet of water without his descending device.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Tony. Again, frustration. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, maybe refining the question a little bit, because I kind of know at least a little bit of what the intent for something like this could be, and so what has happened, as these assessments have progressed, is they've looked at different time periods, and different

management regimes, and, as descending devices became, you know, a more popular thing, and eventually became a regulatory requirement, what the assessment has done is they have time-specific estimates of discard mortality rates, and so it was higher as you look in further back in history, when people weren't using the current best practice techniques.

That rate, that 20 percent that we're at estimated at right now, was higher previously, and it has gone down. That number is down from what it used to be, because of things like more awareness about best practices, use of descender devices, things like that. One of the things that the assessment scientist folks have been trying to get a handle on is the level of compliance with the best practices. Obviously, there's a regulatory requirement to have the descending device on the boat. It needs to be on the vessel, but are people actually using it?

That's one of the connections that's trying to be made, is what's the frequency of use, and use when it's appropriate, and I think it's an important clarification, what Matt pointed out, is use of it in accordance with best practices, something like that, and so maybe refining the intent of this question of what proportion of discards do you release with descender devices, when it would be deemed appropriate by best practices, or something like that, and think of it in that context.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Mike. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. I'm going to jump down to Number 3, the social and economic influence. How have changes in infrastructure, docks, marinas, and fish houses, affected red snapper fishing? To put things into perspective, in Ponce Inlet, twenty years ago, there were nine headboats. When red snapper closed, they slowly started dwindling away, one-by-one. We are the last one. It has drastically affected the docks, the marinas, and the fishermen, you know, those that weren't super polished on the customer service side of things, that just went out and did what they know, and that they were good at, and that was fishing, and then the fishing wasn't there, and, well, their jobs went away, and their boats went away, and it has a huge impact on that.

When they announced the single-day red snapper season this year, leading up to it, I probably got 200 or 300 phone calls a day. I told our guests to sign up for the text messages alert through NOAA, and the email alerts, so that, whenever it was announced, that they could go and get their tickets. They don't want to miss out. We're licensed for sixty-nine passengers. We take fifty-two on a trip, and we sold 104 tickets in eleven minutes for red snapper day, just to put things into perspective. My booking website called me and said, is there a problem?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. Tony, did I still have you down, or are you good? I did want to recognize Vincent Bonura, another panel member that could not be here in-person, but he is logged-in online and listening and following along. Any other comments? Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: If you jump down to socioeconomic, I mean, you know, when you look at that list, you know, it's -- Like Haley said, it's a pretty bleak picture for, I mean, anybody who makes a living on the ocean, fishing and stuff. I mean, you know, the infrastructure and the docks and the marinas, and just the ability to have a fishing boat, that goes out to make its living fishing, is becoming more challenging every single day. That's just the way it is.

All the real estate is getting grabbed up by condos, et cetera, et cetera, marinas, where they're going to park a boat, and they're going to go out twice a year, and they don't have to do shit. They don't

have to have fish getting dragged across the dock, or anything like that, and so, you know, that's one of the things, when we're looking at the economic impact. You know, like when Haley said, every time we have a closure, or a shutdown, there's a percentage of the guys who do it professionally that go out of business. That's just the way it is. I mean, the statistics are there. You can look in and just see cut after cut, drop after drop, and it's going to -- You know, it's going to continue to happen, unless we take a stance, and we make some changes.

Look at the people around these tables, who have done this for their whole lives, multi-generational. I mean, I'm a businessman. I'm in it not just for now, but, I mean, I've positioned ourselves so we can continue to offer fishing to future generations. I mean, that was my sort of goal, is to be able to do that, and, you know, with the economic stuff we're facing, it's just -- You know, it's just really, really tough. It's a hard, hard business, for anybody who's in the commercial charter-headboat fishing deal, to survive at it.

You know, we were talking yesterday about, hey, maybe a little glimpse of hope from the council, and, you know, well, maybe a glimpse of hope is we cut out a notch for the commercial headboats, and allow them to do certain things, when things get nasty, and get shut down, so that we can continue to do what we've done for generations. I've got guys that are third-generation captains in my fleet. I mean, this is all they know. There's nothing for them, out there in the world, if they can't fish, period, end of story. That's all they've done for their entire lives, and if I go out and say I'm shutting my doors down, and I'm going to retire to the Bahamas or whatever, those guys are screwed, because they've got fifteen or twenty good years left, and they've got nowhere to go.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Cameron, and those guys are typically really passionate about it, and they really love what they do. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Just to piggyback on what Cameron Sebastian said, it goes on both sides, when we talk about headboats and bottom fishing and red snapper. The social and economic impact would be seen on both sides. If, you know, something doesn't change, or we don't work through this, not only are people going to lose their jobs, but the headboat serves as the most inclusive option to be able to have the opportunity to offshore fish. You know, when you look at it as a whole, it's a cost-effective option for fishing.

I'm here for my customers, okay, and I'm representing these people that work all week long or have been through -- You know, they've served in the military, and they've served our country, and their last thing that they have, that they enjoy doing, is coming out and fishing on the headboat with the friends that they've met there. You know, maybe they've lost family, whatever the case may be, and it goes so far beyond the fishing for the social impact that would be seen if, you know, something drastic were to occur, and I go back to equal opportunity and accessibility for red snapper season, and, you know, people were price gouging.

We kept our same exact rates, because we wanted to serve our customers, and to serve our community, and to serve the people that give us the opportunity to stay in business. People are doubling and tripling their prices, which we could have done. We did not, because we want to ensure equal opportunity and access to fishing for all, and then, you know, the data collection side, you can't argue that. No one takes more people fishing than the headboat. No one does more fish reports than the headboat. We're held to such a high standard, and it's well-documented, accountability, and, you know, if things were to go crazy, like Cameron said, I think that there

should be a consideration, both from the EEJ and research side of things, to have a notch cut out for the headboats.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. That's good input. Scott.

MR. BUFF: I would just like to throw this out there. At some point in time, there's a tipping point, to where we've gone beyond where we can come back, and I feel like, with me, where I'm at today, if you had to start over, you couldn't survive, and we're at a threshold, to where something's got to give, because -- This is just my opinion, and, look, hey, we all got here. We're all -- We all got here together. It ain't your fault, and it ain't our fault, but the bottom line is that when is enough enough, and, with all of the changes that's been made since I left here --

You know, where is that line at, to where we're just going to kind of reap what we've sowed, for the past five or six years, and see where we're at, instead of just cut, cut, cut, cut, cut, and, you know, another thing, and I was sitting here thinking that I've been off of here for six years, and we're still talking about the same things that we were talking about when I left, and nothing has really been done, and just like the red snapper.

I mean, you basically have protected it so much that the mortality rate is so high that we can't even go fishing. You know, I mean, face the facts. You know, you've protected something so much, and it's recovered so much, that we can't even go fishing, basically, and so, at some point in time, something's got to change somewhere, and, look, there's other problems in the fishery. It ain't just red snapper, but this one has just been overprotected, and, at some point in time -- I think you said, earlier, about some retention, you know, and I know they started that a couple of years ago, to where we had a little bit of retention, but I think that retention is not enough. If not, we're just going to continue down this road for the next five or six years.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Indeed, and that's something that I think I've heard over and over, when this panel gets together, is that, you know, some retention, at least for the red snapper, you know, is -- It needs to be considered. I mean, one of the -- You know, one of the other things that I'm hearing around the room is, you know, commercial fishermen, and charter-headboat captains alike, and this is all we know, and, if the worst were to happen, you know, are our legs going to be cut out from underneath us, or is the government going to subsidize us, if they tell us we can't fish?

You know, I mean, those are real concerns, and real worries, and, you know, everybody that's been running a business on the books, and above-board, you know, are we just going to be shit out of luck, you know, or are we going to be helped along, until we can figure out what else -- You know, what our lives are going to look like, or do we just have to sell our property, you know, our coastal property, to the highest bidder and just walk away, shaking our head?

You know, these are a lot of concerns, and I think that, maybe if we were to get, you know, some professionals involved, to help paint that picture of what this might look like if, you know, fishing were to be shut down, you know, what the actual impact is going to be on the working waterfront and what that would look like going forward. You know, that might be something that we could get some attention with. Cameron, and then back to you, Scott.

MR. SEBASTIAN: This is going back from a blend of what Richie said yesterday. Since we already have federal permits, and they're going to take marijuana to a schedule three drug, and, if

we already have fishing federal permits, and they cut the fishing out, we should be the first ones in line to be able to do something with our vessels that'll be permitted with marijuana.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Perfect. Scott.

MR. BUFF: I spent some time in Gloucester, in the last two or three years, and I think we could take a lot of notes from their fishery, and I know it's completely different, but their stuff is run like a business up there. They have associations, and organizations, and I want to, I guess, say that there's a little bit of protection on what they do, and how they do it, and I know the lobster fishery -- They have their own problems, but, at the end of the day, they all stick together, to where none of us are. It's like everybody's on their own. Nobody wants to do anything together about what's going on, and so it's just a thought.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I think that -- Richard, and then Randy. Go ahead, Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, you're right about that, Scott. Listen. The lobster fishing industry in the Keys is a well-oiled machine, and they definitely know what they're doing. They've educated themselves, and they have great representatives, and they're fighting a winning battle, and so we can take a couple examples from how they've done it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: We have our own issues in that fishery that you may not be aware of. Randy. To speak to the -- You know, just real briefly, there have been different user groups, that historically have had a really low percentage of the overall catch, that have been allowed to expand without, you know, without really any governance, and that has kind of taken a little bit away from the way the program was designed. Moving on. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Well, we've definitely hit on a lot of different things, and I will definitely organize this into the report, and send it out for review, just like we do with our normal process. For those of you that are new, what happens is, your notes that we get on the screen today, I typically go back and do a little bit of re-listening to the meeting, to make sure I capture things, but I develop a draft report, and send it out to the AP, and you all have a week or so, some time to review it, and let me know any changes that are necessary, and then it gets finalized, and then we send it on to the assessment panelists.

You will get a chance to review this, once it gets put up in a prettier format, but, moving down to a couple of the sections that haven't been hit as directly or -- I know definitely one of these, one of the questions from the assessment panelists, was focusing on the timing of the changes here, and so, thinking some about management measures, are there -- We've definitely heard some interest in increased retention, in some form. That's definitely one of the management measures.

I'm looking at the current ACL allocations. I kind of know the answer, but it's better coming from you, and then, as far as the environmental ecological impacts, we've touched on this somewhat, with the interspecies interactions that you all have noted. One of the things that the assessment analysts wanted to know is are the recent trends, you know, kind of over the past three years, are they different than the past ten years?

Have you seen an acceleration of things, or was there kind of a big jump in whatever trends you were seeing in red snapper, and then kind of a leveling off, and what's been the difference, if there's

any difference, between those different time periods? I'll kind of open the floor back up for more discussion and keep taking notes.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Haley, and then several others.

MS. STEPHENS: I know I kind of touched on it earlier, but, just to reiterate, we're seeing big fish inshore, and we're seeing small fish offshore.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Haley. I have Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Thanks, James. I think it goes along with what we were talking, and what Haley just said, but, also, I think it's an evolution. The fish are evolving, because they've eaten themselves out of house and home, and the expansion is simply finding more food, and so I think it's still expanding, since the original closure fifteen years ago, and it's just progressing into what it's becoming, along with eating the other species.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Tony. I've got Andrew, and then Cameron.

MR. FISH: As far as the management measures, I think some of the bigger boats are getting penalized on the red snapper. They're making much longer trips, going much farther offshore for the beeliners and triggers that kind of stuff, and these are basically the guys that pioneered all these fisheries, and they seem to be getting penalized, whereas the boats in Florida, north Florida, are doing half-day trips for the red snapper, and doing stuff like that as a management measure.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So you're saying that retention numbers might be a little lopsided, based on the amount of time spent on the water per trip?

MR. FISH: I think so. I mean, but I was just making a point that the larger, bigger boats are not catching near the amount of quota that they obviously could be, because they're trying to maximize their efficiency, and do what they normally do, and not just target the red snapper.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So, for trip boats, a higher trip limit would be your recommendation.

MR. FISH: If there's some way to manage that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Hey, that's what we're here for.

MR. FISH: Nobody wants VMS, but some do.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Makes sense. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Just the change in the last three years, versus ten, I mean, the American reds, where we're fishing is just -- I mean, it has exploded in numbers. I mean, you know, the guy yesterday was -- He was probably doing a fishing trip, an eleven-hour trip, eighty-five foot to a hundred foot, and he caught ninety fish, and he had ten passengers onboard, and so a massive change, a massive numbers increase.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, and just to clarify, Mr. Mike, we're seeing -- We're seeing fish everywhere. There's just a huge abundance. There's large and small fish inshore. There's also large and small fish offshore, and, to kind of touch on what Andrew was saying, you know, when we talk about the commercial side of things, a seventy-five-pound gutted limit is hardly commercial fishing at all. You know, I would even go out as far as to say, you know, maybe consider something like a seventy-five-pound thing as a, as a bycatch, because you're -- That's essentially what the red snapper are. They're eating your bait, when you're trolling. You're not targeting them. It essentially is bycatch for the commercial sector.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. In response to environmental and ecological impacts, while not directly related to this question necessarily, and, of course, everybody has seen an increase in red snapper over the last ten years, but one of the things to consider too, anecdotally anyway, is, as we've seen warming waters, I don't think it's -- I don't think it's a coincidence that we're seeing much better recruitment in some of these, air quotes, warm-season spawners, like mangrove snapper, mutton snapper, red snapper, and then we're seeing recruitment go down in the shallow-water groupers, the reds, blacks, gags, all those things that we know traditionally spawn in the cooler months.

Considering that, and, you know, it's obviously something ripe to look at for geographical shift with a lot of these species too, or they may be showing up further north, in cooler waters, at different times, from a recruitment perspective, and then aren't able to really fully develop, because then it gets too cold or something.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It would be interesting to find out for sure. John.

MR. POLSTON: I just was saying, about this past snapper season that we had, and, obviously, it wasn't very long, but something that came to mind, when everybody started talking about the large and small red Snappers, is the people that I was selling to, there's -- You know, they have different -- Like you grade beeliners, and everybody knows that everything gets graded, and I've noticed, since we've, you know, have a little influx of the snapper, for that short period of time, and there's a lot of people they want the snapper the same way, and they want one to two, or two to fours, or four ups.

Because I did quite a bit of that this last snapper season, it just came to mind that I think I noticed a lot more smaller snapper than I -- Probably more of a 50-50 this year, versus I think maybe they were a little bigger before, and I -- First off, I thought that was bad, but then I got thinking about it, and that's got to be more recruitment that's coming. I mean, more smaller fish means more fish are being born and more -- You know, they're growing up, and they grow fast, and so we had some one to twos, and two to fours, and, I mean, I know everybody was talking about big fish, and we had plenty of big fish tool, but I think it's a good thing that we are seeing the smaller fish.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, John. One of the things that I've kind of been interested in, in the last year, has been bass fishing, and I know that individually managing a pond, or a lake -- One of the most important things, in order to have a good fish stock, is to remove some of those smaller, more aggressive fish, so that other species don't overtake -- You know, they still can thrive in that environment, and that your breeding stock remains. If everything was catch-and-release all the

time, you end up having an abundance of smaller fish that don't have enough food to live, and so they're going to eat everything in its path.

You know, maybe our management strategy isn't too dissimilar, you know, and it's a little bit off what we're trying to do here in our South Atlantic region, and, you know, maybe we're creating some of this imbalance, and, you know, maybe we should start studying how we can turn that around, you know, and not just based on catch levels and stuff like that. Like maybe it's a -- Maybe it's a balance issue that we're just completely missing the point on. I don't see any other hands up. I do -- Andrew.

MR. FISH: With regards to the ecological, there has been a trend. I use the rip charts a lot. I look at the satellite charts, for king fishing, and it seems like, over the last five years, there's a steady green sludge coming out of the Okeechobee, going north, and it creates a big green swath that's wider as it goes, and it's viewable from the satellite, and it seems that that could obviously change the way fish -- Where they live and that kind of stuff, but it's more and more, and it doesn't ever seem to go away like it. As far as I can remember, and, well, before satellites, and I don't have that data, but it's constant green that we're going to see that coming out of the Okeechobee.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I couldn't agree more that, you know, what's going on inland, and on the coasts, that it has a direct effect, you know, to the health and viability of our resource, and, you know, unfortunately, in this room, we are forced to overlook that, and we have to work within the parameters that we're given.

I mean, in the Keys, we're jumping up and down all the time about water quality, and how it has negatively affected our coral reefs, and our habitat, especially in Florida Bay and, you know, in our estuaries, and it's maddening. You know, I think that that's why a lot of us are here. You know, we really want to understand why things are the way they are, and, unfortunately, development and the money is associated with that -- You know, we don't have much competition. We can't really compete with that level. You know, we're in the minor leagues. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Under Number 4, management measures, you know, I realize that the habitat, and the whole fishery, is drastically different on the Gulf Coast. However, I do have contacts over there, that I seek for counsel on issues like this, and please correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that the headboats have their own quota for red snapper, for snapper specifically, over on the Gulf, and it -- From what I've heard, it seems like it works really well for them, and I know that it's different but, moving forward, maybe something to consider is a separate, you know, ACL allocation, or quota for the federally-permitted, Coast-Guard-inspected for-hire headboat fleets.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Haley. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Well, I think that we've covered a lot. Again, if folks have anything additional, when you see the draft report, please let me know. I'll pause once more, if there's anything else that needs to be that hasn't been said already, that needs to be noted. Otherwise, we'll move into the stock risk rating for this for the species.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I don't see any hands up for comment. Go ahead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so the next step that we're going to do, which is kind of a newer step that we're integrating into this fishery performance report process, is this stock risk rating. If you remember, back a couple of years ago, the council passed -- I guess it was the beginning of last year, the council passed the acceptable biological catch control rule amendment, and so that changed their ABC control rule.

What that is, it's, when we come out of an assessment, we get a number that says, if you fish above this number, then you are overfishing the stock, and so there is a process that's defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act to go from that overfishing level, and, in order to get the level that catch can actually occur at, which would be your ABC, your acceptable biological catch, you have to go through a process of steps that are outlined in the management plan, and that is the ABC control rule. That is the process to go from an overfishing limit that you get out of a stock assessment to go to what is the catch level going to be for the fishery moving forward.

In redefining this process, through that amendment, one of the aspects that the council was kind of taking into consideration a bit more was the risk level that they were that they were accepting, and so, anytime you catch a fish, there is a chance, be it small or large, depending on how many fish you're taking out of the population, but there is a chance that you are going to have overfishing occur, that you're going to catch too many fish at too fast of a rate, and so that that chance goes up the more fish you take out of the population, but there is an accepted amount. Like anytime that the council would set a catch level, they are accepting that they're okay with such and such chance of overfishing, such and such probability of overfishing.

The council is going to be setting that risk rating. It wasn't as clearly defined in the previous control rule. Part of them setting that that accepted level of -- That accepted probability of overfishing is to take into consideration input from the AP, and input from the SSC, and then the council will make the final decision, and so that's the process that we're going to be going through today. What we're going to look at is a list of I think it's probably about ten or so different aspects of the fishery, and it's just a simple categorical grading of a one, two or three, high, medium, or low risk, of overfishing.

I'll pull up the spreadsheet, so that you can see what we'll be working with, and we're going to work through this for several species throughout the course of this meeting. Right now, we're just addressing red snapper, and it will probably be about the lunch break, but then we're going to hit some more of the species that are being assessed coming up when we get back, and so if you give me just one second to pull up the worksheet.

You have seen this before. We did work through it for Florida hogfish at the last meeting, and so this is something very similar to what we did, and you can see that hogfish is pulled up right there, and what we'll do is I'll show you the attribute that we're looking at, and let's see if I can make that bigger.

I will show you the attribute that we're looking at. Some of them are biological, and some of them are what we call human dimension. They would be dealing more with the fishery, the social and the economic standpoint of the fishery, and then we have some ecological attributes as well, and so we'll show what attribute we're talking about.

We have some rough guidelines for what would, you know, denote the category that it falls into, as far as a high, a medium or a low risk of overexploitation, and that's just another word for overfishing, and so a high, medium or low level. These are kind of guideline points. Some of these are data-driven based on biological studies, and some of these are going to be based on the landings trends, but I do want to note that, within this, there is a level of discretion.

These are guideline levels, but, if you all have reasons to believe that one of -- That the guideline level is not telling the whole story of what's happening with this fish, in this aspect, then we can take some notes on that, and provide that information to the council as well, and what we'll be coming up with for each of these is a recommendation on what you think -- What category you think this should fall into, and so we'll start off with the biological estimated natural mortality.

This is a rate that's calculated within stock assessments. Generally, if you have a low natural mortality, that means that you're going to be heavily affected, that a stock is going to be heavily affected by fishing, and so fishing is going to have a strong impact on that stock, and that means it's at greater risk of overfishing occurring, because fishing is having a greater impact on that stock, and so your low natural mortality species are going to be your long-lived, slower-growing ones, like your groupers, whereas ones that have high natural mortality are going to be the ones, kind of like dolphin, that turn over annual stocks really quickly. They don't survive very long, but they reproduce early in life, and they turn over really quickly, and so fishing is going to have relatively less of an impact on something like that.

I've got to zoom-out a little bit, just so you can see the notes and everything that's recorded here. Sorry for the small type. We're trying to work our way through this. This is the first round, and so, from SEDAR 73, the natural mortality value for red snapper was estimated at 0.11, and so it's going to be one of those species that's a bit slower growing than some others. This is something that gets estimated within an assessment process. They look at this information, and so that would put it in that high-risk category of overfishing occurring, but I can look to the AP and see -- Do you have any information, any input, that would suggest that it should be something other than the score that would come out of that default guideline?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: John, go ahead.

MR. POLSTON: If I understood correctly, earlier, when we were going over the chart of the red snapper, and I think Chip was doing it, or whatever, but he made the comment that the red snapper are very fast-growing, and I think you just said that they're slow growing. Did I miss one or the other, or misunderstand?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I'm going based off of the rate and the general -- The rate from the last assessment, the mortality rate from the last assessment, versus the general guideline levels that fish normally fall into, and sometimes we have exceptions to the rule of where they fall, in terms of what's normal for a natural mortality rate, versus how they grow.

MR. POLSTON: Okay. I don't think that was my point. Chip, did you say, earlier, that they were fast-growing, or did I misunderstand?

DR, COLLIER: Yes, I did say they were fast-growing, and they are fast-growing when they're small, but red snapper are always the exception, unfortunately, and they are a fast-growing fish

that lives long. Those are usually not the same. Usually fish that are fast-growing are short-lived, and usually fish that are long-lived are slow-growing. Red snapper is the exception.

MR. POLSTON: Okay. I guess I'm sounding stupid here, but which are they? Are they fast-growing or slow-growing? You're saying fast, and he's saying slow. I understand you're saying they live differently, but which one are they? Are they fast-growing or slow-growing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, along with Chip, fast growing -- Normally, natural mortality is associated with slower-growing fish. That's the normal, with Chip pointing out that it's an exception, that red snapper is an exception, to the rule. The general rule is, if you're slow-growing, you're going to have a lower natural mortality rate, and you're going to live longer. Red snapper is a weird species that breaks the rules, the general rules, and so that's something that may need to be pointed out, and may need to be considered in how risk is evaluated.

MR. POLSTON: Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mike, did you want to stop for comments now? I mean, I see that Chris has his hand up, and maybe we just address things as we move along here? Okay. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was just wondering if it would be something that ,when you cut the ear bone out of a snapper, if it got like a ring, or whatever in it, every six months, or quarterly, and wouldn't that make things look different? Instead of having a fifty-one-year old stock, it would be like twenty-five. It would be pretty wild.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I'm just thinking that maybe Number 2 is the better alternative, a medium growth.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: A question for perhaps someone on the council. Do we know what level precision that natural mortality of 0.11 was estimated with, coming out of that SEDAR in 2021? Is that a fairly precise estimate, because if it is, I would argue for the risk level to be high for the estimated rate of natural mortality.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you for that question, Paul. I don't see anybody -- Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So natural mortality is, as you know, Paul, is extremely hard to estimate. It has not been directly estimated for red snapper. They used some of the age or size-based estimates, in order to inform their estimate of natural mortality, and so it's not perfect, but it's some of the best information that's out there. They used -- I can't remember exactly the study right now, but they used the most recent information for it. They had updated the natural mortality for red snapper in the last assessment.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: But, again, do we know the precision around that estimate? I assume that's a median value there, and, if it's super imprecise, then I could see a lot of merits in Tony's

AP recommendation for assigning a two to that cell K3, but if it's -- If there's a lot of precision around that estimate, then I think that should have some bearing on the AP's decision.

DR. COLLIER: I would have to go back into the assessment, to see exactly how much uncertainty they put around that, but, in order to get up to that next level, they would need a CV of essentially 100 percent, and I can guarantee you they didn't -- Let me check, and I'll get right back to you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. I kind of can't help but draw the parallel to the analogy that I had introduced about managing a freshwater pond, or a small lake, or something like that, and, really, if this red snapper species is a bit of an anomaly in nature, you know, maybe some retention, or a slot size, to kind of remove some of these smaller, more ravenous fish, would help bolster the overall numbers of the species, and, along with that, it may help some of the problems we're seeing in some of some of our other species, kind of like with the with the open season for goliath grouper.

You know, we're only allowed to take the smaller fish, you know, to kind of help control the population, and maybe a little bit or to change perception of, plus, you know, giving back when something has been taken. I don't know what the real directive is there with the goliath grouper, but, you know, maybe looking at this species a little bit differently, and kind of adding some retention to some of the smaller fish, may be a worthwhile endeavor.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just kind of keeping us moving through, the next category, the next attribute, is age-at-maturity, and so the last assessment estimated this between one and two years, looking at the level when they exceed 50 percent maturity, and so that would fall into a low-risk category. Typically, you're at a higher risk of overfishing a stock if they mature later in life. Red snapper seem to be between one and two years, and so that's in the low risk, within the low risk guideline, and so is there any different opinion from putting it in the level, the three score, for that for the low risk option?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I don't see any hands, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Not seeing any, we'll keep moving down. Next, we're in the ability to regulate the fishery. If you're in the -- If management is unable to regulate the fishery, in terms of keeping it to the annual catch levels, that can increase the risk for overfishing, and so the general guideline is that, if the fishery consistently is exceeding its total ACL, and so this is both sectors, rec plus commercial, and, if it's consistently doing so, and kind of a somewhat consistent option is like more than three out of five years, by more than 15 percent, then that would put it in the high risk category. Medium risk is that, most years, it's below its total ACL, and not typically by more than 15 percent, and low risk would be if it's consistently below its ACL.

What we have for the recent landings, we looked at 2018 through 2022. Those are the most recent finalized landings for the commercial and recreational, for both sectors, and the total ACL was exceeded by more than 15 percent in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, within that year range. The commercial ACL was exceeded by less than 15 percent for each of those years that was listed, the recreational ACL was exceeded by more than 15 percent for each of those years listed, and so I will look to the AP for a recommendation on how well the fishery is staying under its ACL.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: John, and then Cameron.

MR. POLSTON: Well, if I'm looking at it right, I would say, in this particular situation, you would need to separate the two of them, because if commercial, in three years, or four years, whatever it was you said, did not exceed their limit, they would be categorized in a separate part than recreational would be. Wouldn't that be correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: In aspects where -- If you were making a management decision based on this one thing alone, then I understand that. In terms of evaluating how the risk of the population -- Of too much fishing occurring for the population, whether it's commercial or recreational fish taken out of the population, or fish taken out of the population, and so we're talking about how it affects the population itself, the stock itself, and so that's why we look at total ACL as opposed to -- Like I give the detail of the how the commercial and the recreational have each done, but the total ACL is the metric that's being used here.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So that is including discards and everything? Is that --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and that's just landings. That's just the landings, and so I guess the default, from the total from the landings exceeding the total ACL by more than 15 percent in several of those years -- The default would put it at a high risk for that aspect. Is there any different opinion from that default level?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I mean, I kind of view this whole section a little different. With the very short duration of the season that's open to land the red snapper, you know, the intent isn't to catch more than what you're supposed to catch, and if a fish, that you have a very short window to catch -- If you immediately ramp up to over what you're supposed to catch, to me, the indicator would be that the stock is so strong that you're pegging out your maximum, and going over, because you can't you can't collect the data fast enough to really represent an accurate timeline, and, in the commercial sector, having it be under 15 percent over, I think that's just a reflection of guys trying not to be excessive, and just maybe overestimating a little bit what they're catching on each and every day, and that's reflected in the landings. I mean, that's just kind of my take on it. If you catch all of the fish that you're allocated, in a very short period of time, and go over it, I feel like the representation wouldn't be a one in this case. Chris, and then David.

MR. KIMREY: So I feel like -- Again, you know, it's the total metric, but, for the commercial reporting, being at 15 percent -- I mean, you got to remind yourself, for red snapper, they're fishing on a quota. They're allowed seventy-five pounds a day, and so their numbers are going to be really tight, and it doesn't matter how many trips they actually make. What matters is how they report, and they're reporting no more than seventy-five pounds per day, and so it's going to end up with a much tighter representation, you know, that 15 percent.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. David. Thank you.

MR. MOSS: This is the way I understand it anyway, and it kind of goes back to the crux of what we've been talking about this whole time, right, and so the data is saying one thing, and we're saying something else, and the data is suggesting that this is a one, and, as you said, you know, perhaps the ACL should be adjusted, because, if we're consistently going over that, then it would indicate that the stock is in much better shape than what everybody's saying, and we can't do

anything but go over it. We're quite literally trying to not keep a single fish, and we're somehow still blowing the ACL out of the water every year, and no pun intended there.

It seems to go to, you know, what do I believe, you or my lying eyes scenario, and I don't know what the correct answer is here. Again, the science, and the data, says one thing, but, on the water, we're saying something else, and so it's -- If I'm reading this correctly.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I have Paul, but maybe Mike wants to address David directly.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just in response to that, the question here is not -- Like we're looking at these as line-by-line individual things, and so the ability for management to regulate the fishery is not a statement on the abundance of red snapper, whether it's there or not. It's can management effectively keep the fishing within the limit that is defined by law, and is management able to define that? Is management able to keep the fishing within the limit that is defined?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: Yes, and that's kind of what I'm saying is that, according to the science and the data, the answer would be no, right, because we're consistently going over the ACL, but, again, as anglers on the water, we're seeing something different than what the data is saying, and so I don't know what the right answer is here.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Maybe the question is what would it take to get that to be a three? I mean, I think that -- Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, as far as putting that at a three, that would be -- An example of that would be probably be black sea bass, in terms of that stock is not hitting its ACL at all, and we'll get to that, you know, later on, but that stock is not hitting its total ACL, and so management is effectively keeping that fish within its limit. You know, there are other factors that are coming into play, but it's not management's inability to control harvest that is the problem there. It's something else, and this question is asking is the management system that's in place, the management plan that's in place for this stock, is it able to effectively control the harvest, and that's the question that's being asked right here.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay, thanks. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I would just dovetail with what Mike said. It feels like we're perhaps conflating two different issues here. The first, as Mike said, is we're evaluating whether management can stay below the ACL for each sector of the fishery on a regular, repeated annual basis, and it strikes me, as with a lot of these very limited, short-duration fisheries, such as the recreational fishery for red snapper in recent years in the South Atlantic, that's very difficult to do.

We have a similar fishery, that's of a super limited duration in North Carolina, and that's the North Carolina state-managed fishery for southern flounder that had very limited participation windows the last few years. It wasn't open this year for recreational fishing, and they blew by the ACL, and so I think we're kind of combining two different issues here. Whether going by the ACL reflects the current assessment numbers that we're all seeing on the water is one issue, but that seems

separate from what the issue is that we're raising on this particular row of data that Mike's working on right now.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks for your input, Paul. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, I guess, is there any suggestion for something different than a one? Okay. Not seeing any, I'm going to slide down to it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well, I mean, I guess, to change that to a three, what would the rationale -- Like, in the definitions of the risk levels, if it was a three, it would be at a lower risk, right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right. There would be a lower risk of overfishing, because the management regulations that are in place, and the management system, the way the fishery interacts with that, is keeping harvest at a level that is below the regulatory limit.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I did have Chris here, slated for comment, and then John and Chris Conklin. Chris.

MR. KIMREY: Obviously, it seems like the answer to your question, Mike, is no. It has to stay at a one, but what's sitting here just burning me up, and I'm sure everybody else, is all the differences between the commercial and recreational that lead up to that number one, and that's what I was talking about a minute ago. The way -- For red snapper, during the commercial season, seventy-five pounds a day, it's -- Their numbers are -- It doesn't matter -- I'm trying to be political here, but it doesn't matter where their seventy-five pounds, where or when it originates, and they are bound to report no more than seventy-five pounds per day, okay, during the commercial season, and they're fishing off of a quota.

You know, I would say that, for the commercial sector, the risk of overfishing is hugely smaller than recreational. Like Paul referred to southern flounder in North Carolina, which, anytime they open it, because of the mindset of the general public, it is a panicked fishery, while it's open, and they blast past the ACL. In North Carolina, with American red snapper, on the recreational side, or even the charter boat and headboat, we never have that option to blast past an ACL, because we can't even get out in the inlet. This year was no different, and I've been complaining about it being open in July since I've been on the AP, but that's a whole another topic.

What leads up to the reporting on the recreational side and how that -- All that information that's generated is so much different than the commercial side, and I know you're lumping them in for one single metric, but it just bugs me that it's that way. I mean, that is -- That is one of the biggest problems with red snapper in the southeast Atlantic, is the differences in where that data is coming from. I mean, that's the problem. It is, and everybody knows that, right? A show of hands? No show of hands. I'm just kidding, but --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Chris. John, and then Chris Conklin.

MR. POLSTON: Mike, I know you explained to me we're not going to break it out differently, because we're talking about total catch or whatever, but, since you're rating it one, two, three, since commercial is not basically overfishing, and recreational is, would that be enough to move it to a two, instead of a one?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That's the AP's -- That's up to you all. It's your recommendation, and so, if you want to say it's a two, and that's your reasoning, then you can state that.

MR. POLSTON: Well, I mean, if it's got to be left like it is -- Like I said, in my opinion, they should be broken out, but I understand why you're not breaking them out, and so I would say it's not a one, because commercial's not overdoing it, and that would be because saying you guys aren't managing it properly, and the commercial part is being managed properly, and so I would say move it to a two. That's my reasoning.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was just wanting you to know that the commercial quota is much smaller than the recreational, and so the percentage overage, even though it says it's under 15 percent, is -- The percentage point on the commercial side is much smaller than a percentage point on the recreational side. I wish I could put like one-and-a-half there. That would be cool, but, you know, this just screams, you know, exactly what we always been talking about. We can't control the effort on the recreational side, but it would perhaps look better if we had a more finite universe to compare to.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes. Thank you, Chris. I'm certainly not trying to rush through any of this. I'm sure that everybody's kind of looking to break. What are we thinking? It's 12:22 now.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess before we break, if we can get -- Is the final decision a two or a one? A two. I see a two. Okay.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So what do we think? Return at 1:45? Is that enough time or -- All right. Let's get some food and try and be seated at 1:30.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Welcome back, everybody. After a fairly abbreviated lunch here, I think we're just going to be waiting a couple of minutes, until Mike gets back, so we can finish up the red snapper, and then we're going to move a little bit away from the agenda and continue on with things. Okay, Mike, and whenever you're ready, I guess.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so we are continuing on through the risk tolerance scoring for red snapper. The next category that we're looking for is the potential for discard losses, and so this is looking at our dead discards, a large proportion of the removals of the population. This is something that gets evaluated in the -- In each of the assessments, as they look at the dead discard amounts relative to the removals.

The last assessment indicated that dead discards were over 90 percent of the removals, in terms of number of fish, for red snapper, and so that puts it kind of in the default category of a high-risk situation for dead discards being a significant proportion of that total catch. Is there any reason for that to be scored as something other than a one for this stock?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I guess we're open for discussion on that. I don't think so, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Next, moving to annual commercial value, and so, for this metric, we're looking at a couple of a couple of aspects of the commercial kind of measurements of the value for the commercial fishery, and so we're looking at total annual revenue, and then the total trip revenue, and so, in terms of the total annual revenue, looking at that same time period, we talked about before 2018, through 2022, and red snapper averaged about 5.8 percent of the total annual revenue, and so that's kind of like the middle ground, the between 1 and 10 percent.

Then, in terms of the total trip revenue, the average was at 29.7 percent. That, again, is kind of that middle ranking, between 10 and 40 percent. Now, this value, and the column -- The scores in Column J, and so like these preliminary values, and this is how this was scored when the SSC developed the analysis in 2017, and so that doesn't need to have any bearing. It's based on what you all are seeing in the fishery now, and what the data is indicating in the more recent time, and so what is indicated by kind of the default guidelines would be a score of two, a medium risk, in terms of the value to the commercial fishery. Is there any reason to score this as anything other than a two, a medium risk of overfishing, from the commercial standpoint?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Any input on this from anybody in the commercial sector that harvests, represents harvesters? Looking around the room, I don't see any hands, Mike. John.

MR. POLSTON: Well, my -- If you're saying now strictly commercial, and going by the numbers you had before, that we've been under, as far as going over our quota or whatnot, would it be better at a three than a two?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, as far as the annual catch limit, the commercial has exceeded its commercial -- Its annual catch limit, in four out of five years, and it's just been by a smaller margin. It's been by less than 15 percent, but it has gone over the ACL in four out of five years.

MR. POLSTON: I get it, but, just for example, this last year, it went over 12 percent, or something like that, but that -- In no way, shape, or form was it the fisherman's fault. It was the data was pathetic, and it came out pathetically slow, and the fishery was at ninety-something percent, and I think we got the closure like two weeks later, and they closed it, and so that was not the commercial fishermen's fault that it went -- That was the people that keep the books.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and none of this is -- In all of this, it's not specifically looking at is this the fishermen's fault, or is it the stock's fault, or is it the management's fault, and it's looking at the totality of the situation. You know, in that aspect, in the previous ranking, is management able to effectively do its job, in terms of being able to limit harvest to the ACL? You know, what is it looking like, and, in terms of the commercial value, typically you're going to have a greater risk of overfishing, for something that's highly valued commercially, because there's going to be more incentive to catch larger amounts of it. People are going to want more of it, and so that's kind of how it all fits, but none of this is necessarily assigning blame to the fisherman for that aspect.

MR. POLSTON: Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: I mean, I second John, for changing that to a three. I mean, it seems like that it's not a medium or high risk, and, again, I know we're not assigning blame here, but the commercial guys wouldn't have overfished if the quota had been closed a little sooner. It's not their fault. I mean, that's the point that John is trying to make, but I would second moving that to a three, versus a two.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Unless we need an official motion to do that, I think that is the will of the panel at this time.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you. All right, and so, next, we'll move down to recreational desirability, and, to kind of get a handle on this, we look at the targeted trips, and so these would be trips that report targeting this species. This would be your primary -- The way the data are recorded, when MRIP surveys are conducted, they ask what was your primary target, or your secondary target, and then there's also the question of what was harvested, and so either a primary, secondary, or, if that fish was harvested, and that would have been like caught and landed, then that's what would be included in this aspect.

In terms of the recreational targeting, from 2018 to 2022, annual recreational targeted trips range in between 5 percent to 36 percent of recreational trips in the region. The average was 19 percent, and so that would put it at a higher risk of -- A higher risk of overfishing, by the default metrics. Is there reason to have this as something other than a three?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I feel like this might be, Mike, a little bit misleading, because the recreational desirability in this row is -- I think that's specific to whether we're operating within a recreational mini -season or outside of it, and so, of course, you're going to get very different answers, in my opinion, whether you're within one of those mini-seasons or not, and so this one is really hard to evaluate, in my opinion, and hard for us to put a number on, as an AP.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, and I misspoke. I looked at the wrong direction. It would be a one. It would be a high risk. That's what I was intending. It would be a high-risk categorization, and so is there a reason for this to be anything but a one?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mike, I'm not seeing any hands.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Continuing down then, in terms of social concerns, so we have a metric for the social concerns. That is we use the social quotient, and we look at reliance on this species by community. In order to get estimates for this meeting, we had to look at the county level. We would like to get a little bit more refinement to those data, and look at the community level, but I am going to show what our social scientist, Christina, had gathered regarding the social risk ratings.

This metric, what we're looking at is the number of communities that are showing reliance on red snapper, and most of these communities have low reliance, from a commercial fishing standpoint, and most also from a recreational standpoint. It seems that a lot of communities have kind of moved away from red snapper, and have become more reliant on other fish species, and I'll zoom-in a little bit.

We only have really a couple of communities where there's been expressed some level of reliance. It was noted, for the recreational, Charleston County in South Carolina, and St. Johns County in Florida, but the overall recommendation, based on the number of counties relative to the reliance that those communities have shown on this fishery, is that it would be a low risk, and so, from the social standpoint, that would give a recommendation of a three for this score. Is there any reason for something other than a three?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Again, no hands, Mike, and, I mean, I would just like to say that it would be kind of hard for any community to really rely on a species that doesn't have much available to be taken. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you. Point well taken. Finally, environmental attributes, and so this is scored a little bit differently than the human dimensions and the biological attributes, in the sense that the human dimensions and biological attributes, what we'll do is -- We take an average of those scores to develop those different aspects.

The environmental attributes are more like an on/off switch. Is there something, from an environmental standpoint, that poses a greater risk of overfishing of this stock than it would be otherwise?

Some of the attributes that are common could be ecosystem importance, where there's a high risk if there's a lot of dependency from the ecosystem. Is it a keystone species? Does it affect structure of habitats? Is it a top predator, that affects food chains, things like that, such that there would be detrimental effects if there were overfishing of that stock? Is it being affected negatively by climate change, or is it being affected, potentially negatively, by other environmental variables, talking about regime shifts that would be causing declines in the population, anything of that sort, and so are there any environmental attributes that would be potentially having a negative effect on red snapper? It's either a yes or no. If there are things, then it gets a one. If there's nothing, then it gets a zero.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: For red snapper, essentially, if we are considering that a predatory fish, which it is, we wouldn't really be considering it as a problem. We would be considering some of the fish it might be feeding on -- That they might have the problem.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right. Say, if it's a species that keeps some other species -- That, if it becomes too populous, it could become a nuisance, if that's something that kind of keeps something else in check, and then that would be something where you would put a little bit more importance on that, that there is a risk from overfishing that stock.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Would shark deprivation be an issue here? I'm trying to think about that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess I would probably -- I don't know that I would categorize red snapper as being a -- Like, if overfishing of red snapper occurred, would there be a negative effect on sharks? I would probably say no, and so that might be the way to think about these environmental aspects. Either is red snapper at risk of being affected by the environment, or, if red snapper were

overfished, if overfishing occurred of red snapper, would that have a negative effect on the environment?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Or the adverse. If underfishing, or under retention, of the red snapper was having a negative effect on the environment, by predation on other species. I mean, can we reverse engineer the same equation?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It's only considering for overfishing, because that's what is presenting the -- That's what's presenting the risk, and kind of the direction is that if you're -- If you are at a higher risk level, if there are larger ramifications from overfishing a stock, either on that stock or on others, then the tendency -- The response to that would be that you would have a little bit of a larger buffer in between your overfishing limit and your ABC, to make sure that you don't go over your overfishing limit. Underfishing, like you're talking about, where you're well under your limit, that's not necessarily a risk to that stock, because you're taking less than what the limit would define.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'm just trying to quantify the burden that the current population of red snapper is having on other species, I guess is really my point.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and that point is well taken, and so I guess I would -- The way that I would think about that is, if we were not talking about red snapper, and say we were talking about a shadow fish species, that is being eaten by red snapper, that you all think is being eaten by red snapper, then that's something that would have a risk associated with it, because it's getting eaten by red snapper, and it's having a predator that's affecting it, and so there needs to be more preservation to keep -- To build up that stock.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: But where is the conversation of overfishing coming in, and what species of fish that are overfished are contributing to the decline in those other fish? It seems like it's only a one-way elevator. I mean, maybe I'm misinterpreting the whole thing, but it just -- It seems one way.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That conversation would come within deciding management decisions, and like that would come beyond just this one aspect. Like this evaluation, the scoring, is one part of the ABC setting process, and that wouldn't be addressed in this aspect. That would probably be addressed with -- Probably in more of a management context, because you're not talking about a stock that you're legally required to change your fishing, because you're overfishing it in that aspect, and you're talking about a stock where you're trying to affect something in a different way than your legal requirements would discuss.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not seeing any hands, it looks like there aren't any environmental aspects having a negative effect on red snapper, and so that would be just a zero, and so that's the scoring that we've gone through, and we do have a number associated, and a category associated, but I want to note that the way that this is scored -- There's some dynamic aspect of the boundaries.

They shouldn't change very much, but the way that this is set up is for a third of the scores, from all of the species that are being looked at, to be in the high, medium, low risk category, and so this

number may change what category it falls in by a little bit, once we get through this round of several species that we're talking about, but it probably is not going to change very much, and so it's -- Your recommendation would be these numbers, and these numbers would go to the council, and they would consider your recommendation, with the SSC's, as well as any other information that they bring to the table.

That's all we have for red snapper with the risk scoring. It's also kind of a first run-through of something that we're going to go through for several other species. We're trying to work this so that it can be a smoother part of the regular process for these fishery performance reports, as well as when we go through our acceptable biological catch setting processes for our stock assessments, and we have several species that we're going to be addressing in stock assessments. They're going to be finishing up soon, and so that's why we need to kind of do some catch-up in this meeting and go through several of these.

In the future, we'll probably be addressing one to two of these, as we address fishery performance reports, within our AP meetings, but I think we're going to now pause on the risk ratings for species, and we're going to be heading over to Wally for the Southeast Reef Fish Survey presentation.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike.

DR BUBLEY: All right. Is everybody ready for a change of pace, a little bit? All right. This is an annual thing, and we've given this in the past, and so just kind of an update of where the SERFS sampling stands after the 2023 season. It's kind of an odd timing now, because we've actually finished the 2024 season recently, but we don't have the data associated with it, and so, because we're giving this in the fall, instead of the spring, like we do other times, it'll be about a year lag, and so just bear with me on that stuff.

I definitely want to thank the coauthors on here though, especially Dr. Julie Vecchio, who ran all the chevron trap analysis for this project, and Nate Bacheler, from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center up in Beaufort, who ran the video analysis, and so there will be a combination of the two, and we'll get into that shortly.

The overview we'll have is just what SERFS is, basically what our plan was, what we're seeking to do each year when we're going through this process, how we went about doing it with the survey design, and then the activities from 2023, and so we'll focus on both the trap and video abundance indices for certain species that you probably care more about, and then we also have some of the information, like length and distribution, from the catches for those species as well, and then I'll get into -- Again, it's the planned 2024 activities, but that's basically what we did this year, and so I'll give you any updates on if that has changed at all.

First, I just want to start off with some caveats with this. This isn't an update of stock status, and so, going into an assessment, you have a lot of things besides just these indices of abundance. You have age compositions, like compositions, landings data, and a lot of stuff goes into it, and so this is just from this survey, just to give you an idea of what we're seeing when we're out on the water.

All of the stratification units, models, all the stuff that goes into an assessment, doesn't necessarily mean how we're doing it here, and so what we do is, for all the species, we do it exactly the same,

so we don't have to deal with this, and so it's going to be slightly different, potentially, what I'm showing you here, than what is in one of the assessments, and so just be aware of that as well as we go through this, and some of those have not been reviewed in SEDAR, or other assessment frameworks, and so things like white grunt, which may never be assessed, and we'll see what happens with that, but we have some of the indices of abundance for species like that, or species that are more ecologically important, like tomtate, that will show up here, but they're not assessed, and so you won't see those in other documents as we go.

As we stand, SERFS, the Southeast Reef Fish Survey is made up of three partners, and so we've got the MARMAP group, which you probably heard a lot of, and that's been around the longest time, the SEAMAP South Atlantic, and then SEFIS. All of those acronyms are on the bottom, if you're interested, but what's been going on with these groups is that we have collaborated, and had the same efforts throughout the years, to ensure that we're doing things consistently and covering as much ground as we can.

The chevron video trap sampling is specifically targeting hard-bottom habitats, and so we're trying to put these on areas that potentially could have fish. They might not necessarily have fish, but they potentially could, in depths from fifteen to about 110 meters, from April through October, and this trap, this gear, has been used consistently since 1990, and so we haven't changed the specs of the trap, how we fish it, the bait, any of that stuff. It's been fished the same way over this time period and the reason for that is -- The thought is, if we see catches changing, while we're doing everything exactly the same, the thought is that it's monitoring what the population level is doing, whether it's going up or down, and so that's the reason why we standardized it.

The traps are baited with menhaden and soaked for roughly ninety minutes, and then, since 2011, all the traps have two video cameras on them, and you can see, here, we've got one that faces towards the mouth of the trap and one that faces on the other direction, and what we use that for is we get some information on the number of fish that are there, and the types of fish that are there, but we also get information about habitat as well, and so we can get some ideas of if we're dropping this where we wanted to drop it, or is it some sand bottom that we happened to miss where we were shooting for.

The chevron video trap universe is roughly 4,300 sampling stations from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to about Port St. Lucie, Florida. We just randomly select from that group of them, with some buffers around, so we don't have stations right on top of each other, but we try to target about 1,500 every year, since SEFIS has come onboard with and completed the SERFS group.

The way that we divvy up the tasks are all of us are out on the water fishing during those months that I mentioned, but, once we get the data, the MARMAP and SEAMAP group, that are based out of South Carolina DNR, are responsible for those catch indices, as well as the life history information, and so any of the otoliths that we collect, we're ageing. Any of the reproductive tissues we collect, we're staging those, getting sex and reproductive maturity out of those ones. The SEFIS group, in Beaufort, North Carolina is responsible for the video indices, and so they're reading all of the videos and doing the analysis to put those together.

I will pitch that all of this -- All of these data are publicly available, and so they're on the seamap.org website. There's usually a lag of a couple of years, so we can make sure we go through the QA,/QC process and make sure the data is sound, before we release it out to everyone, but, if

you want to see the catch data from these surveys, you can find it online, and you can download individual numbers of fish that were caught per year.

I've gone through all of that, and let's get to what we actually did in 2023, and so, in total, there were eighty-six days at-sea, plus five mapping days. Over that time period, we deployed 1,800-plus gear deployments, a little over 1,500 of those chevron video traps and almost 300 CTD casts, to get some environmental data, like temperature and depth information. In those chevron video traps, we caught over 38,000 fish, from eighty-three species and, everything that we catch, we count, we measure, and we weigh them, and so we have some information about everything that came up out of the water in these traps.

We also kept almost 10,000 of these fish, from thirty-one different species, for life history information, and this is the stuff that I mentioned before, things like age, maturity, DNA for population genetics, and we collect stomach samples for diet studies, and so just a brief overview of what I'm going to be showing you today. We have this Chevron video trap data, and we're creating a catch index, and so this is a relative catch index.

As I mentioned before, we're not giving exact numbers, but we're saying, if we're seeing more fish, we're expecting that that population level increased, and so what we're kind of providing here is is the population going up or down, and that's it. We're not giving actual numbers of what's happening. We have the catch index for the traps, starting in 1990, as I mentioned, and the video index starts in 2011 and that's when SEFIS came onboard. There was no sampling in 2020, and so there's going to be a blank spot there, due to COVID-19, and then we standardize the data, using this zero-inflated negative binomial model, but what that basically means is this was trying to account for any inconsistencies between years of sampling.

Say the water temperature was colder one year than other years, and it tries to adjust the catches based on what those water temperatures are, if that fish has a preference for a warmer or colder temperature, and so with the catch data, it's fairly simple.

We have the number of fish that we bring up in the trap, and then we normalize it based on the soak time that's there, and so, if the trap was in the water for an hour-and-a-half, or an hour, we have a way to account for the fact that it was fishing for longer periods of time. For the videos, they use what's called a sum count. That's basically -- All you need to know is, about ten minutes after that trap lands on the ground, all of the sediment settles, from when it got stirred up, when the trap got in, and they're taking counts, every thirty seconds, of how many fish are on that screen, and then they're doing that over the span of twenty minutes, and so they have forty-one counts, total, individual that they're using for that.

Just to get you -- To kind of focus on what we're going to be doing, and talking about here, and so this is an example of a distribution map that we have, and this is only going to be the Chevron trap catch. Then we have the abundance, in different quintiles, and so we have them in five different bins ,and that's by number of fish per trap hour. Those warmer colors, and so the reds, are going to be higher catches. The cooler colors, like the blue, is going to be low catch, and then, where there's a white spot, that means we didn't put traps there.

You'll see this for all the species that we have in the traps, and you'll get an idea of where the fish distribution is, at least over the last five years. That's what we've been doing with these ones, and

so we have more data over time, but, when we've looked at it, it's tough to differentiate any movement patterns, or we haven't seen a lot of distribution patterns, and so we just stuck with a five-year period. Now, for the actual indices that we're going to be showing you, and this is for the catch data, and what you'll see is that it's normalized to the long-term average.

You'll see that that line at one just indicates that's average for that entire time series from 1990 through 2023, and so, if it's at a level of two, that means that it's twice what the long-term average is, or a level of 0.5 is half of that long-term average, and so, with the chevron trap catches, what you'll see is the index line, and the one we focus on is that red line that's going through. The gray shading is the 95 percent confidence interval, and so that's the uncertainty around where that line is, and then the nominal values are these black dots, and that just means that it's unstandardized data, and so those are just the raw catch values of what we had before we adjusted for things like depth and latitude and temperature and things like that.

Now we have the second component, which is the video survey, and we've tried to make it as similar as possible. Two different groups were creating these, and so it's not quite exactly the same, but the red line for the video index is also that standardized index. That's what we're looking for. The red dotted lines here are the 95 percent confidence intervals, and then the black dots, and the line connecting them, are the nominal values, and so very similar in colors, or at least that's about as good as we can do, I think, at this point.

Once we do that, we're also going to be providing these length composition data, and we don't have the age stuff, as real time as we have the length data, because we're collecting it on the boat, but this is coming from the traps, and so it's only the catch information. It's in maximum total length, and so basically trying to make that fish as long as possible, pinching the tail, and then they're in one-inch length bins, and so the bubble size within here indicates the number of fish in that length bin, divided by the total number of fish per that year, and so you'll have -- You'll see any of those bigger bubbles are going to indicate that there's more fish in that size bin.

The red line here is going to be the average total length of all of the catch for that year, and then we've added in a green arrow, which is the commercial minimum size limit, if it's got one, and then we have the pink arrow, which is the total length at 50 percent maturity for the female, and so these are all kind of important indicators, with some of these species, to see where the population level is compared to where those points are.

You'll notice, in some of these spots, there's some missing bubbles here, and that's just an issue with rounding. In those previous years, we were looking at fork lengths, instead of total lengths, and, when we convert to total length, and then round it, sometimes there's a gap, and so just be aware that those are just artificial, due to rounding.

Now here are the species that we'll look at today. There's -- At this point, there are six of them here that are with the chevron video traps, and they're listed in order here of the abundance of what we actually caught, and so tomtate is the most abundant species that we caught. Scamp was number twenty-three, and so we'll cover these ones that you might find of interest.

With tomtate here, we have the distribution map. You can see they're pretty widely distributed, in relatively shallow water, and other than a dip, probably in the mid 2000s, to 2015 or so, it's been pretty consistent. It's bouncing around that one-to-one line, but, looking at the length distribution,

what you'll see is it's -- You haven't seen any other ones yet, and so maybe it's not jumping out at you, but it's really tightly packed, and so we always joke around about using a tomtate as a standard length of measurement, because it seems like every single fish that we come up with is basically the same size.

Vermilion snapper, you can see it's also pretty widely distributed. The population, a similar kind of thing. We had a dip in the early 2000s, and, since then, it's gone back up to kind of average levels, and it's bouncing around there in the last few years.

Now with the video index, and we have one with this, we show similar trends. It's just, obviously, a shorter time series, and so it's not going to be quite as drastic, because it doesn't have some of these larger ranges that we have earlier in that time series with the traps, but what we see is that it's -- The last few years has basically been bouncing around that average for the year.

Vermilion snapper, we've seen a slight increase in the size of the fish, and then, in more recent years, it has pretty much leveled out. The minimum size limit is right around where the average size of the vermilion snapper is now, and the female maturity is way lower. There's -- We very rarely catch vermilion snapper that aren't mature, and so they mature very quickly.

Black sea bass, they're a lot more shallower than some of these other species, and it's no surprise to anyone else that this continues to go down. I mean, this is one species that I remember, twenty years ago, being on one of these vessels, and catching these fish, and you'd go to one of these shallow stations, and it was just 200 to 300 in a trap, and now it's not like that anymore. The video index is showing something similar. It's just going down.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Can I ask a question?

DR. BUBLEY: Sure.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Paul, go ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Thank you, James. Just a point of clarification, Wally. On this horizontal dashed line, that's on the Y-axis of one, is that -- You said that's a long-term running average line?

DR. BUBLEY: Yes.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: So the point I was just trying to wrap my head, and we can come back to this at the end of the presentation, but that line, that horizontal dashed line, will coalesce towards the points, eventually, if you have a whole bunch of years like red snapper and years of high relative abundance. That line is going to start trending up towards those points, and vice versa. If you have a number of years, for example, for black sea bass, where the relative abundance is lower, that dashed line is going to start dropping towards those points. Is that correct?

DR. BUBLEY: Correct. Yes. All right. Here's the size distribution of black sea bass. There's a slight increase when SEFIS came onboard, but pretty level at that point. The minimum size limit for the fishery, and then the female maturity. Female maturity, again, they mature at a pretty small size.

Red snapper, obviously, more in the south than in the north, but we do find them throughout the range, and Chip was showing this already, but, basically, we're seeing an increase, since about 2008, or 2009, in this survey, and it has sort of leveled off the last few years, but it has leveled off at a pretty high level, three-times what the average is over that time period.

The video index is showing something very similar, and so they've had an increase, essentially, since they've been coming on, or just after they came on, and it has sort of leveled off the last couple of years, but it's still at a very high level.

Here, you can see the length distribution. I mentioned before that each year is relative to itself, and so you can see those really big bubbles in those early years, and that's because we didn't catch a lot of red snapper, and so you're divvying up all those size bins, but between fewer of them, and so those bubbles are bigger, which is why, when you get to the further right, when we start to catch more red snapper, those bubbles get smaller, even though we're catching way more at that time period.

This is just supposed to give you a distribution pattern over the years, and it's kind of interesting with this one, as well as a couple other species, is you can really see some year classes pretty well, and so, if you look over here, at about 2005 or so, if you follow this up right, you can see this level of that year class going through, and so we see them getting bigger, and getting older, as we're going through, and we don't see it as much now, in the more recent years, and that's probably because we have so many more fish that it gets blurred, and so it shows up well in those earlier years, because you had one really big year class, and now we've had a lot of year classes that have gone through. The female maturity is below the level of the average size that we're catching in the traps.

Here is gray triggerfish. It's pretty widely distributed inshore and offshore. The population trends are a little lower in the last couple of years, but they're still relatively close to where that long-term mean is, and then the SEFIS video index is showing something similar. It's a dip in the last couple of years, but it's still hanging around where that long-term average is. Here's the length distribution, the minimum size limit, and the female maturity.

Red porgy, which is a slightly deeper species that we're catching, more on the outside portion of our range, and red porgy has gone down, not surprisingly, and I think you were all aware in the last few years, but -- I don't know if this trend will continue or not, but it's starting to tick up again, and so we're hoping that we continue with this through 2024 and up, but these last two years are the first couple of years that we've actually seen an increase from the previous year, and so that's something. It's still not ideal. It's still pretty low, but it's something that maybe is trending in the right direction. The same with these video -- The video index shows something very similar.

What you will notice between these two, the video and the traps, is that they mirror each other pretty well, and I think that's pretty good indication that we're getting an idea of what's actually going on out there where the traps are being dropped. The red porgy size is getting slightly larger, but maintained over the last fifteen years or so. Then the minimum size limit and the female maturity.

Stenotomus is scup and longspine porgy. It's pretty difficult to tell apart at times, especially if they've been beat up in the trap when they're brought up, and this used to be a really high-catch-rate species for us. A lot of times, it was in the top three or five that we had, in previous years, and it's way down there now. This is similar to some of these other species like black sea bass, where we've seen this dip, and it has pretty much just stayed down lower than what we were typically seeing in the earlier 2000s and 1990s. Here's the size distribution, and so they've slightly increased in size over this time period.

White grunt, we have the distribution more northerly, and so white grunt kind of has that disjunct population, and so you've got this group up off of North Carolina, and then you have a big gap, and then, down in the Keys, and in the Caribbean, white grunt show up again, and so it's kind of a weird pattern, distribution pattern, where they don't have -- We're seeing almost none of these fish anywhere south of say mid-South Carolina. The pattern is bouncing around a little bit.

The last couple of years have been a little bit lower than the long-term average, but it's still in the ballpark. It's not any super-concerning trends like we've seen with black sea bass. The same thing, a shorter time series, for the video index. It kind of goes up, and it goes down, but it's in the general vicinity. The general size of the catches that we've had, and the female maturity.

Then almaco jack a little deeper-water species, and they've started to show up a lot in our traps. You can see, in the last couple of years, they're sort of on a similar trajectory as red snapper were, and, actually, even more so, and so, if you look at that numbers, in some of the years -- In 2019, it was almost five-times what the long-term average was, and so it's been pretty high in recent years, and we've seen similar on the videos as well, is that, since 2011, it's been increasing. Here's the average size, and so you can see -- Because those circles are getting smaller as we go to the right through the years, you can see that we're catching a lot more of them as well. There's the minimum size limit.

Red Grouper, and so this is a lot spottier, patchy distribution that we've seen in the traps, and, again, this is another one that has dipped down, and stayed low for quite a while. In the last couple of years, and, again, I'm trying to be optimistic, and we've seen an uptick, in the last couple of years, and so that's maybe a sign of something moving forward.

The video index has showed kind of something similar, but this is where the longer time series actually elucidates this a little bit better, because, if you look at the trap index, up on top, you see that they were at really high levels in the 1990s and 2000s, and then they dropped down a lot, and so it's a concerning trend that we see in this index.

If you look at the video index, it just kind of bounces around that one line, and that's because the videos came in after that large peak, and so, if you're just looking at the video index, that is over thirteen years, you would say, oh, the population looks relatively stable, and it might be relatively stable, but it's stable at a lot lower level than it used to be, prior to, and so that's why longer time series are a little more beneficial and give you a better picture of what's actually happening out there.

Here's the length distributions for the red grouper, and, in this case -- In the last couple of years, we've seen it go down, and that's actually a good sign, because that's indicating that we're having more smaller red grouper that are recruiting into this population, and that's one of the concerns

with things like red grouper, or black sea bass, is it's not so much a fishery, and it's more of a recruitment issue, and so the fact that we're seeing a lot more small red grouper is reason for some optimism. Hopefully they'll turn into big red grouper. There's the minimum size limit and the female maturity.

Then gag grouper, and gag has been relatively consistent in the traps. While we don't catch a ton of them in the traps, it has maintained the level, for the most part, with actually an uptick in this last year, and we think that might be a recent class that's coming in. The video index shows -- Earlier on in the video index, they had some higher levels, and then it has maintained, around since 2016 or so, and then here's the length distribution, and the same thing with the gag that I was talking about the red grouper. We see a lot more of these smaller fish, which indicates they're potentially moving in. We've got a year class that's moving in and will take over from that point. There's the female maturity and minimum size limit.

Scamp is the last one that has the trap catch data. It's a little deeper water. Scamp has gone down, since the early 2000s and has stayed relatively low at that point. The video has shown something similar. It has gone down, but, again, it's a shorter time series, and so it doesn't look as dramatic, because it didn't have those higher periods in the 1990s and 2000s, though this population -- Sort of the mean size has decreased, and so maybe that is another year class that's coming through, because we see a bunch of small fish that most recent year. There's the minimum size limit and the female maturity.

Then there's a few species that we have just from the video, and not from the trap catches, because we don't catch them in large enough numbers to be able to create an index, and so I'll present the hogfish, mutton snapper, gray snapper, and greater amberjack, but we're not going to have that other information about the distribution pattern, or the length distribution, because we don't have that information from the videos.

Hogfish has maintained relatively stable since the videos came onboard. Mutton snapper, we've seen an increase, a pretty substantial increase, over the time period from 2011 to 2023, and gray snapper as well. We've seen an increase of about one-and-a-half times what the long-term average is over that time period. Then greater amberjack, just like the almaco jack, has shown a pretty big increasing trend as well in the videos.

The 2024 plans, as I said, we've already done, but we started sampling in mid-April this year. We ended about a week ago. We had four vessels this year, and so, in previous years, we had the R/V Palmetto, which is based out of South Carolina, the R/V Savannah, based out of, surprise, surprise, Savannah, and then the NOAA Ship Pisces but, this year, we also had a new addition, and s we had the R/V Lady Lillian.

This vessel was replacing the Lady Lisa, and that was an old shrimp trawler that we used for the Coastal Trawl Survey, the SEAMAP Coastal Trawl Survey, that covers shallower water, but it's large enough, and it has the capabilities that we can actually put traps, these chevron video traps, off of that as well, and so it's been nice to have another platform that we can utilize.

We had all those four vessels out this year. We also attempted to extend the northern extent of that chevron video trap survey to the council boundaries, and so, as I mentioned before, typically, we've gone up to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. This year they went from Cape Hatteras, North

Carolina to the North Carolina,/Virginia border, trying to utilize similar protocols, and methods, to see if we can get some catch data from up there that would coincide with some of the catch from the lower portion.

We also did some sampling in some of the wind energy lease areas, and this has provided some baseline levels, and so nothing has been built there yet, but, at this point, they have something to go from. If they put these turbines there, they have a way to compare what it was like prior to the turbines.

We also did some regional mapping, and so they were trying to get some ideas of what proportion of the shelf off of the southeastern United States has hard-bottom habitat, and so they were doing some mapping from -- I think they were going from the Virginia/North Carolina border, but they were going from there, all the way down south, and trying to get some ideas of what sort of habitat is there.

Then, for the life history sampling, and it's not something you really need to know too much about, but what we've had to do is we've had to balance the life history sampling with the actual funding that we have, and so what we do, for the reproductive data, is we rotate species every three years, and so we collect -- In this case, we collect the red fish for three years, and so vermilion, red porgy and red snapper, but this year was the first year we've transitioned over to the monochromatic species, and so we have the black sea bass, the gray triggerfish, and the white grunt that we're taking reproductive samples from, and that will happen for the next three years, until they rotate out again.

I wanted to thank all of the staff from these groups. This project has been going on a long time, and so, obviously, there have been a lot of people involved with this, all the research vessels and crews, and then the NOAA funding and the SC DNR support. I'm more than happy to take some questions. This is just a video, a brief video, of kind of the sampling, and then some of the video is underwater, as we're going through this process.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Wally. I did see Andrew's hand go up.

MR. FISH: Do you put the traps in the -- Do you try to put in them in the same place, the same time of year, year after year after year?

DR. BUBLEY: It would be nice if we could put them in the same time, at the same place, but we don't. We don't have the -- We're based on when we have the vessels, and when the weather allows it, and so that's one of the reasons why we standardize them, is, if we send it -- If we put it out at a different time of year -- You might expect different fish to be caught in September than you would in April, potentially, and so that's one of the things that we try to standardize for, is we look at day of year, and we try to adjust it based on that.

MR. FISH: But do you target to try it, and don't if you don't kind of thing, or no?

DR. BUBLEY: No, and it's just -- It's too unpredictable for us to even attempt that. I think it would -- That would turn very -- It would be haywire real quickly, and so we just basically -- We get what we can, when the weather allows it. Especially at the beginning of the season, the weather is kind of spottier, and so we just go wherever we can get the boat out to.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. You know, I can't help but think about the impact that the Deepwater Horizon spill had on all of these species, and you take a look, from 2010 right on through, and, you know, we were told that we got extremely lucky that the loop current kind of broke away from the connection to the Deepwater Horizon the areas that were affected, you know, but, when the dispersant was added, and things went to the bottom, essentially, we don't know what happened.

We don't know if, you know, some of that was carried, you know, around south Florida, and up the coast. Has anybody ever tried to do a layover, a time sequence of when that happened, and you kind of compare it to the different life cycles, and regenerative cycles, of some of these species, and see if that timeframe, you know, would align to any of the declines in any of these species? I mean, has anybody ever like really thought to do that, and, I mean, I know it may not be super important for this body of people to actually conduct that research, but has anybody asked that question, and really done any digging on that, because I mean, that could be an environmental factor here that we're just not seeing or, you know, don't have any information on.

DR. BUBLEY: I don't have any information on that. That's not something, at least with our group, that we've looked at, and, obviously we're just doing -- We're catching -- We're looking at the fish that are there, and we're not getting a good feel for what would be in the water column, and so, if there has been work done on if the dispersants showed up in the Atlantic, that would be something that potentially we could look into, but I'm not aware of it, and it's not my specialty to talk to.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I appreciate it. I was kind of looking to anybody in the room as well. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Wally, thanks for the presentation. I had a question, and I listened to AP members about the shoreward increase in range of red snappers in the South Atlantic region, and they're now populating shallower depths, and I noticed a lot of your heat plots, for a lot of these species, show the greatest relative abundance, from your chevron survey, in the shallower waters, and my question to you is, does SEFIS, or MARMAP, have any plans to expand this survey to more -- To shallower waters that aren't characterized as thoroughly as those deeper waters on the shelf?

DR. BUBLEY: As of right now, I think our sampling universe is about where we're expecting it, versus -- Outside of having that northward and potentially southward shifts. The range that they're at -- I think we don't have a good grasp as to where habitat is in those shallower zones, and I think that would take a lot of effort, to get to the point where we could find some habitat in that area. We have the trawl survey that goes shallower, but, because it's a trawl survey, it's not covering any sort of hardbottom habitat. They're trying to avoid anything that's going to get them snagged, and so they’re looking for more sand or flat pavement=type bottom.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I was just going to suggest if you all are looking to come in under 200 feet or so, the Top Spot chart maps would be a good starting point for that kind of structure.

DR. BUBLEY: Yes, and, I mean, we're going to about fifteen meters or so, forty-five feet or so, and forty-five or fifty feet is what we're -- That’s typically the shallower sites that we're dealing

with. It's also -- For some of it, and, obviously, the trap catch will be not as affected with this, but the videos are -- Especially when you get in real shallow water, in the brown or green water, they're not very helpful there as well, because you have low visibility, and so we can't really see much with the videos either.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Randy McKinley.

MR. MCKINLEY: I mean, this is not a question, and just an observation, and it's sort of staggering to see the jacks and all. I mean, three-times what you had seen and stuff, and, I mean, man, those things, they eat a lot of fish. I mean, you know, we're putting all the blame on maybe the Americans, but definitely seems like it needs to be time to raise the limits on jacks. I mean, those things eat a lot of fish. Those big ones can eat a big beeliner very quick. Just an observation.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Randy. I've got Chris, and then Jack.

MR. CONKLIN: Just for the record, you guys are not conducting the short bottom longline sampling anymore?

DR. BUBLEY: We ended up putting an end to that, after -- Two years ago, I think, was the last year that we sampled, and part of the reason for that is because of the introduction of the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey, that cooperative longline project that we have along the coast. There's a lot of overlap between those two gears, and the areas that they're covering, and so because the SADLS survey is covering a much broader area, we've kind of ceded to them, and we're basically utilizing that data instead.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. Jack.

MR. COX: Yes, sir. I enjoyed the presentation, and I always do on this video stuff. How far back does this MARMAP survey go on the northern part of North Carolina? Like did you guys ever survey up south of Ocracoke north?

DR. BUBLEY: So, yes, and, I mean, Cape Hatteras is basically as far north as we had gone, up until this past year, but even then -- So, prior to SEFIS coming onboard, it was a lot spottier up in North Carolina and South Carolina, or Florida, because we only had one vessel, and so we were making longer trips, and so we couldn't sample that quite as thoroughly, because we only had the one vessel and it was coming from Charleston, and so it's a long distance, but, since 1996, we've included a fairly good chunk of that, and then, since SEFIS came on board in 2010, we've filled out that a lot better, and so the sampling distribution pattern, since 2010, is pretty thorough from that area that I was showing earlier.

MR. COX: I just want to say that, from about 1980, through the early 1990s, I used to do a lot of fishing off the Hatteras, and from anywhere from 120 feet out to about 250 feet, off of Ocracoke, and, during that timeframe, especially in the 1980s, there was a lot of red snappers, all different sizes.

Of course, when you got inshore a little bit, they were smaller, but I've got a lot of pictures of days that we had 500 or 600 pounds of red snapper, in the 1980s, and then it tapered way down, in the late 1990s.

DR. BUBLEY: In the 1990s, we weren't thoroughly sampling the northern and southern extents quite as well as we're doing now, and, I mean, I remember -- I first came onboard, as a graduate student, in 2003, or 2004, and, I mean, when you caught a red snapper, that was a reason to wake up everybody, basically, and it was not a common catch that we were having during that time period, but, obviously, things have changed.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I think the most recent SADLS came in this morning, or they hit the dock this morning, and do you know when that data will be available?

DR. BUBLEY: We have to wait until -- It has got to go through its QA/QC process. It will probably be -- We typically get the data early the following year, and so early 2025 would be when we first get the data, but then we would have to go through the process of our own quality control methods, as well as we'll be receiving all of the otoliths and the reproductive tracts, and so we have to process them and then read and stage those as well.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Any other questions for Wally? Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Wally. The presentation was amazing. I enjoyed it very much. This is my first time seeing this, and so please forgive my ignorance, if this is a silly question. Where do your findings go? What do you do with this information?

DR. BUBLEY: So this is a big component of the stock assessment.

MS. STEPHENS: Okay.

DR. BUBLEY: So this is the main fishery-independent survey that goes into the stock assessments, and so we're producing those indices of abundance for them, as well as any sort of age composition, age data for growth curves, reproductive sex ratios, maturity curves, that kind of thing. It's all going into those assessments, and so anything fishery-independent that's going to assessment is probably going through the shop, or at least a good chunk of it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Excellent. Thank you very much. Any other questions? Chris.

MR. KIMREY: For these chevron trap surveys, do you all do anything DNA-wise with that? Is there a random sampling, fin clipping, for each species, or how does that work?

DR. BUBLEY: It's dependent on where the funding is coming from, and if we do it, and so we don't regularly do it, but, if we have some funding come in, for a specific project, for a specific species, we'll do it for that year, and so we were taking fin clip samples for the Atlantic version of the great red snapper count, and so we were taking fin clips of every single red snapper that we came up, and so that was there. This most recent year, we've gotten some funding from the council to look at the population structure of black sea bass, and we're actually looking at this.

MR. KIMREY: That’s the whole reason I was asking.

DR. BUBLEY: We're looking all the way up to the Gulf of Maine, and so we have collaborators that are collecting fin clips from the Gulf of Maine. They're as far south as we can.

MR. KIMREY: Trying to see if there's a stock biomass like shift or whatever?

DR. BUBLEY: Yes, and we want to see if --

MR. KIMREY: That's what I was curious about.

DR. BUBLEY: Yes, and so it's increasing in the Mid-Atlantic, and we want to know is it increasing because the population's increasing, or are the fish down here shifting up there, and so that's what we're hoping to get out with this study.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Very cool. I've got Cameron, and then John.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, on the black sea bass, and so it looks like they had -- It was 2015 and 2016, and it was pretty strong, and it started dipping continually down after that. Does that correlate with the trappers being pushed off twenty miles at all?

DR. BUBLEY: I think that -- I mean --

MR. SEBASTIAN: I'm just asking, and I know it was around that timeframe when they really started to enforce the --

DR. BUBLEY: I think this is more due to -- It happened to have a really good recruitment class that year, and they just weren't followed up by any, and so they had this huge amount of fish, and then they just slowly died out of the population, and I think that's where that probably came from and why we have that big increase that one year and then a dip afterwards.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So you haven't found any indication that they shifted closer to shore? Do you have any within your sampling or anything?

DR. BUBLEY: No, and, I mean, nothing would indicate that to us, with what we've seen so far. We haven't dug into it too deep, but, anecdotally, just what I've seen, I wouldn't think so.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: John.

MR. POLSTON: My question would be, this data that you just got, you said it will be approximately a year before it's ready. Will it be in time for the next snapper assessment?

DR. BUBLEY: Yes, and so we push these things through. If there's an assessment going through, we go through the process. What we typically -- The lag that I was saying was more for when we distribute it to just the general public, when we put it on the website, but we try to get -- So, the data that were collected in 2024, we will have that information, at least in the index of abundance, and potentially with ages, for that assessment that's coming up, and we're going to try to -- We're going to see what we can get during that time period, and 2023 will definitely be available.

MR. POLSTON: (Mr. Polston's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. BUBLEY: No, I understand, and we try to push forward. If we know an assessment is coming up, we try to prioritize those, and get them through this process. I mean, right now, the otoliths were already sectioned, if we haven't sectioned all of them, and people will start reading, but we get 1,500 to 2,000 red snapper every year, and so we have to go through that process, but we do prioritize it, when we know something that's coming up, especially like red snapper. We make sure we get the most up-to-date data that we can get.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you guys. Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: I just made a quick observation, and, I mean, I'm sure this has been noted, but that that peak is about two years after snapper was closed. The sea bass population was at its peak, and it started falling off a cliff right after we closed the snapper fishery.

DR. BUBLEY: Yes, there's a lot -- All of these data are correlative, and so we don't -- We can't attribute -- It's tough to attribute some trend to something like that, and I know -- We have done some diet studies, and we haven't seen a lot of black sea bass in red snapper studies. We're actually increasing that. We're looking at a lot more red snapper studies now, to see -- Or red snapper stomachs now, to see if we can find any more black sea bass, but we haven't seen a lot of it, to indicate that, but they just seem to be eating whatever's around at that time period.

MR. CONSTANT: We just see it all the time, but we also see other species.

DR. BUBLEY: Yes, and that's the thing. I think it's whatever is prevalent around there is what they're eating, but, I mean, it also could come -- I think someone, and I don't know if it was David earlier, but someone made the comment that it could be environmental conditions, maybe the environment, because black sea bass are a colder-water species, and so maybe the conditions aren't great for them, which is why they're declining, and then the conditions are a lot better for red snapper, because they're a warmer-water species, and so there's -- Again, there's a million hypotheses.

MR. CONSTANT: So there's a lot of things to weigh, but that's too obvious to ignore, too.

DR. BUBLEY: Yeah, and so, I mean, we've looked at -- There's a reason why we looked at some diet studies, and have continued to take stomach samples, is to try to get some ideas of what they're actually eating, because that has come up. I mean, it's pretty regularly coming up in meetings, for council meetings, and Snapper Grouper AP meetings, and so that's something we're looking into.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I mean, might it be fair to assume that the juvenile, or fry, even black sea bass, may not be where the chevron trap sampling is taking place, and maybe some of that consumption of the black sea bass may be more nearshore, in those murky waters, from some smaller red snapper that may not have the interactions with in the chevron traps. I mean, it's a possibility.

DR. BUBLEY: Yes, and, I mean, we don't see the black sea bass until they're about a year old or so, because they're -- Prior to that, even if they're there, they're going to swim right through the mesh, and so we wouldn't catch them.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Any other questions for Wally? Wally, thank you very much. Mike, I think we're moving on to some of the risk assessment for the other species.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, next up, we are going to be going through golden tilefish. Now, normally, when we go through this process, it'll be at the same time as a fishery performance report, like we're doing for red snapper, and that happens at the beginning of a stock assessment, so that this is done ahead of an assessment.

That way, the ABC control rule can be applied to the assessment projections, right when they're run during a stock assessment, and things can be available in a more timely fashion. Golden tilefish is in the midst of an assessment right now. I think that one is actually wrapping up, and going to be going to the SSC pretty soon, and so we kind of -- With the timing of when the new ABC control rule went into place, versus the assessments that were going on, this is one of the ones that we're catching up on.

This is not the normal timing that we're going to have this in, but we'll take care of golden tilefish, and blueline tilefish is another one that has an assessment going on right now, that we're not starting right at the beginning, but we're before the end of it, and so we'll be addressing that one as well, but, first, for golden tilefish, starting in with the biological attributes.

The natural mortality for golden tilefish was estimated at a 0.1, which would put it at a high risk of overexploitation. It has a max age of forty years, and it tends to be one of your later-maturing, slower-growing types of species, and so the default score for that, based on that information, would be a one, a high risk of overfishing, from that regard. Is there any reason for any other scoring?

Not seeing any, I'll keep moving down, and so next to the age-at-maturity, and the age-at-maturity, at 50 percent maturity, from the last stock assessment was estimated at three years, which would put it in that medium risk category, and so is there any reason for a score other than two in that regard?

Seeing no hands, I'll move us down to the human dimension attributes. Sorry, and I'm trying to get it zoomed enough so that you can see something on the screen there. All right, and so, for the ability to regulate the fishery and keeping in -- The management's ability to keep the fishery below its ACL, the total ACL was exceeded by less than 15 percent in 2019, 2020, and 2022. 2020 and 2022 were right at the ACL, and that was less than 1 percent difference. The commercial ACL was exceeded by less than 15 percent in 2019, 2020, and 2021. The recreational ACL was exceeded by greater than 15 percent in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

I do want to note one of the differences there between the commercial and the recreational. Even though there was a high percentage of overage from the recreational ACL, the recreational allocation for that species is quite small. I think it's about 3 percent of the total ACL, and so that's why, even if the recreational was over its ACL, it didn't end up resulting in the total having a large overage itself. By this regard, and, actually, this I'll pose to you all, where you all think that this would belong, as far as overage, and is it being held to the ACL, and is there a high, medium, or low risk of it exceeding the ACL in a given year?

MR. COX: I mean, not on the commercial. No, I would keep it at one. You don't want to make -- I mean three. We're talking about golden tile.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Golden tile.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: This is another one of those like you can kind of swing both ways points, because, as you were saying, the allocation for recreational, and I'm speaking for recreational, is very low. It's, like you said, 3 percent, and now the other part of that too is these are -- This falls under the rare-event species category, and they call it that because it's rare to have an intercept, is my understanding, and a lot of the people, at least down by us, it's a fairly accessible fishery, but there's a lot of people that can quite literally just walk out their back dock, like out their back door, hop on their dock and go and access these fish, within about twenty minutes or so.

There's a high propensity of it going over the ACL perhaps, but, again, if you get one intercept, then that's going to blow it out of the water, no pun intended, and so it's a difficult one to answer. I would keep it as like a two, to kind of marry the two, for me anyway, because of all the reasons I just stated.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, David. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I've heard a two, and I've heard a three, and which one would you all like to go with?

MR. POLSTON: Well, I would have to look at it the same as I did the other. I would have to lean more towards a three, because, as far as commercial is concerned, it hasn't been over in the commercial, or, well, actually it's the opposite of what we talked about before. The commercial represents a way higher percentage than the recreational does, and so, since basically the commercial didn't go over, more or less, then I would have to lean more towards three.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, John.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so, unless I see another hand that would disagree with a three, I'm going to keep on moving down. Next is the potential for discard losses. The previous assessments have characterized the discards for this fishery as negligible. Pretty much anything that gets brought up is getting kept. Folks aren't doing a whole lot of discarding of this stock, and so that would put it in the three category. They're a very small component of the total catch. Any reason for any other scoring than that?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David Moss.

MR. MOSS: Just to take it back a step too, the one thing I would caution, with really any of these deepwater species, particularly golden tile, is, for the recreational sector, accessibility is getting easier and easier, and, you know, starting let's say about ten years ago or so, it was pretty rare for somebody to be able to go out and access this fishery, and now, with all the electronics, and boat technology and all that other stuff, it's a fairly accessible fishery now, and so just keep that in mind.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Chris.

MR. KIMREY: I mean, back to the prior block, the ability to regulate, you know, I think we decided on a three, but, like David said, even though, from the recreational sector, 3 percent is a very small amount, it also means that it makes it very easy to overfish that ACL, and there's a few factors that can affect that, and, without an intersect, you could easily blow that ACL all to pieces and may not know it.

For this block, it also applies recreationally that -- There's a few factors. Like, for us in North Carolina, when golden tile is open recreationally, and we have a stretch of good weather, there's a fair number of people that are going to make the ride to catch it, and, if there's no intersects, nobody will ever know about it, okay, and so, if you take that same group of people, when we have a stretch of poor weather, when golden tile is open, nobody's going to fish for them, and nobody is going to intersect any, but you can have two very different amounts of fish that were harvested by the same people in the same place, just off of weather.

This is something we've talked about a lot, in this AP, is access via technology. It's getting easier for people to go deeper. It's getting faster for people to go deeper, and all they need is the weather, and there's a lot of people that are going to target these fish, and so I would caution being too light just because the ACL in the recreational sector is so small.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Chris. I think that's good input.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so caution noted there, but, everybody that had noted that caution, you're still okay with the three as being the consensus moving forward, it seems, and so, continuing to scroll down to the annual commercial value, looking at the total annual revenue as well as the total trip revenue, annual revenue, for 2018 through 2022, averaged about 20.3 percent, and trip revenue averaged about 70 percent during that time, and so just kind of outlining that, again, for entities that caught golden tilefish, that was the average for the annual.

As far as the trips, these were trips that caught golden tilefish, and so, when you caught golden tilefish on a commercial vessel, this was the average revenue that would have been generated from a trip that caught golden tilefish, and so that's what was estimated for those years, from the trip revenue standpoint, as well as the annual revenue. This seems to be that, when it's caught, it's a pretty profitable fish, which will put it in that higher risk of overfishing category, and so the default would be a one. Is there any reason for anything other than a one?

Not seeing any hands, we'll keep moving down to recreational desirability. Looking at the trips that are targeting this species between 2018 and 2022, the annual targeted trips ranged from zero percent to 2 percent of recreational trips in the region, and so an average of 1 percent, and that put it right at that low risk threshold, and so the default scoring would be a three. Is there any reason for something other than a three, a low risk score, for recreational desirability?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David?

MR. MOSS: Sorry, and so this is an interesting one, because, across the whole region, you know, from Key West to North Carolina, it's probably pretty accurate, but, again, off of southeast Florida, there's a lot of people fishing for them now, and so it's -- Like, if you break it down almost to the subregions, they get fished for quite a bit down south.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I think we ought to pay a little attention to this because, David, I really haven't seen that amount of pressure, like you're talking about, but I understand you're in Florida. Here, in South Carolina, we don't have many people targeting tiles. It's usually the sword fishermen who -- When they do go out for swords, they bottom fish and catch some tile on the way in, but, as Chris was saying, it's with a 3 percent ACL, it could easily blow up just in Florida, and then you knock the other states out of the whole fishery, and it leads to closing, and so very good points.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I think, to kind of piggyback on the whole thought process there, if there is less access to some of the shallow-water fishes, that maybe the effort will quickly shift to golden tilefish, and we could be seeing a whole different risk factor there.

MR. CONSTANT: Our decent tile fishery starts at about eighty miles.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It's two hours for a lot of boats., and so any other questions, or comments?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right. Continuing to move through, and so, for the social concerns, and I'll bring back up the summary document, and scroll down. You've got to get through a couple of species to get down to -- Here's golden tilefish. The community reliance, at the county level that we saw, there's some medium reliance out of Dare County, North Carolina, and then medium to high reliance out of Monroe County, Florida. Dare County would have been the commercial fishery, as opposed to Monroe would be the recreational fishery.

The tentative recommendation was for medium community reliance, and, again, this is one that, when I spoke with Christina about this analysis, she would really like to have this at a finer scale than the county, because we've definitely heard some of the low-reliance counties have communities within them, especially commercial communities that have some higher reliance, and so this is at a coarser scale than we would like to eventually get this data down to, but this is where we're at right now, but this is also a place where, if you are aware of a community, or part of a community, that has really high reliance on golden tilefish, meaning that you depend on it greatly for targeting in your recreational trips, or you depend on it greatly for a significant portion of the income for your business, then this would be a place where -- You know, let the folks at the table know, so that can be accounted for appropriately. The tentative level was medium, and so that would be a two, but I'll put it to the AP, to see if there's any change to that, from your perspective.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David, go for it.

MR. MOSS: So again, a southeast Florida perspective, and, James, you hit on this. As the bottom fishing has gotten more difficult southeast, because of a combination of a smaller reef tract, and then, of course, with sharks pushing people kind of off of bottom fishing, this is what a lot of people are doing now.

I know we'll go out, a lot of times, even if we go trolling for dolphin or wahoo or something like that, and it slows up, and that's the first thing we hit is we'll go out -- For us, and, like you were saying, you got to go eighty miles, and we've got to go about eight, and so it's not like it's much of a trip for us to go to the golden tile grounds, and that's really kind of the tri-county area of Broward, Palm Beach, and Dade for all of it. I would keep it as a medium, at best, and, again,

considering that that area specifically gets much higher pressure than probably the rest of the region.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I mean, socioeconomic impact is definitely -- For that fish, it's very important, because, in the spring and stuff, we can't get grouper and stuff to be able to retail. The tilefish has become very important, especially, you know, March, April, May, June, before grouper season comes in, and so it's very important fish.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Randy. Anybody else have anything to add? Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. If you scroll down to the bottom, where the counties were listed, I just noticed a couple of notes that might be helpful to review when deciding on the number for the social concerns. Yes, and on community reliance there.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: These comments came out of the last fishing performance report. I'll zoom-in a bit, but these were a couple of comments that came out of the last fishing performance report that you all completed ahead of this golden tilefish stock assessment. Any -- With that additional perspective, any disagreement, from the table, with the current medium recommendation? Seeing shaking heads, so we'll continue to scroll down.

Last one in the environmental attributes, and this is one from an ecosystem perspective. It is one of those habitat affecters, because they have that burrowing behavior, and that provides habitat for themselves as well as some other provides refuge for some other fish species, and so that's been noted as one of the ecosystem importance aspects.

I'm not sure if there's others that would be in consideration from you all's perspective, but I know that's one that is talked about in the scientific literature, and it has had submersible studies done on it as well, and so that's one that's gotten brought up in previous discussions, and so that would initially say that there is a one. There is some risk, from an environmental attribute. If this species were to experience overfishing, that there would be effects on the ecosystem. Is there any disagreement with that?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Not seeing any hands, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not seeing any, and so we're through golden tilefish, and then the last one that you'll hear from me on is blue line tilefish. All right, and so blue line tilefish. Based on the last stock assessment, the methods that were applied, the natural mortality was estimated at 0.13, which, from a natural mortality would put it in a high risk category. Is there any disagreement with that recommendation with a high risk scoring for natural mortality?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Not seeing any hands.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not seeing any, continuing on, the age-at-maturity. This one is a little bit different, because we do not have an age-based assessment for blue line tilefish. The ageing, in the last stock assessment, was determined to be too imprecise to be used in that stock assessment model. We're having discussions about potentially putting more work into getting the ageing

information put in in the future, but it's not going to be a part of this update assessment that's being conducted right now. That's updating the model that happened in the last round, and so, as far as an age-at-maturity, we don't have one.

We have a length at maturity, and that's estimated at 305 millimeters. There's the approximate average maximum size. This isn't the maximum size, in terms of the biggest fish, but the estimate for how big your average fish would be at its biggest would be about 690 millimeters. That might work. Paul says twenty-seven inches, and I'll go with that, but that's the information that we have concerning age-at-maturity.

I'm not sure if you all want to consider -- If you all want to score this one or not, or if this is something that's best left otherwise. I really don't know what to do with this one, from an age-at-maturity, because we don't have the age information, and so is there anything that you all want to do, as far as a recommendation in this regard?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Not seeing any hands, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Next, in the ability to regulate the fishery, the total ACL was exceeded by more than 15 percent for this fishery in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021. The commercial ACL was exceeded by less than 15 percent in 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022. The recreational ACL was exceeded by greater than 15 percent in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, and this is, again, kind of similar to what was discussed for golden tilefish.

This is one of those rarely-intercepted species, from a recreational standpoint, and so, even with a small number of intercepts, depending on when they happen, and how many are in that intercept, that can have a big effect on the recreational estimates of catch for this stock, and so that's the landings information. That would indicate a high risk of exceeding the ACL. Is there any discussion for a score other than one for this regard?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Jack.

MR. COX: Could you tell me, on the recreational ACL, what percent exactly would have been exceeded, on the average, of those years?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Let me see. So blueline tilefish, recreational ACL, and so here would have been the exceedances, as they match this table, and so 2018, 2019, and 2020, and you see the highlights here, and so we would have had 133 percent of its ACL, 126, 335, and 143 percent of the recreational ACL.

MR. COX: Wow.

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and blueline tilefish -- It has -- The ACLs are shown in these two columns, and so they’re much closer.

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I am not sure what the discussions from -- Like this would have been much older council discussions, and so I would have to look back and see what some of the previous rationale was, in terms of the reasoning why the -- Wait a minute. Hold on. I picked the wrong column here. The recreational ACL is here, and the commercial ACL is here, again, they're

MR. COX: They're much closer.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: They're close, yes.

MR. COX: I would just keep it at a one.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: Yes, I also would keep it at a one, and one thing to remember too, and, again, southeast Florida, is, when we have that little period where like snowies are open in state waters, and they're not in federal, a lot of times, people that are fishing for snowies will catch bluelines in state waters down by me. You can get them within three miles, in that range, and so, if state waters are open, people are catching them.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and the allocation percentages came from a historical landings formula that was pretty broadly applied for several species in the South Atlantic, and so there were historical recreational landings, as well as the commercial, and I guess there were -- Probably, for golden tilefish, it was probably stilted more commercially, because the golden tilefish fishery seems to be like a much older, much more significant, commercial fishery, going back, than necessarily the blue line tilefish was, and so I think I heard one for the scoring. We'll continue moving down.

Potential for discard losses, the last stock assessment characterized dead discards as 3 percent of the total removals, and this is like the removals from both sectors, including both in that aspect, and that was only applied for the southern portion of the stock, because of the way that we have, or, in some ways, don't have data on blue line tilefish, in different pieces of the region, and that was evaluated with one part of the stock, from Cape Hatteras south, and the part of the stock that is from Cape Hatteras north is evaluated in a separate model.

Then the two are kind of combined, from the two different areas, to develop the management, but the southern portion is the only one where we had estimates for landings and discards numbers, and so the southern portion is where that 3 percent number is representing, but a small component of the total catch, and, this being a deeper-water species, there's not -- As far as we're aware, there's not a whole lot of discarding of this species, and so is there any reason for a score other than three for this aspect?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Not seeing any hands, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not seeing hands, we'll keep moving down to commercial value. Commercial value, for total annual revenue, between 2018 and 2022, was, on average 3.3 percent. For trip revenue, it was 15.1 percent, and so the 3.3 would put it in the medium-risk category, as

well as that trip revenue, and both of those point to the medium-risk category. Is there any reason for a scoring other than two, a medium risk, for commercial value?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Not seeing any hands.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No hands, and then we'll keep going. Recreational desirability, targeted trips, for recreational, ranged from zero to 2 percent from 2018 to 2022, an average of less than 1 percent, and so, in that aspect, three is the default score. Is there any reason for a scoring other than three? Not seeing hands, down to social concerns.

We have one community that's been noted as having a medium reliance, from the commercial standpoint, and that's Dare County in North Carolina, and then two recreational communities have medium to high reliance. We've got Dare County in North Carolina and Monroe County in Florida, and so the tentative risk rating was medium, for this aspect, and it was noted, in the last fishery performance report, that they're particularly important in the Outer Banks area of North Carolina, for the charter and headboat, as well as the commercial fisheries, and so there's some reliance from that area. Is there any reason for a score other than the two, for medium risk, as far as the social concerns?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No hands, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not seeing hands, we'll continue down to the environmental attributes. We don't have anything noted as far as the building behavior that you would see in like a golden tilefish. There has been some thought that blueline tilefish might be experiencing some form of impacts from climate change, in terms of range expansion.

There's been increased catches of blue line tilefish, as you get further and further north up the coast, than what there were potentially historically, such that the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has started managing blueline tilefish, within the last ten years, but kind of coming out of the last stock assessment was when the Mid-Atlantic Council picked up management of blueline tilefish, but they've been seeing blue-line tilefish, in the region from Virginia north, going back a bit further than they were starting to manage, but that's just when they started that, and so there's been some increasing catches in that region that may be indicative of climate change. Is there any reason to not have an environmental attribute point noted for blue line tilefish? Not seeing any hands, we'll put that one on.

Mr. Chair, I think this might be a good time to break, because we're going to transition in staff from me to Allie. Allie is going to lead you all through mutton snapper and then the yellowtail snapper fishery performance report.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So let's break for ten minutes or so and be back around 3:30.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right. We're going to pick up here with mutton snapper with Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. and so you're going to see me for -- My face associated with mutton and yellowtail, as the council receives these new assessments, and then takes management action, and

so that's why I'm walking you through the mutton snapper risk rating, and then I'll be walking you through the yellowtail snapper fishery performance report questions.

We'll go ahead and get started on the risk rating for mutton snapper. I will note, for this first section, we've got information from SEDAR 15A, which was completed in 2015. Lower down in the risk rating, we'll be talking a little bit about the assessment that's getting finished up now, and I already forget the number, but it'll be in there.

DR. COLLIER: 79.

MS. IBERLE: 79. Thank you, and so that assessment is wrapping up here shortly. Starting off with estimated natural mortality, like I mentioned, SEDAR 15A had a constant natural mortality averaging 0.11, based on a max age of forty years., and that puts the preliminary score at a one. Does the AP feel that that should be modified? Again, this is for mutton snapper.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'm not seeing any hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right. That brings us to age-at-maturity. Again, based off of SEDAR 15A, 50 percent mature at right under four years, which puts the score at a two, and so, again, looking for any modifications or comments on that rating.

AP MEMBER: At four years, how many inches is that animal, approximately? Do you have that?

MS. IBERLE: Chip is going to be looking that up. My apologies. I should have written that down for you guys. I remember looking at it, but it is escaping my brain. I will -- We can come back to age-at-maturity, after Chip finds that, but we'll go ahead and keep moving on for now.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Just out of curiosity, and it's probably not going to change my opinion on this, but like where is the species at 50 percent maturity? Is it like the twelve-inch range?

UNKNOWN: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: With that information, I think it'd be worth noting that the size limit change from sixteen to eighteen inches was a pretty significant measure, when we're talking about the sexual maturity of these animals, and really the risk number. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. If memory serves, that's why we changed it to eighteen, back in the day, because it was such that that huge jump from, as Chip said, all the way up to 80 percent at seventeen inches, and, also, for whatever it's worth, they're seeing a lot of small muttons down in the Keys lately. Like scary numbers a lot.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: There's two words for that. It's Helene and Milton. We see that.

MR. MOSS: Yes, but, even before that, we were seeing -- I think I told you that a buddy of mine released quite a few, on a partyboat last week, after the hurricanes, but, even before that, a lot of juveniles on the patches and stuff, more and more every year, it seems.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and that's absolutely a great sign, and, I mean, as a harvester, you know, I probably wouldn't even be opposed to a twenty-inch size limit, if we had continued problems with this fishery, but it does sound like they are rebounding. You know, I mean, you have the summertime limitations too, the spawning season limitations, even with the commercial sector at ten fish per person, and so, I mean, I think that that's been a real strong reason why the mutton snapper would look to be doing okay. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Again, that preliminary score for age-of-maturity was at two. Any desire to modify that score?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: I'm just kind of asking, just it's pretty -- I mean, from everything that we just said, it's pretty low risk, right?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I mean, I would categorize it that way, but I'm not sure that I'd be willing to change it from a two. Andrew.

MR. FISH: Forgive me, but who does the preliminary scoring? Who did all that?

MS. IBERLE: So that's kind of -- Essentially, we're mining that information from the assessment, and using the values that are set here, to determine that score.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The preliminary scores were developed by the SSC, but what you should pay more attention to would be that information in the note of where the age-at-maturity is, and so the age of 50 percent mature is 3.7 years, based on the last stock assessment, and so that's what you should probably put more stock in, is, if we have information from the stock assessment, or the landings, more so than the preliminary scores, because those were developed kind of collectively for all the species, based on the information that was available at the time, when the SSC was kind of constructing this tool to be used in the control rule process.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Did that answer your question, Andrew?

MR. FISH: I'm just like, should we trust these preliminary scores? Should we be -- You're asking us to not change them, or trust them, am I right, and it's almost like you don't have confidence in them. It's the same thing we just went through the last two hours. That's -- I mean, I mean, I'm just curious, as you're asking our input.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Andrew, I think that, whenever we've given the input, it's been recorded, and, you know, I mean, hopefully that's the new, you know, accepted risk factor, or, you know, risk.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so we've got leaving age-at-maturity at a two. That brings us to human dimensions. Again, ability to regulate, and I'm not going to go over this, since this is the fourth time you guys are doing this, but I just will note that there was no overages from either sector from 2018 to 2022, and so low risk, with that regard, and so I'll turn it over for this section.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Allie, thank you, and this is where this whole risk system kind of rubs me the wrong way, because, when we don't go over our marks, it seems like the fishery is in trouble, and, when we do go over our marks, we're told that we're in jeopardy, you know, that there's a higher risk of overfishing, and that doesn't seem right to me.

Like, if we can't catch the fish, the fish aren't there. If we can catch the fish, the fish are there, and so that's where I think we're a little bit backwards here, but, I mean, I'm not trying to derail the whole system. I'm thinking that it has been a three, for a long period of time, and changes in size limit, and the management that we've put in place over the last five to ten years on the species, you know, and we've talked about different closure areas, for the mutton sapper spawn and stuff like that, and, I mean, I think I would be comfortable leaving it a three, but it's -- I think I think it's a little misleading.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, I mean, just commenting on that, and I hear what -- I hear where you're coming from, James, and that's why we have kind of divided up in different portions, and we're trying to focus this portion towards the ability to regulate, because, if you're trying to catch them, and you're not catching them, then I see what you're saying, but if you're -- I guess, if you're not trying to catch them -- Sorry. I am confusing my words right now.

I see what you're saying, in the sense of, if the fish are there, you all are going to catch more of them. There also needs to be an ability, from a controlling overfishing standpoint, of management needs to be able to limit how much is caught, and that's what this is trying to get at, is is management able to limit how much is caught.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So I guess -- I guess here's where I can help you with this, and help myself, I guess. If the stock assessment output, the total allowable catch, is trusted to be accurate, and each ACL, for each different sector is trusted to be accurate, and we do not reach those numbers, then we're not going to overfish, because we haven't - We haven't harvested what was what we were allowed to catch, and, you know, from a fishermen's standpoint, that's not exactly how we look at things, but, from a management standpoint, that's how we have to look at things, and so I guess I found a little bit of clarity on that for myself. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Real quick, James. First, I want to say that's exactly how I feel as well, and we were talking, earlier, about, if you have variables, and say if you have ten variables, versus a hundred variables, you'll get to a lot more specific outcome, and I feel that this is a fairly new thing, but, if we had a one through ten choice, instead of just three, we may be able to define this a little easier. Maybe that's something in the future.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Good input, Tony. Another thing that I would like to point out, in the way that all of this is structured, is we are giving our opinions in real time. We're giving our opinions based on what we see, and what we've seen for the last, you know, six months, since we've been here, and in the last recent memory.

Most of what we're going off of is five years old, or older, and, I mean, maybe not for mutton snapper, but based on whatever the last assessment was, and so this is based on old information, and we're coming in here in real time, and giving our opinions based on what we're seeing actually now, and so we -- You know, we have a lag of, you know, our opinions, versus what we're seeing

as the data., and so, you know, I mean, that's -- It's always going to be a little bit conflicting, because we're looking, we're looking into the past. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so I'm thinking of the risk rating, and I think, the way that I'm thinking of, of this specific section, is, if you're thinking about setting an ACL -- If you have a stock that it has a one, so you're at high risk, you would need -- You would maybe want to set a buffer in between your stock ABC and ACL, is how I was kind of conceptualizing this, and so is -- You know, not including a buffer, something that is -- Or would including a buffer be something that should be considered for mutton, and I guess the -- That's how the score would reflect that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Are you talking about post-assessment and when we do allocation?

MS. IBERLE: Yes. Som when you're thinking of -- You know, you're given a stock ABC, and you're going to set that total ACL, and is it appropriate to set a buffer between that ABC and ACL, because there's concerns of landings exceeding that ACL. Does that --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I think we do that, and I think, with the yellowtail discussion -- I'm pretty sure, in past meetings, we've been at around the 70 percent mark, as what we have chosen to adopt as the ACL, you know, for both sectors, of the total ABC, you know, and so yes. I mean, I guess the short answer is yes, because when there are concerns about population density, and the total overall numbers of the stock, it's within our best interest to err on the side of caution, when we can, and to stay ahead of things, if, if at all possible. Especially, you know, when, when we're not meeting an ACL, in any species, and that should be a red flag, in my opinion. John.

MR. POLSTON: I was just going to say, as far as you asking about should there be a buffer in there, and I get the buffers and stuff like that, but, things that I've experienced over the years, when you put say a 20 percent buffer in there, and, because NMFS doesn't count in real time, and they count by dates, okay, and that's -- It's not the way it's supposed to be done. The law says you're not supposed to do it that way, but they do it that way. I mean, that's just the truth of the matter.

My point is you've got to be careful, because they say, okay, we're at 80 percent, and they shut the fishery down, and probably not, on the mutton, it makes a big difference, but like, in our fishery of the golden tile, it's bad, because time is crucial, because you're fishing with longline gear, and it's cable, and it rusts fast.

It doesn't last long at all anymore, and, not to get off-subject, but I'm just saying, and then they say -- A month later, after your gear has all gone bad, they say, oh, we made a mistake, and you're only at 92 percent, and, you know, you got another 8 percent to catch, but it costs $4,000 to re-gear up, and so I'm just saying that you've got to kind of be careful, when you put a buffer in there, because I've seen it kill us several times, or not kill us, but, I mean, hurt it.

Then, if you didn't meet your quota, it gets turned around and saying, oh, you guys must have caught them all. They forgot, you know, that they shut it down, and then nobody geared back up to go catch the rest of it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John. I think that's good information. and, to kind of piggyback on that sentiment a little bit, I think that, if you did have the buffer in place, and there was an excess of harvest, and so, you know, let's just say you left a 20 percent buffer, and you went over

15 percent, and maybe that trend continued, over a number of years, one, two, three, five, whatever, and that would be proof, in my opinion, that the assessment was on point with the total allowable catch.

Just because we were erring on the side of caution, at 80 percent, it means that we still are within the realm of what, you know, scientifically we can catch, and it's all good things, you know, and so I don't think going over an 80 percent mark, as a built-in buffer, should be viewed as a negative thing. I think that, if we build in the buffer, and we still land in that range, those are good things. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: So, in thinking about that buffer, and so, essentially, what this is saying now is so we have currently, you know, according to there being no overages from 2018 to 2022, your current rating in there is a three. Essentially, this will be the first step in informing the council of saying we haven't been meeting the ACL, or exceeding the ACL, and so, in that regard, a buffer may not be needed, and so, maybe if you guys are thinking that the ability to regulate may need to be lowered, then that might go down to a two.

Again, this is just meant to kind of inform, as we move forward in the process, and thinking about those things, such as, you know, a buffer and the, you know, kind of greater ability to regulate, and so, with that, does the AP feel that this should stay at a three, move to a two, and what's the pleasure of the AP?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I guess I'll speak, since I have been on this topic. I think, given the parameters of what we have, it should remain a three, based on your quantifications of everything. Very low risk. That's it. David.

MR. MOSS: Yes, and just I completely agree, and remember too, particularly down in the Keys, with this species, obviously, and so you've got Riley's Hump closed, and you've got now Western Dry Rocks has got the seasonal closure. You've got, potentially, the Tortuga's expansion that is going to be closed, and you've got whatever is going to go on with the sanctuary, and like there's going to be a lot of areas that are mutton spots, mutton spots that we're not going to be able to fish in anyway, and I think that this species is probably on the right track, for the most part right now, as it's managed according to this, like you said.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David and, yes, I mean, I do agree.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I added that in there, and your score is at a three, and so that brings us to the potential for discard losses, and so this is where we're looking at that newer assessment that will be finished here shortly, and, using the commercial average weight for 2018 to 2022 of right under six pounds, and the discards were greater than 40 percent of removals for all years, in that timeframe.

Then, looking at recreational dead discards, they were greater than 51 percent of recreational removals, and commercial dead discards were between five and 8 percent of commercial removals. That gives you a risk rating of a three, and I will turn it over to the AP to discuss whether or not you feel that needs to be modified.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Ali. Do those dead discards include fish that were bitten in half by sharks? I'm serious, and like I'm not -- I don't mean to be any type of way about it, but, you know, typically, a shark depredation on a mutton snapper is half the fish.

MS. IBERLE: I'm unsure of the -- If that dead discard percentage, if that includes the disposition, but I think the guys are checking on that, and so my apologies.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No worries. I just, you know, was curious, and, also, like I would be one to always err on the side of caution, when it comes to enforcement, and I know lack of enforcement is a hot topic, but, if I have a mutton snapper that has been halved by a shark, and there's viable meat on it, I'm still reluctant to keep that fish, because it's not eighteen inches anymore, and I know that it -- You know, you feel like it's a no-brainer and that, okay, but, on a technicality, it's not eighteen inches, and you're not legal to possess that fish, nor is it legal to filet it on the water and put it in the cooler, and so, you know, I mean, there is some gray area there, and I just, you know, I was curious. David.

MR. MOSS: If it's true here that rec discards are greater than 51 percent of total rec removals, I would, in some ways, hope that that includes shark depredation, because, if it doesn't, then that's pretty damn scary.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: 100 percent. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I'm just wondering how Cell V9, the recommendation, how they came up with a three there, because I'm hearing, from AP members, that this number should be a higher risk.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So that's one of the differences from when the SSC developed these numbers, in 2017-ish, somewhere around there, versus you'll see -- You'll notice, in the note, that this is referencing SEDAR 79. One of the big transitions that -- There are actually two transitions that happened, and so, from the MRIP standpoint, MRIP transitioned into FES following that assessment, but there also was a transition from the assessment.

They're not even using MRIP, at this point, for the discards and the landings for the private recreational sector. They're using the Florida State Reef Fish Survey. That was deemed to be a more reliable survey representing the recreational landings, and so there's been some data changes from when the SSC looked at it, as opposed to the most recent stock assessment that is in the process of getting completed right now.

I wanted to -- The reason why I didn't include the last assessment, from a discard losses standpoint, is because of that recreational data change, and that was a big data change, as opposed to something like your natural mortality, or your age-at-maturity, is going to be fairly constant. It's not going to change very much from one assessment to the next, but, if you have a change in your recreational data, that changes your estimates and how things are being viewed in those different assessments.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Mike. Before I acknowledge Haley, maybe I can add a little bit more clarity on why that may be a three, in actual terms of fishing. A lot of -- Especially in the Keys, in my region, a lot of the mutton snappers that would be released, discarded, would typically be in your shallower reefs, the thirty-five to fifty-five foot range, which are still in federal waters

in the Keys, and, you know, the shark problems aren't as severe in those depths, although we can have interactions, but the fight is much quicker, and the fish tend to be a little bit smaller in those areas.

As you get to the deeper reefs, you know, you're going to have more interactions with sharks, possibly, but, outside of that, where you might experience barotrauma, they're bigger fish, and so you're most likely not going to have to release them, if you're targeting them in season. They're going to be keeper-size fish, and so I think, you know, there's a multitude of reasons why that is a three, even though there are problems with dead discards, I don't think it's a real high risk. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. I know that you mentioned transitioning from MRIP to the Florida State Reef Fish Survey. That's reported by the recreational anglers, correct, and there's no option to choose when a fish has been mutilated in that Florida State Reef Fish Survey, and so I'm just curious as to how we came up with this 51 percent mortality rate with, you know, the Florida State Reef Fish Survey.

The other thing is we're going by our recreational fishermen, who are filling out this report, and it all comes back to the same thing of education. There's no education component, when you sign up for the Florida State Reef Fish Survey, and you check a box when you sign up for your fishing license, and people don't know, and so, in their head, there may be a perspective that says, hey, if I say that I caught a hundred mutton snapper today, they're going to think that there's a hundred red snapper, or, sorry, mutton snapper, and then it makes me look good, but, in the reality, you didn't catch a hundred mutton snapper, and now you're saying that 51 percent of them are dead discards and so I just wanted to point that out.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. Richard has his hand up.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, and I agree with Haley there. Unless sharks are in that number, there's no way that 51 percent of the mutton snapper are dying on the way down. It's just it's not feasible, because many of our muttons are caught in sixty feet or less. You know, the only time we're generally catching muttons, in the deeper water, is when they're spawning and, you know, little by little, that's -- That possibility, for us, is leaving anyway. That number can't be right.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard. I think I'll go to Mike, and then David.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so one thing I want to point out is that 51 percent number is not a discard mortality rate. It is a percentage of the removals, and so landings,, plus dead discards equals removals, and so how many fish were removed from the population by fishing activities, and what that number is saying is that 51 percent of the removals were in the form of dead discards.

That doesn't mean that for every, you know, two fish that were thrown back, one died. It's just -- It has to do with how many fish were being caught, and so what that indicates is there were a large number of fish that were caught, and had to be had to be released, had to be thrown back, and so, when you take the percentage of those fish that were caught, and thrown back plus your landings, the fish that were caught and thrown back, and died from that process, were 50, or 51, percent of what was removed from the population, and so it's different than a discard mortality rate. The discard mortality rate from that assessment, I believe, was 30 percent, and so it would have said seven in ten, of fish that were caught and released, survived that process.

MS. STEPHENS: I appreciate that clarification. I guess it was just a little bit confusing, the way that it was written. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: I'm good.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. I guess we're back to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Any desire to change this from a three?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: With the caveat that I've never researched the species, and I rarely encountered them, and I would move this to the two category. I'm hearing a lot of reports, from AP members, about the increasing rates of shark depredation, and, with that 30 percent discard mortality, I don't -- This strikes me as moving this to a two, instead of keeping it as a three.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I can, I can appreciate that, Paul, based on, you know, the information at-hand. You know, I think, to the people that represent the different areas that are familiar with our mutton snapper encounters, maybe they would tend to disagree a little bit, and leave it here, me being one of those people. I think that the, the three out of ten is probably high. I can't ever recall releasing a mutton snapper that didn't immediately swim back. They are a very, very feisty fish, a very hardy fish, and so, I mean, you know, with respect to the information that you're seeing now, I understand where you would want to err on the side of caution. That's my opinion. Any other thoughts?

MS. IBERLE: All right. I left that one at a three. That brings us to annual commercial value. We've got between 1 and 10 percent of the total revenue for all years, from 2018 to 2022, with an average of 1.8 percent, and then less than 10 percent of total trip revenue for all years between 2018 and 2022, an average of 6.7 percent. That puts you at a two, and I'll turn it over, to see if the AP feels that value is appropriate.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So, for every thousand pounds of fish that was landed commercially, eighteen pounds were mutton snapper. Is that basically what I'm looking at?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would put that more in terms of dollars, because we're talking about revenue here, and we're not necessarily talking about the poundage, and you're going to have different revenue generated for different species. They're going to sell at, you know, a different price per pound, and so there's going to be consideration of that.

I do want to point out that this is one of the kind of different cases, at least for the few that we've looked at, where your annual revenue score, and your trip revenue score, don't fall in the same category, and so, by your average of your total annual revenue, you would be in the --- Like at the very bottom end of that two category, between 1 and 10 percent of the total annual revenue, whereas your trip revenue is less than 10 percent, and so that would be in that low-risk category,

and so, again, this is the place where you have two different pieces of information, and you can kind of use your discretion to develop what your recommendation would be.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'm just curious how we could have threes across-the-board here and have the revenue factor change how all the other factors perform. I don't understand how it would make it a higher risk to overfishing, because of the money it generates.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So this is going back to when this was developed in the amendment, and I will point out that this did -- When the amendment was being developed, it did come to the AP, and you all did have opportunity to review the methodology here, but, along those lines, I think some of the motivation within that is this, if a species is commercially valuable, then there's going to be incentive, from the commercial standpoint, for a commercial fishery to maintain high levels of harvest for that species, even in cases where, if the species is declining, they might spend a little bit more time out fishing, trying to catch this valuable species, as opposed to another species where, if it's not as abundant, then they're going to be more inclined to fish for something else that is -- You know, that is more readily available, and so there may be more value, more effort, put in towards a species that's generating a higher amount of revenue. Does that make sense?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It does. Unfortunately, having dealt with, you know, mutton snapper, and, you know, over the years as a wholesale dealer, they're one of the lowest-yielding fish that I've ever, you know, bought and sold. Their head is a large portion of their body mass, and, although they're very attractive in low quantities, as soon as any kind of volume starts coming across the dock, the price tends to plummet pretty quickly, and so I wouldn't agree that it's as desirable as some other species.

I mean, I'm not uncomfortable leaving it with a two here, but there are factors that I would suggest making it a three, and being consistent with the other valuations. I mean, so, essentially, for consistency, and to kind of represent what we've been saying all along, I would recommend it being a three. Any other discussion? Thank you. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. That moves us to recreational desirability, and so, in that same time range that we've been talking about, annual recreational targeted trips range from 10 percent to 29 percent of recreational trips in the region, with an average of 20 percent, and so that puts you at a one, and I will turn it over.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I completely agree with this. You have a lot of the charter fleet, in the Keys, and they will move to dropping for mutton snappers, you know, when other things -- I mean, it's a primary targeted species, for one, and, when you talk about having relatively inexperienced anglers, you know, maybe a little bit slower reelers, and mutton snappers pull really hard, I think you're going to encounter more of those shark interactions with -- You know, from the recreational sector, because those fish are being more targeted, on lighter tackle perhaps, and, you know, there is some elevated risk associated with that in this sector. David.

MR. MOSS: I agree with what you just said. I'm not going to lie, and I don't understand here what one versus three means. It's almost like, on the ballot measures, when a no means you support something, and I'm a little confused here, but what I have seen, more and more, is a lot of the hardcore mutton people, or not even hardcore mutton people, but you're seeing less and less of it, because of what you just said.

It's getting to be kind of a pain in the neck to bottom fish in the southeast anymore, particularly in the depths where you're going to get good, quality muttons, you know, in kind of that 150 out to 220 range, or even a little bit deeper, and so there's quite a few people, that used to target these specifically, that have just kind of given up and moved on to either tilefish or pelagics or something else, because it's kind of a pain to have to deal with.

Like you said, when you bring up something that you know was like a, you know, twenty-eight-inch fish, or something like that, but there's less than half of it there, because the shark got it, it really drags you down to the doldrums pretty damn quick, and so I don't know what that amounts to number-wise, but there's information for you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That also brings us back to, you know, the then and now. You know, I mean, what you're explaining is the reality of the situation currently, you know, and kind of we're discussing something that -- You know, information that's already existed for a while. Any other comments? Allie.

MS. IBERLE: So, to kind of think about why we're seeing a one here, if you have greater than 5 percent of trips report targeting that species, then your risk is higher, because that species is valued, and so people are going to be actively targeting, and so, essentially, because trips are specifically targeting this species -- So, for instance, the charter and headboat, if it's a fish that clients enjoy catching, then there would be more risk for overfishing, because you're specifically targeting. Does that clarify?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: It does, and then I'll still go back to now -- Listen, and there's still plenty of people that go after muttons, and don't get me wrong, but that effort, I would say, is waning slowly, because of the frustrations of what's going on when you try to bottom fish. Now, that doesn't mean that people aren't still targeting them, and they absolutely do, particularly in kind of the spring, and then moving into the summer, when the mahi haven't shown up yet and whatnot in the Keys. They definitely still hit the reefs, and the edge of the reef, and the deep wrecks and stuff for them, but it's slowly waning. Well, not so slowly.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So David, given the user group -- That's what I was going to say. You know, given the user group that you represent, I would not -- You know, I would rather defer to you, if you wanted to make a change. Allie. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I just got one comment, or a question, and it may paint a better picture of my ignorance, but I don't see how we can have a one on mutton and a one on red snapper. We had a two-day season for red snapper. How are the same number of trips, or the same percentage of trips, targeting red snapper that are targeting mutton snapper?

MS. IBERLE: I think, with this, it wouldn't be thinking about the number of trips. It would be thinking about how high you're valuing the species, when you're deciding what to target on a specific trip. Does that make sense? I don't know if that made it muddy the waters.

MR. MATTHEWS: Not really, because, in reality, you can only target red snapper two days a year, as a recreational angler, and so the recreational desirability is limited by your ability to fish for them, and so I don't see how that -- I don't see how those could be measured in the same metric, I guess, or with the same percentage of effort, when we're talking about a fishery that's closed all but two days a year, and, this year, all but one.

MS. IBERLE: So, coming back to mutton, do we think this needs to be bumped up to a two, or do we want to keep it at a one? What's the pleasure of the AP?

MR. MATTHEWS: I'm fine leaving this as a one. I think there's plenty of support for it, but it just makes me rethink what we did for red snapper. That's all I'm saying.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Matt, I fully understand where you're coming from, and your perspective on this, and I think that, you know, the desire to go fish for a red snapper isn't really going to diminish, and I think that the desire for retention is equal to the desire to go fish for them. It just -- To me, it just so happens that the retention laws are different for mutton snapper, where fishermen want to fish, and so, you know, maybe -- You know, maybe the category is the same, because it's over 5 percent, and the parameters that they set forth for the risk factor in this line, you know, are very similar, and I don't really want to mix the mutton and red issue too much, but, I mean, maybe it's just as simple as that. I don't know. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: This is -- I mean, we can certainly follow up with the MRIP effort data, and try to take another look and get an idea of what the directed trips information is looking like, but, I mean, what the data that we have pulled here would indicate is that there was definitely a high concentration of trips with a stated directed target at red snapper, even for that one to two-day season, and, for mutton snapper, that may be diluted down, and spread out across the course of the year, because there are a lot of trips that may not be directly targeting mutton.

They may be -- You know, they may be encountering mutton more at the harvest level than having them as a direct target, or as a bycatch level, where they're catching and releasing, but they're not landing any mutton, and so that may be one of the places where that connection gets made, whereas, in that small one to two-day period, as many people as possible are going out for red snapper, and they're targeting them, and they are targeting them to harvest them in that very short time period.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Based on what you said there, I would think that, if we're talking about the open season idea of targeted trips, when we take a look at red snapper, it would be nearly 100 percent. So, you know, in a sense, that's why they're both a one. I mean, if you're looking at open season, that's why they would both be a one.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It would be in the perspective of annual trips, and not just the open season, but there would just be a very high concentration, in a short amount of time, but it would still be in the perspective of an entire year.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Right. That's what -- You made the comparison, you know, of the 20 percent of people targeting muttons, on any given day, was a diluted number, and I was just following that up as, you know, an actual -- If you were to look at the adverse of that, you know, when red snapper

season is open, it's everybody's going after them. It's just kind of the other side of the same coin. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: Just speaking on that a little more, James, I mean, let's be honest, and, you know, how many charter boat fishermen from the Keys go out on a trip targeting mutton snapper? I mean, that's generally a bycatch for us.

There is only one time, during the year, that we target mutton snapper, as a charter boat fleet, and that is during the spawn, and so that's almost 100 percent right there. I mean, we don't generally do any charter boat trips that target mutton. Does your fleet in Marathon, because I know we don't target mutton. We target yellowtail snapper quite often, and gray snapper, but mutton is more of an, oh shit, we caught these yellowtail, and, look, we caught three or four muttons, too.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richard, certainly, if you're anchored down, and you have a chum slick, you know, a mutton is going to be more of a bycatch. What I've found, in my area, is you have -- Initially, when it's a little bit cooler in the day, you have your charter fleet, your center consoles, and they anchor down, and they get a chum slick going, and they put some yellowtail on the boat, and immediately they're out of there. They're not trying to, you know, essentially limit-out on yellowtail. They're trying to provide their customers with a diverse experience, and then, from that point, they're going to move directly onto dropping.

Actually, they'll probably move directly from that to fishing for blackfin tuna, and so they may run a little bit further offshore, target some of the deeper wrecks, and then, in the middle of the day, they'll be hitting that, you know, 250 to 135, any hard-bottom ledges, stuff like that, and they'll make their last attempt, you know, at mutton snapper, but it's a daily ritual, you know, for the guys that I know in my area.

The fishing experience, you know, with the fishing regulations that we've had, and that we're currently facing, I think a lot of our captains are really learning how to kind of give their customers a full experience without having the pressure of filling the box, and they're doing a wonderful job at that, at least at what I see in Marathon. It's not about how many you catch. Now it's about, you know, spreading it out, and going to catch a few different species, bend the rod, stories, photos. You know, that's just what I'm seeing. David.

MR. MOSS: As you move up in the Keys, there's still, Richard, guys, like in Islamorada, and further north, that definitely still target these, and particularly as you get into Miami. There's a lot of people, and not just charters, but the private recs that go out there, and that's all that they're doing, is muttons, and I know I said that people are starting to move off of that, which they are, but there's still a lot of people that they're still going out there with their thirty-foot leaders, and that's all that they want to do, is they get their five muttons, if they can get five.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: Did you do that years ago, or is that something that's becoming more and more popular?

MR. MOSS: (Mr. Moss' comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay, because, I mean, I'm thinking that the success story for mutton is just growing through the years also, and where what James was saying, you know, and I guess that's probably is happening a little more with the light-tackle fishermen down in the Lower Keys, but it just goes to show you that there is a success story beginning to happen with the mutton snapper, also.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: I will say, and perhaps it's just recency bias, and my memory sucks, but it's a lot more productive lately, with the advent of all the technology of electronics, of braided lines, of all that stuff, and so, you know, people have really honed-in on techniques, and what to do, and so they're definitely more productive at it, but there's lots of people still doing it, and we've done it for years.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, gentlemen. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so, bringing us back, we have this in as a one. Any desire to change this from a one, and so a high risk, when it comes to recreational desirability?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right. That brings us to social concerns. So, like the tilefish, this was estimated at a county level. Most communities have a low reliance on these species. I'm not going to flip over to that Word document, and just noting that one community is medium, and so St. John, Florida, the recreational sector, and one medium high, which was Monroe County, and so I don't have -- This is going to be at a three. Any desire to change that score?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No hands, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Then that brings us to environmental attributes, and so, looking here, and it's important ecosystem species. Thinking about climate change, range expansion, or collapse, or any regime shifts, anything that the AP wanted to note, as far as environmental attributes for mutton.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: I don't have direct knowledge of this, because I don't typically fish that much further north, but I hear tell that they're targeting them further north than used to, in greater numbers. Like I know you could cast them up off of Jackson, and St. Augustine, back in the day.

There was a few people that really know how to do it, but my understanding is that, more and more, they're targeting them further north, in Florida anyway, especially as red snapper is become more of a nuisance, and they can go a little bit deeper and catch muttons. Again, I don't have first knowledge of that, first-hand knowledge of that, but that's what I've heard, kind of actually from Haley's neck of the woods north, is what I've heard, but I don't know 100 percent.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that information, David. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Muttons have shown up here in South Carolina. We're catching them, but they're not quite to the point of targeting.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Good to know. Thank you. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: So I made a note that we're seeing targeting further north, in recent years. I don't know that that necessarily notes a risk change, unless the AP feels that there's something specific other than that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Yes, we've definitely started to catch more and more mutton snapper, off the northeast Florida coast, than before.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David, did you have anything further to add?

MR. MOSS: I don't know if that -- To go directly to Allie's question, I don't know if that would lower the risk. Again, I'm a little confused with how this aligns, but, as you see species expansion, or range expansion, does that lower risk?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would say it's more of if it's -- If it's working the opposite. If it seems like climate change is making this species one of the, quote, unquote, loser species, if it's negatively affecting it, then there's a level of risk associated with it, but, if it's one of the winner species, if it's one of the lucky ones, then that's not necessarily lower. That's not necessarily increasing your risk of overfishing.

MR. MOSS: So it would be more of like a three than a one, in this case, correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and, in this case, it's either a one, or it's a zero, and it's not tacked on, and so this would be -- What it sounds like is it would be a case of a zero, that there's no negative environmental impacts either from this species or caused by this species.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike. That's actually a good clarification. I was confused, a little bit, in this portion of it as well. So a zero. Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I think that wraps us up for the stock risk rating for mutton, and so we're going to stay in south Florida, but shift gears a little bit and kind of get into background, before we go into the fishery performance report questions, and so I'm going to hand it over to Chip to review that background information beforehand, and so give us a minute to get set up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Allie.

DR. COLLIER: Okay, and we're going to go back to the Shiny app that is linked in your overview, and so we looked at it this morning for red snapper. It was also discussed for mutton snapper, where I had pulled that information, and it was over here on data for past reports, and so we have the full list of species that have been reviewed, and so mutton snapper was in there. I realize that we're going to get to yellowtail, but just telling you where I got the information for mutton snapper, and so all this past information is there.

You can also click on your past fishery performance reports. You can see they that might have multiple years associated with them, and so all those past fishery performance reports are available, and so this is a resource for you to use, if you want to go back and look at some of this information, and so bouncing over to yellowtail now.

Yellowtail snapper, going back to life history information, you can see more of a gradual growth in yellowtail snapper than what we were showing in red snapper, where it's just small increments each year that the fish are growing. Length-weight, if you want to convert some of the size fish to a weight, that information is available, and so we're seeing about 100 percent maturity right at -- Right around fourteen inches, and so that's going to correspond to age-three fish.

Indices of abundance, these indices of abundance end in 2017, and we have four different indices of abundance. One is the logbook, and that is the headboat logbook, and one is MRIP, and then we have two dive surveys, one for adult yellowtail snapper and one for juvenile snapper.

You can see, generally, in the later part of the time periods, you're seeing the fish, or the indices, are indicating higher than normal abundance than what you were seeing prior, in the early 2000s. Going into yearly landings, these landings are just for the South Atlantic side for yellowtail snapper. You can see a gradual decrease in this. That was likely a response to the last assessment, and then some increases in 2021 and 2022. Almost all the landings are coming from Florida, and then these are the recreational releases here.

Bouncing over to commercial, you can see, back from 2014 to 2016, or 2017, there were some high levels of yellowtail snapper landings. That's when the changes in the season went in place, in order to prevent exceeding the ACL for yellowtail snapper and then having a closure when the fishery wanted to be open, and so now the closure potentially occurs during the summer, if the ACL is exceeded. However, since that regulation has been put in place, the commercial sector has not been getting to their ACL.

Going down, you can see where the commercial sector is. It looks like I don't have quite the right numbers for this, and so I will go back and redo the app, and then I need to update the commercial released estimates. We'll bounce over to revenue and price, and this is, once again, just for commercial. You can see the ex-vessel value has bounced around since 2018, but the ex-vessel price kind of jumped up, and has stayed fairly high, and then the economic impacts -- This, once again, for the commercial side, it really does match the ex-vessel price, and you can see it bounces around a little bit, from 2018 to 2022, and then we'll jump down to the recreational.

You can see that the recreational has been increasing since 2019, and that's fairly consistent among the three different indicators, and so, with that, that is yellowtail snapper. Please let me know if you have any questions, and then, Allie, we'll jump into the questions for you all.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so I put your questions on a slide, and so it's not kind of all the information all at once, and then I'm going to be kind of recording stuff on the other screen here. If you have a question, or if I have a question, to make sure I've got everything recorded right, I'll holler, or, if you want me to bring this over, just let me know, and then I guess we'll just kind of get started, and, if we don't finish all the questions today, we can pick this back up tomorrow.

All right, and so, starting with just kind of some higher-level questions, and so have there been substantial changes in the yellowtail snapper fishery since 2017, which was the terminal year of SEDAR 64, and then, if so, please describe the timing, location, and what you think may have caused the change.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Allie, I would like to kind of note that 2017 was a pretty pivotal year in the Florida Keys. That was the year that Hurricane Irma had quite a large impact on not only our infrastructure, and that's kind of when things changed, as far as development goes. It seems that we had a rate of growth ordinance that, up until that point, was being followed, specifically in the Middle Keys.

Since then, and I'm not trying to point any fingers, but, as a lifelong Keys resident, I think that local politics has changed a little bit, and there's been a higher increase than what should have been in vacation rentals.

There has been more saturation in for-hire vessels, and, alongside of that, there's been more pressure on the yellowtail snapper, from the recreational standpoint, and, since that time, there's been a reduction in commercial effort, one, because of working waterfront, and, two, a lot of people that I had bought fish from in the past -- They either, you know, had problems rebuilding after the storm, or maybe their work ethic wasn't strong enough, and, you know, there was a lot of reasons, but I lost -- I lost six out of the seven boats that were fishing for yellowtail since 2007. I'm the only one that's still fishing for yellowtail snapper in the Middle Keys, you know, that I used to buy from.

I won't directly attribute that to, you know, a loss in population for the fish. You know, things have definitely changed in the Middle Keys, and I'm trying to speak slowly, so you can kind of keep up making notes.

The recreational sector, I mean, from what I can understand, and what I see, and the people that I talk to, they follow the rules. You know, this species isn't super complicated. You either catch them or you don't. If you know what to do, they all live, when you discard them, and most of them are not in super deep water, and so barotrauma is not a huge issue. I think that, you know, some of the landings reports you're going to see, in the commercial sector, are because of this shift in effort. Those are some of the changes that I've seen since 2017. David.

MR. MOSS: I agree with a lot of what James just said. The Keys, in particular, has changed quite a bit. There's a lot less of the mom-and-pops, and it’s a lot of -- There's a captain down there that loves to say that the billionaires have pushed out the millionaires, and they've brought all their big boats with them, and, from what I understand, and I'm not a commercial fisherman, obviously, but, from what I've heard, at least as you go further north in the Keys, the Islamorada and Key Largo area, is that a lot of the commercial guys, because of the price of fuel, bait, et cetera, aren't going out unless they can really hammer them, and so, unless the bite is really going crazy, it's just -- It’s not worth it for them to spend all day out there. They can do other things, and so they'll go out if they can, you know, have a full box and be home before lunch, or whatever.

There is absolutely more effort and. again, with electronics, and so on and so forth, all the different mapping, all that good stuff, and certainly trolling motors, and you don't even need to anchor anymore. You can just spot-lock on a spot, and start throwing your chum out there, and get them,

and so there has been certainly an effort shift, and, again, as I understand, they're catching them more and more north. Chris was just telling me he's catching them pretty regularly up here now.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Good points, David. I agree. Richie, you got anything on that?

MR. GOMEZ: Well, I mean, with the charter boat industry down in Key West, you know, we target them more, because the trolling is not what it used to be, especially with the mahi-mahi, and so -- But, when we target them, you know, if conditions are right, we don't see any shortage of them. They're still abundant. They're still hungry, and we're still doing real well with them, but they do get hit a lot more, because of what has become of the fishing down there.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richie. That's pretty much what I would have expected you to say, and, really, your opinion is valuable, you know, and thank you.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I'm going to move us on to fishing behavior and catch levels, and so I'll just start with this first bullet point, or we can tackle both, and it doesn't really matter. We can take it out all at once.

Have there been effort shifts? We talked a little bit about this in that first question, but have there been effort shifts to and from yellowtail snapper, and kind of describe a little bit about that, if you have noticed them, including timeframe and when these shifts occurred, and then have there been considerable changes in fishing techniques, gear that's used to target yellowtail snapper, and then, again, just a little more detail on the timeframe, if these gear changes are occurring.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I saw Richard's hand go up first, and then David.

MR. GOMEZ: Well, I was just waiting for that part. That's all. Answered.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: So, the first part of that, obviously, I answered, the effort shifts. With the techniques, I'm going to channel my inner Rusty Hudson here. I remember, when I first started fishing for yellowtails, when I couldn't even grow a beard, you could use like straight twenty, or twenty-five, and catch them, and now, you know, fluorocarbon leaders, again, for the recreational industry. You know, if you don't have fluorocarbon leaders, or pretty light line, it can get pretty tough to catch them, at times, and so, with the pressure, with the added pressure, has come different techniques to try to target them, because they've become a little bit more wily and line shy.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I agree with that, and I think that the timeframe maybe a little bit more in arrears. When it comes to the use of fluorocarbon, I would say it definitely predates 2017, you know, and maybe even 2005. You know, I mean, you may have a harder time catching them, if you weren't using a fluorocarbon leader, and so, I mean, that is definitely one of the advancements in targeting not only yellowtail, but, you know, a lot of the more finicky species. I mean, and even to catch kingfish, and mutton snappers, you know, other -- You pretty much should use fluorocarbon, if you if you want to get a bite, and so that change, I think, has been, you know, pretty consistent across all of this species in the complex.

MR. MOSS: Just to reiterate, again, throwing in like the whole trolling motor and electronics thing as part of this as well, again, it has become fairly easy, because you don't even need to know how to anchor anymore. You can, you know, drop down your eight-foot trolling motor and sit on top of the spot, no problem.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David, as disruptive as that is to a person like me, when I'm trying to harvest, I will overlook that, ten out of ten times, to have an inexperienced captain try and anchor up on a piece of bottom, and like to be conscious about what's going on on the bottom of the ocean is far paramount to the disruption that it causes, and it's significant for me, but it's something that I would -- You know, I'd much rather have.

MS. IBERLE: Anything else on either of these two questions? All right. So, continuing on with fishing behavior and catch levels, have you noticed an increase in shore-based landings of yellowtail snapper? How much fishing for yellowtail snapper typically occurs during the day, versus at night, and have you seen changes in this? Do you actively avoid fishing for yellowtail snapper in certain areas, to avoid catching undersized fish? Currently, there's a twelve-inch minimum, for both sectors, or highly-regulated fish, and so say red snapper, to lessen bait loss. Just thinking about, when you're targeting yellowtail, are you having to move around to get legal fish? Are you having to move around to avoid things like red snapper?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: I'll just answer him from the top down, for us here in the Lower Keys. We don't see much landings from land. I don't think it's gotten any better, or maybe on the bridges, and maybe James could talk about that more, but not off of Key West, or off of the piers. We would never fish for them at night. It's a bycatch at night, and, yes, we certainly target areas that we're going to catch larger fish. We know where the smaller ones live, and we avoid that area, if we're going to be looking to bring a catch home for our guests, and that's pretty easily done, to avoid the small ones and catch the big ones.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard. David.

MR. MOSS: Similarly, I don't know that there's much in the way of shore-bound catches of yellowtails. They may run into the piers, every great once in a while, but it's certainly not a regular thing. As Richard was saying in the Keys, for the most part, it's during the day. As you move further up the coast, like Dade County, and Broward for sure, and even Palm Beach, it's more of a night fishery, and the people that fish for yellowtail typically do that at night, and they do much better at night, and, yes, certainly charter boats actively avoid smaller fish.

Recreational will try to, for the most part, but there's some times where, if the weather is bad, and you still have to go out, and all that you can do is -- Because you're certainly not going offshore, and all that you could do is, you know, get on like the thirty-foot patches or something, you're going to catch ten to twelve-inch fish and weed through them, and that's all that you can do.

MS. IBERLE: Sorry, and I just wanted to clarify for me. So you're saying the charter boats are maybe a little bit better at avoiding the smaller fish, but the private rec are going to be encountering them a little bit more?

MR. MOSS: I mean, this is very broad strokes, but, yes, because, a lot of times, private recs, they just -- They want to bend a line, or bend a rod, and wet a line? Bend a rod. So, you know, whatever bites, and they're perfectly happy with weeding through, you know, ten-inch fish, to get the one twelve-incher, whereas the charters don't want to deal with that, but, again, even from a charter perspective, and Richard can probably speak to this too, sometimes, when the weather is really bad, and all that you can do is go to that thirty-foot patch, you're going to catch ten to twelve-inch fish.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well put, David. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: On the rec side, I mean, a lot of times, it's the inexperience of the fisherman that puts them on those patches, because it's almost a guarantee, and they are going to be smaller fish, but they're going to bend the rod. They're going to be having a great day, in their mind, and everybody's happy.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richard, and I would agree with all of the sentiments. I would probably address the increase in shore-based landings. I think, if anglers change the way they fish from the bridges, and the piers, a little bit, they would probably land more legal-size yellowtail. Most of the people that come, they have the mentality of, you know, that heavy current in the bridges. You got to use heavy lead, you know, and you need to be fishing on the bottom, and it's kind of hard to get the presentation to these fish that they would be willing to feed. They're more of a top-water, or midwater column, bait moving, you know, and maybe even in a chum slick.

It doesn't even have to be a lot of chum, and just a scent trail even, and a lot of a lot of land-based anglers would have some success at these fish. These fish are all around the nearshore waters, into the bay, and they're very prolific, pretty much everywhere, and, yes, they're going to be smaller fish, but, you know, I think, if I think if they did change their efforts a little bit, and, again, this would be all state waters, and so, you know -- But they could be they could be caught from land.

As far as, you know, actively avoiding small fish, I can't sell a yellowtail that's not twelve inches, and it's really, really hard to get a 0.7-pound yellowtail to add up. You know, I do sell by the pound, and so, you know, it's really hard to spend the time it takes to hook, unhook, re-bait, and get back out there. That takes time, and so it's not efficient for me to catch a small fish, even if it's legal. Now, if every single one of them was thirteen inches, and they were up feeding actively, then, yes, I would stay on that biomass of fish, and I would have a very productive day, you know, but, when it's that one-out-of-ten scenario, that David was mentioning, and Richie was mentioning, I can't -- I can't deal with that. There's just -- There's absolutely no way, and so, yes, I would actively avoid.

To address the bait loss issue for red snapper, to this point, there are no interactions while yellowtail fishing with red snapper. That was kind of the I'm kind of waiting for my ball of yellowtail to turn red, and so we'll see. Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: So you're saying you're not having interactions with red snapper. Is there anything that you're having interactions with that would cause you to leave an area while you're actively targeting yellowtail? I'm not sure, and maybe that's not a valid question.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I mean, I'm glad you asked it. It's just a -- It's a question, and, really, the only time I would leave an area is if the yellowtail didn't want to come close enough to the boat where I could -- Where I could catch them at a fast enough pace to, you know, to make a catch, and that relative distance to the boat would increase my interactions with sharks, and so, if the fish want to feed -- If there's a lot of current, and the fish are maybe feeding a hundred feet from the boat, and they're and they're big yellowtail, and I can't beat the sharks, I will leave. That's saying -- You know, that goes for grouper. Like, if I if I drop down for a grouper, and it gets eaten by a shark, I'm done grouper fishing at that spot. David.

MR. MOSS: Yes, I agree. You're not going to -- Yellowtail aren't going to commingle with anything that's necessarily highly regulatory. What you will catch them with, every now and then -- Not every now and then, but you'll catch them with mangroves, and sometimes you'll catch them with muttons. If you know what you're doing, you can catch black grouper with them too, but James brought up a great point, and I wish I could say that the bulk of recreational anglers are smart enough when, they get a couple of shark interactions, to just move and find a different spot, but it's just not the reality.

They'll weed through, and get frustrated and, you know, lose every third fish to a shark, but they'll keep trying to think that, you know, they're going to outsmart the shark, or whatever, and so there probably is a fairly significant shark predation loss to the average recreational person.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and I'm keeping an eye on the time, so I'm not kind of running you guys way over. We've got about five minutes left, and so I'm going to try to get through a couple more questions if that's okay with you, Chair. Perfect. All right, so I believe this is -- We're getting to the tail-end of fishing behavior and catch levels.

What do you see in terms of, -- We were starting to talk a little bit about discards in that last section, and so, in terms of discards in the commercial sector, or the recreational sector, and then, to that question, how often are yellowtail snapper discarded? What are the reasons for those discards? Are you encountering yellowtail snapper as a bycatch? I know we talked a little bit about the bycatch at night, when fishing for other species, and, if so, what species are being targeted while you're discarding yellowtail snapper? Do you think discard mortality is a significant factor for these species? So I know, David, you just mentioned kind of the shark issue, but has this changed, and, if so, please describe, including some timeframes, and so I'll turn it back over to you guys.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: The only reason a yellowtail gets discarded is if it's short. For the most part, if it's twelve inches, it's going in the cooler. Do you encounter yellowtail as a bycatch, and, no, it's usually the other way around. You're fishing for yellowtail, and you might get lucky and catch something else, for the most part, and I'm not saying that that never happens, but, for the most part, you're anchored on a spot, chumming for yellowtails, and, you know, you'll get a mackerel come in, or a mutton or whatever, and discard mortality is significant. Again, if we're counting shark predations as discard mortality, though you're not technically discarding, then yes. Otherwise, no.

MS. IBERLE: (Ms. Iberle’s comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. MOSS: So, again, the ones that are discarded are going to be short, which means that you're probably fishing shallow anyway, and so barotrauma is not going to be as much of an issue. It does happen, but it's not nearly as much of an issue, and so it's not a huge factor. I don't think that this has changed over the years, and I can't imagine. Then the nature of how -- Well, I'm not going to say the next part. Never mind.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I would probably, if I could just add that maybe one in twenty would have a trouble, any trouble, surviving, and that's probably due to being hooked too deep to survive, and, other than that, I'd just like to double-weight everything David just said. I mean, I kind of -- I agree with that. Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: What you guys said too, and besides -- Sometimes, I guess you could call them a bycatch, when we're when we're on the reef trolling, and looking for barracuda and mackerel and some action, and we'll put a little jig down, with a slice of fish, like a ballyhoo or a slice of bonita, and, as we're getting that action for the people, on a slow day, we're actually catching yellowtail snapper on that small jig.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Richie. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: This isn't my fishery, but, when I do fish the Keys, which is every year or two, the only time I've lost them has been with shark deprivation.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Sorry, and I just wanted to clarify, and so you were saying trolling for barracuda and mackerel, and you are sometimes interacting with the yellowtail?

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, and purposely though. You know, we're using a special little jig for them, and so we're actually getting the action, plus catching a few fish that they can eat, at the same time, and we'll catch mutton snapper like that too, and we've even had a grouper come from the bottom and hit it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So intentional bycatch. I mean, I know exactly the technique you're talking about, and it works. I mean, it's a great way to do a couple of things at the same time. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. We're at 4:58. Let me actually make sure -- So the next kind of section is the social and economic influences, but I'll defer to you, Chair, whether or not you want to keep going or pause here for the day. That is up to you guys.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Personally, I would like to wrap yellowtail up. That way, we don't have to start midway in the morning. You know, for those who are probably aren't going to comment anyway, because it's not your jam, like I would completely understand if you wanted to call it a day, you know, but, if it was up to me, I would rather wrap this up and start fresh in the morning.

MS. IBERLE: Powering through, and so that brings us to social and economic influences, and so, thinking of the commercial sector, how has the price and demand for yellowtail changed? Is there an increase in demand for a specific size, and so thinking plate-sized, or sizes above, obviously, that twelve-inch minimum size, and, among the species you target, how important are yellowtail

to your overall business, and that's thinking charter, for-hire, or commercial, and then what communities are specifically dependent on the yellowtail snapper fishery?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I guess -- I don't see any hands, and so I'll kick it off. For the commercial sector, since 2017 specifically, we've been in a very consistent marketplace. In years prior to that, we've -- You know, with the extra pressure, the extra commercial pressure, when the fish started to run, and really chew, it was very easy to flood the market. Since then, it's been a little bit harder, and so we've had a more consistent price, almost all the time for them, and every size has its place. There's a little less value associated with the smaller fish, the three-quarter to ones, and that gives kind of -- I don't want to say low income, but your lower-income people, that seek out fresh fish, you know, some of your different ethnicities, and they want those fish, because typically they scale them and -- You know, gut them and scale them and eat them whole, and so that would be more of the plate-size that you're talking about, and so that specific size range is important.

You know, all of Monroe County depends on the yellowtail snapper fishery, and even up the coast, and I would say as far as, I mean, West Palm. I mean, I fully believe that there is a dependency on this species all the way up the east coast, at least to West Palm Beach. You know, the sector may change. There may be a shift from more of a commercial reliance to more of a recreational reliance, but it is important all the way. David, and then Richie.

MR. MOSS: Yes, I completely agree. In the Keys, as you move up, it's the bread-and-butter for a lot of the charter guys. As you get -- Really probably starting, I'm assuming, in Key West as well, but I know, for sure, Marathon, up through Islamorada and Key Largo, it's really the bread-and-butter for the charter fleet, and even into Miami. Then, as you get a little bit further north, there's a lot of six-pack drift boats that will -- They will fish reefs for yellowtails. It's a little bit different technique, but that's, again, kind of their bread-and-butter and what they go for everyday, fishing the second and third reef.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: In the commercial sector, I can't speak too much, besides to say that, you know, some of the light-tackle charter boats also commercial fish for yellowtail, when things are slow, and the commercial fishermen generally have something else to depend on too, and not to say the yellowtail aren't important to them, but they are doing other things, like lobster fishing, also. Yellowtail snapper is very important to the charter boat industry, especially as our blue-water fishing continues to deteriorate.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and, Richie, I like the point you make about diversity, you know, in especially the commercial fishing sector. You know, being a lifelong Keys resident, it's either diversify or die, and in the charter business as well, you know, and you can't just hang your hat on any one fishery anymore. You had better be good at several, and. the more knowledge you have, the more respect you gain.

MR. GOMEZ: Even with the hardcore trollers, that thought that that's the only thing they ever wanted to do, they’re realizing that they better do something, on different on many days. You know, hell, how many days do we deal with no blue water nowadays, and probably something like that's about to happen with all this runoff from the storms, you know, as that pushes down the

rivers, and into the ocean, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if we're dealing with the major situation, here in the next little bit.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Lots of factors to contend with, for sure. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Thank you for that input, and so let me -- All right, and so a couple more for social and economic influences. Next, have changes in infrastructure, like docks, marinas, fish houses, and we've kind of touched on this, but affected fishing opportunities. So, again, we kind of talked about that, specifically talking about those storms and how that infrastructure changed after that storm in 2017, but how have fishermen, and communities, adapted to changes in the yellowtail snapper fishery? Anything extra to add on the infrastructure side, and then changes, as far as adaptation goes?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: We've said it a bunch, and I'll say it again here, and the dying-off of working waterfront, and, James, I'm sure you've had to deal with it. I know there's a captain, up north by me, that we all know and love, that literally has to sell his fish in a parking lot to a truck, because there's no fish houses anymore to do that to, and then people are aging out of the commercial fishery, again further north, for any number of reasons.

Number one, they're aging out , and, number two, there's nowhere to put their boat, and, number three, it's just getting cost-prohibitive, but what we have seen is a fairly large increase in the charter fleet. Again, with yellowtails being kind of the bread-and-butter, that's what you can hit most days, when something else isn't working. As Richard said, if you can't get offshore, if the offshore just isn't going off, for any number of reasons, then it's nothing to anchor up and yellowtail again.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely, David, and something that may be worth noting in this is, generationally speaking, work ethic has changed. If something is hard, the willingness is not there. To start something from relatively nothing seems impossible, and, to take one step, and put it in front of the next, and the next is daunting, to the younger generation, and that may have an impact on the future of commercial fishing. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Anything else on that one? All right. That will move us on to management measures, and so I do want to note that this stock is jointly managed between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils, and so do you feel that the current jurisdictional allocation is appropriate?

The jurisdictional allocation is something that the council will be discussing. They discussed it a little bit, and you saw the makings of Amendment 44, where they were discussing this. We had some changes in the assessment. It was -- You know, we incorporated the Southeast Reef Fish Survey estimates, and we'll be awaiting that new assessment, but the council will be talking about this jurisdictional allocation again soon.

The current jurisdictional allocation is 25 percent to the Gulf and 75 percent to the South Atlantic. This is based off of recreational landings from the MRFSS from 1993 to 2008, and so, again, coming back to is this jurisdictional allocation appropriate, and then, if not, what methods do you think would be most appropriate to take that stock ABC, which includes both the Gulf and the

South Atlantic, and how to divvy-up that pie, essentially, between the two regions, and I will hand it over.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: I'm not hearing any complaints on the south side, on the charter boat industry.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay, and so, for further information, I would like to add that this is based on a given that the Gulf stock and the Atlantic stock is both the same biomass, and so, with that being noted, and some of our earlier discussion about a buffer, about a buffer could really come into play, when we're talking about this allocation currently, and a possible shift, and the South Atlantic comes much closer, on an annual basis, to meeting its ACL, and we may not have hit it on the commercial side, for a number of years, but the potential is still there to do so, and the Gulf tends to come up short every year.

That may be, you know, confusion in reporting, and where the fish were landed, and there may be a number of reasons why the Gulf comes up short. It could be that nobody has been hungry enough to target that species in that area, and so, for the people that have the opportunity to go commercially harvest yellowtail in the Gulf, and they have that in their back pocket, I'm of the opinion that that ability should remain.

You know, when we're talking about the species as a whole, and what can be taken from it on any given year, the lag between the 25 and the 75, you know, that could be a built-in buffer, that, you know, maybe the South Atlantic side could retain closer to 100 percent of their ACL, to where we're not being as conservative as we were in the past, knowing that they're not necessarily producing them in the Gulf, and some of our previous conversation got me thinking about that.

As far as the fishers that are not represented here, that I don't see anybody from -- You know, that's holding a Gulf permit being represented here, and, until they say they want to give us the allocation, or they say that that's the right thing to do, I am completely against trying to take from that.

MS. IBERLE: In thinking of South Atlantic closures, the last commercial closure was in June of 2019.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and, again, you know, we're talking about this, and we're probably going to be talking about allocations, sector allocations, very soon. I think retention, for the commercial sector, at its current rate, or maybe just wait until we get there, because you're going to ask the question?

MS. IBERLE: No, go ahead.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay. The way that the allocation is split between the rec sector and the commercial sector is nearly 50/50, or 52/48, or something -- 51-and-change, or whatever, and I believe that the commercial sector should be doing everything that they can to keep that allocation the same. These fish have gone through cycles. I remember, in the early 1990s, into the early 2000s, where, for me in Marathon, it was quite difficult to put a really strong catch together.

Moving forward, into the early 2000s all the way up to the mid 2000s, I had some banner seasons, I mean, like really excellent seasons, and, some of those seasons, we did go over our ACL, and, you know, the yellowtail were really prolific up and down the Keys, and the commercial sector should retain that opportunity, if the fish come back and show themselves really strong, especially if the recreational sector still has this giant question-mark on top of it. I am not willing to reallocate anything to a sector with a question-mark. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Then, to the point of the jurisdictional allocation, I did want to note, obviously, that any decisions -- You know, we don't have Gulf representation at this table, and that is important for making a decision on the jurisdictional allocations, and that will be done jointly with the Gulf Council. I think, with this question, I guess maybe looking at the years is something that I want to make sure that we think about, and so is that year range --

When we're thinking of allocations, we're thinking of the method of allocating. Is the year range that you're using appropriate? Is it a good representation of the fishery, when deciding how to kind of split that pie, and so that's kind of more what I wanted to get at with this question, and, again, the Gulf will be involved as decisions on the jurisdictional allocation are being made, but I just figured it would be a good question to pose to you all.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Allie, and I would expect nothing less than, you know, interaction with the Gulf. I'm going to touch on what Richie said about complaints. I don't have the charter fleet complaining to me. I don't have the commercial fleet complaining to me. I have interactions with all of them on a regular basis. The 75/25 never comes up. David, I would look to you to, you know, to echo what your representation, you know, the people that you represent, what -- If they ever think that there's a problem with that, and I think most yellowtail fishermen are aware that this 75/25 exists, at least commercially. David.

MR. MOSS: I was just going to say, in your industry, they may know, but I can almost guarantee that, if you ask most recreational fishermen in the Southeast, they have no idea that there's a 25 percent allocation to the Gulf, nor should it matter to them, because we don't typically hit the ACL anyway, and so it's kind of a non-issue, as you said, but, to an industry with a question mark, why -- Yes. No complaints from the rec sector, or the charter guys. There's fish out there. Some days you can catch them, and some days you can't.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: To add to that, I know, from a management standpoint, an allocation shift from the Gulf to the South Atlantic is more attractive but, again, you know, there's nobody here fighting for that. Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Sticking with management measures, are there new management measures that the council should consider, or are there existing management measures, such as a size limit, a trip limit, and that should be "bag limit", not a "bah limit", or season that should be changed, and are the current ACL and allocations appropriate for each sector?

I know we kind of touched a little bit on the sector allocations, and then, to kind of just give a refresher, we have a twelve-inch minimum size limit for both sectors. There's currently no trip limit. There's a ten-fish-per-person-per-day rec bag limit, and the season is -- It's essentially a full-year season, but it runs from August 1st through July 31st, and so it's just -- It's a full year, but it has that different start and end date, and so, with that, I'll turn it over.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richie, I saw your hand go up.

MR. GOMEZ: If it ain't broke, don't fix it, and, if you try and fix it, that's when we run into problems.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Definitely. So, you know, from the commercial sector, we fought really hard to get this fiscal change to the start date and end date, you know, for our season, and it ensures that any closure is going to be during the spawning season for this species. Not only that, but it coincides with the -- Well, what used to be the major lull in business, but still is more of a lull in marketability for yellowtail snapper, and so it's checking several boxes at the same time, which, you know, which are all good things.

As far as the size limit goes, I've had mixed emotions about that, personally. I've, you know, I've approached different commercial fishermen, and, you know, say, hey, you know, maybe a thirteen-inch size limit might help but I'm not sure that it matters, with this particular species, because a nine-inch male yellowtail, from March to -- I mean, almost year-round, they're milking.

Like it's that -- It's go time, all the time, for little yellowtails, and, I mean, I feel like that's a contributing factor in, you know, in their life cycle, and why they're so prolific, and we haven't managed to eradicate them yet. I mean, really, and so I think that we've had a good grasp of management for this species, and it is, you know, to this point, the poster child of success, and it's -- You know, I mean, most of it is based on -- I'm not going to give all the credit to fisheries management, but a size limit did go in place early for this fish, and that has done really well, and here we are. David.

MR. MOSS: Yes, and I agree with everything you just said. I do know that there was a couple of partyboats, down on the Keys, and that there are certain times where all you can get are those twelve-inch fish, and to change it to thirteen would really hurt, because nobody is going to go home with anything. You know, they'll have an entire box full of twelve-inch fish, and it's absolutely perfect to take home for the table, for a lot of people, and so, as Richie said, if it ain't broke, don't try and fix it. There's lots of fish out there. People are catching them, when they feel like biting, and sometimes they don't. John.

MR. POLSTON: I just have a quick curiosity question with yellowtail, because I don't really know much about them. Approximately how long do they live, their total lifespan? Do they know that?

MS. IBERLE: I think, from the earlier assessment, and not the one that's being completed, the max age was forty, but I would want somebody to check that and make sure I'm correct.

MR. POLSTON: So a fairly long time then. Twenty? Okay.

MS. IBERLE: Yes. It’s twenty-eight, for the record. Thank you, Mike.

MR. POLSTON: Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: To add to the size verbiage, and, you know, we have an ethnic community in south Florida, and that twelve to thirteen-inch size range -- A lot of that fish goes to a fish

sandwich called minuta. It's a Cuban delicacy, basically, where they remove the bones from the entire fish, scale, and leave the tail on, and they serve it as the sandwich. I mean, it's a really cool process. I don't know if anybody's ever had it, but it's a whole fish, on a sandwich, that has been deboned, and you just crunch it up. You know, I mean, it's awesome, and so -- You know, that would be something that literally would be taken away, and it's kind of a mainstay in south Florida cuisine, if you wanted to add that. Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: In my quick overview, and I know we've got the question about sector allocations, and we've kind of recorded some stuff about sector allocations, but I did want to note the current percentage breakdown is 52.56, so right under 53 percent, commercial, and 47.44 recreational, and that's based off of average landings, 50 percent average landings from 1986 to 2008 and 2006 to 2008, and so that's kind of the basis for that allocation.

Moving us along, I believe this is the last section, and so environmental, ecological, and habitat questions. Do you perceive that the abundance of yellowtail snappers changed over the past ten years? When and where are the fish available, and has this changed? For instance, has there been a shift in catch, annually or seasonally, inshore or offshore, north or south, and then please describe.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David, I saw your hand.

MR. MOSS: I would say that the abundance has changed, in that there's still plenty of fish down in the Keys, but they've moved a lot further north, as we've already indicated, and it appears that they're catching them with a fair degree of regularity now further north, and so that kind of answers -- It goes to both questions, I guess, that the abundance has changed, because we've seen them move further north, but there's still plenty of fish down south.

MS. IBERLE: I guess -- Sorry, and you answered it there at the last minute. I was thinking are you seeing less --

MR. MOSS: It's not been like a population shift, like they've moved from one area to the other. They've just gone and made more. Move forth and multiply.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: See, David, I would agree with that, all the way, and that point specifically is why I would -- You know, from a commercial standpoint, I would really want to focus on retaining our percentage of the ACL, and not allocate it to another sector, because those fish may saturate some of those areas that they have found habitable, and, once that happens, I feel like there very well could be a population explosion in that species, and we might see them stronger than we ever have, you know, and so that's kind of one of those things.

I want to make sure the door is propped open, and be optimistic in this realm that we're at, and, you know, maybe this species will teach us a little bit about, you know, about what being a winner looks like in our changing environment. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Anything else on these two? I believe I've got maybe one more slide. All right, and so has the size of the fish that you typically encounter changed, and, if so, maybe describe that trend. Have you noticed any unique effects of environmental conditions on yellowtail, and then what are your observations on the timing and length of the yellowtail snapper spawning season?

You guys have kind of talked a little bit about that year-round spawning, but any other observations on spawning?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David, and then Richie.

MR. MOSS: I don't think I've ever caught a yellowmouth snapper.

MS. IBERLE: Did I -- Thank you.

MS. MOSS: But exactly what we said though, and they're moving further north. You've seen them further north. As James said earlier, from kind of a spring-ish time, and through like September, they seem to be milking everywhere.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: The first two, no. The third one, they're horny little bastards.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richie, and, for me, since I'm out there every day, and the questions are asked, I would say that, overall, the average fish that I'm catching is larger, and there may be a little bit missing in the one to two-pound class, but I see very, very strong recruitment, and so, everywhere you go, nearshore, bridges, patches, there are little yellowtail everywhere, and so there may be a little bit of a gap, and there may have been an environmental situation that caused that, or maybe those fish, when they're in that zone, you know, that size range, and maybe that's when they go explore new areas, and they're not hung up. They're not tied to any one specific area, and maybe that's when they go, and that's when they're in their strongest part of their life cycle. I don't have the answers, but the questions were asked, and I have an opinion, and an answer and now you have it. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, in the thirty-five years that we've been fishing out there, it's only in the last couple of years that we've actually caught some off the Carolinas. You know, they're riding up on that Gulf Stream, and, this year, it seemed to be more frequent. We had a couple of days where they caught like five or ten on a trip, which is like unheard of.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That's really cool. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I'll keep us moving along. I've still got some more for environmental, and so what do you see now, in terms of recruitment? We kind of covered this one with small fish. Have you observed any changes in catch depth, or apparent bottom type that you're fishing on? Have sea conditions affected fishable days? I don't think we've really touched on that one too much. Then have you noticed any change in the species caught with yellowtail snapper over the years, and so has that changed, and I'll hand it over.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So, as far as the type of -- Well, recruitment we did cover, and we're seeing plenty of recruitment. Changes in depth, or bottom type, for us in the Keys, it's pretty much status quo there. Conditions, I would say that the only limitations that I have in conditions are that I'm getting older, and I'm not willing to fish the rough days, the way that I did as a kid. I mean, look, it can be blowing twenty to twenty-five knots, out of almost any direction, other than south, and you can effectively fish for yellowtail snapper.

Again, you know, your skill level, your comfort level, are going to determine that, but it's not unsafe. Geographically, we're pretty special, and then, the change in species caught with yellowtail over the years, it's pretty much status quo. You get your cero mackerel, kingfish, mutton snapper, grays, grouper, you know, I mean, and maybe less gag groupers, you know, for us in the Keys, and a few more Nassau. David.

MR. MOSS: Yes, a lot of the same. What I will add is, the smaller fish, you're going to find shallower, typically. My next two comments are going to be very broad strokes, but smaller fish you're going to find shallower, and, usually, you'll get the pockets of fish, or the schools of fish, are going to be fairly like size, and so, if you're on a school of twelve-inchers, most of them are going to be in that twelve-inch range. If you're on a school of eighteen-inches, most of them are going to be nicer fish.

Exactly what James said, and you can kind of find a place to find them, regardless of what the wind is doing, unless it's really honking, and exactly what he said. I definitely am more selective on my days now, because it hurts, and there was -- Oh, and what does happen, and, in fact, it just happened recently, is you'll see kind of that late-summer doldrums slow-down, in like August into September, and it happened again this year, and then it takes something to fire them back up again, whether it's a storm event, or it might be a cold front, or it might be something, but anything to change will fire them back up again but usually they'll be pretty hot and heavy from, you know, early spring, through about August-ish, September, and it kind of depends when it started really firing it up, and then it'll wane off, pretty significantly.

They're still there, but they're just not eating, and then it'll take some event, some weather event, to change, to really fire them up, and then, usually, when it does, as it did this year, they go crazy for a few weeks after.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely. Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: We've covered a lot of this stuff, but, as far as, you know fishable days, I would say, for us down in the Lower keys, March and April are probably some of the hardest days, because we have a harder wind, and an east current against the wind, a lot of times, down in the Lower Keys, and that certainly isn't -- It isn't a nice day to be on the water, and then fighting the current also, but there are enough fishable days where -- I mean, I've done a lot of yellowtail fishing in my life, and I could basically make a phone call from the dock, and ask a couple of appropriate questions, and know whether I need to throw the chum on the boat and go or not, and so they're very dependable. If conditions are right, you're going to catch the fish.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richie.

MS. IBERLE: All right and that about wraps it up for me. I think I want to pause and give you guys an opportunity -- Is there anything else that you think is important for the council to know, with regards to the yellowtail snapper fishery? I'll turn it over. Anything else you guys want to add?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Looking around, Allie, I think that we are done.

MS. IBERLE: Well, I appreciate the feedback.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right. I'll adjourn the meeting for the day. I apologize. I believe we are starting at 8.30 tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on October 16, 2024.)

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OCTOBER 17, 2024

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Town and Country Inn, Charleston, South Carolina, on Thursday, October 17, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Good morning, everybody. I would like to call this meeting to order, on the third day of our three-day meeting schedule here. I believe we're going to start with the end of yellowtail snapper, and go over that risk analysis with Allie Iberle.

MS. IBERLE: All right, so we're going to walk through this, just like we have been for the other species that you guys have been doing, and then we'll be good to go with yellowtail, and so starting off with the natural mortality, and so we're going to off of SEDAR 64, which was completed in 2019. Again, the most recent assessment will be incorporating the SERFS information, but we're going to go off of this one, and so the constant mortality-at-age was 0.16, and so that puts you at high-risk, rating at a one, and that was using a max age of twenty-eight years. I guess I'll pause here and see if the AP feels that this should be changed.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I would probably just ask the same question that I asked Chip on sexual maturity, is what size they are in inches there, and, you know, what the sentiment is there, if that's kind of consistent with mutton snapper.

MS. IBERLE: Give us one second. All right, and so this is the figure for female proportion mature, and then total length, and so it's looking like we're pretty much 100 percent mature around fifteen inches, and so that's fork length.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: What would that translate to in age and years?

DR. COLLIER: (Dr. Collier's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So rather consistent with the mutton snapper, and that was -- I think we elected to keep that as a one, and so, I mean, from a scientific standpoint, I think that has to stay. Anybody in the room have any comments on that? No hands, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and that brings us to age and maturity, and so, in Florida waters, 50 percent of females were sexually mature at 1.7 years, and so that puts you at a low-risk rating of three. Any deviations from that?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so that brings us to ability to regulate. In thinking of closures, there was no rec overages from 2018 to 2022. However, there was commercial closures in 2018 and 2019. I checked on the percentage overages in those years. In 2018, it was at 106 percent, and then, in 2019, it was at 104. Then, if you were wondering, the percentage of the ACL usage for the rec sector, even though there wasn't a closure, it ranged from like 35 percent to the highest was right around 65 percent and, with that, I will turn -- So that puts you at a risk rating of a three, and so low-risk, but I'll turn it over to you guys.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: For me, I would just like to point out that those overages on the commercial sector is a normal lag in reporting time. We see it at least a two-week period, before any numbers get updated on the website, or even in any of the fish apps that we use, you know, and so I think that whatever trigger mechanism is used is just a little late, when we're seeing those overages on the commercial side. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so I'm not seeing any deviation from the three for that one. That brings us to potential loss, potential for discard loss, and so, as we talked about yesterday, doing the -- Or walking through those fishery performance report questions, releases are often in shallow water. We didn't really hear a ton of issues, when thinking about discard mortality. I have here that there's notable recreational fishing observed in SEDAR 64, but different recreational data is being used in SEDAR 96, and so I mentioned that the Florida State Reef Fish Survey is going to be included in that. I'll pause here to see if there's any wish to change that off of the low-risk rating of three.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just a question, James or Randy, and I think there's one other AP member that targets this species regularly. What's the depth, when you guys are going after the legal fish? What's the approximate depth you're setting your baits, or your rigs, to try to catch these fish?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richie, go ahead.

MR. GOMEZ: For us, in the Lower Keys, if you want to catch the larger fish, you're usually from fifty-two to fifty-eight feet, and we're fishing on top. You know, we're chumming the water up. If you want to do well with them, you're chumming the water up, and drawing them into you, and just drifting baits into them.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: So that's fifty-eight feet, Richie, below the surface?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'll clarify, or do you want to clarify that, David?

MR. MOSS: So, as you move a little bit further up, the larger fish -- You will get closer to the edge of the reef, which is like closer to that ninety-foot range, and Richie's right. You'll chum, and they'll come up, and some of the bigger fish will be a little bit deeper, but there's not a huge discard mortality issue, because, again, most of what you're throwing back are going to be undersized fish, and, typically, you get those much shallower, like on the patches, which is going to be closer to thirty feet-ish and so not a ton of discard mortality.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Maybe, to add a little clarity on the question at-hand, if we're fishing in ninety feet of water, and there's a relatively strong amount of current, maybe, you know, one to two knots of tide, and the fish are hanging back a little bit, your bait might be thirty feet down, when you get a bite. It's in that kind of depth range. Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: For us, we have -- You know, we have the drop of the first reef, and then we have the bar, and so our reef drops off to like 120, at certain spots, and then it rises back up to, in some spots, up to thirty-five feet, but, generally, it rises up to about forty, or forty-two, feet, and then it drops off again, and so I think the depth is different, where we're at, because of that second reef. We call it the bar.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Thanks for that information. It doesn't seem like these animals are subjected to the same amount of pressure trauma, because you're fishing so far off the bottom, compared to other reef species, and so I would like to see this stay at three, based on what I'm hearing from the AP members.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Paul. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right and that brings us to annual commercial value, and so greater than 10 percent of total revenue, or yellowtail made up greater than 10 percent of total revenue for all years from 2018 to 2022, with an average of 36.2, and so that puts you at a one, when you're looking at the criteria there, and then greater than 40 percent of total trip revenue, for all years from 2018 to 2022, with an average of 83 and so, again, that's going to put you in a one, and so both of those rows are going to have you at a one for annual commercial value, and I'll turn it over.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I mean, given the parameters, and our understanding of this risk assessment, I think that that's appropriate.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Not seeing anything else on that one, I'll move to recreational desirability, and so, again, this is kind of looking similar to mutton. From 2018 to 2022, annual recreational targeted trips range from 18 to 29 percent of rec trips in the region, with an average of 25, and so, again, that puts you in a high risk, because of that desirability, and so I'll turn it over.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: I would say leave it at that. Again, in the Middle to Upper Keys, it's definitely a highly-targeted species. Particularly, with the price of fuel, people aren't running way offshore as much, unless they know that there's dolphin out there, or something like that, and so they'll hit the reef, and, even as you get closer to Miami and Broward Counties, the guys that don't want to run and troll and all that stuff will -- It's a night fishery, but, yes, it's definitely a highly-utilized fishery down there.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, David, and, to echo that, I don't think it's going to change anytime soon, but there's going to be a lot of pressure and a lot of need for the pursuit of the species. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so that brings us to social concerns. This, like mutton, is estimated at the county level and so thirteen communities were analyzed, due to the species range. Most communities have a low reliance, and I know we talked a little bit about community reliance yesterday, and so, in this analysis, one community was identified as medium, and that was St. John, Florida, with the rec sector, and then one was medium-high, which we had mentioned -- You had mentioned Monroe yesterday, and so that is noted here, and I don't have a score in here, but I believe that would put you at a one. Any desire to change that?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Looking around the room, I don't see any hands.

MS. IBERLE: I misspoke. It was originally scored as a two. Any desire to change that?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Maybe a little bit of clarification on what this category exactly means.

MR. MOSS: Sorry, Allie, and so it's -- Again, even though we're seeing a migrate north, obviously, it's predominantly a southeast Florida fishery, and so it's very localized. While Monroe County is certainly heavily reliant on this, it kind of gets a little bit less reliant as you move further north, and so I'm confused as to how to average this out, because, while it is super important to Monroe County and the Keys, that importance almost wanes the further north you get, and so I don't -- This is a difficult one for me to rate that way.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mike, answer that for us, please.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'll do my best, not being a social scientist, but I believe the reason why it was initially scored as a two is because of the very high reliance that was noted for Monroe County especially, and so that was kind of what bumped it up from the low community reliance, but there is that recognition that it is a balancing act of how do you score something that is very important for a smaller number of communities, and may not have a huge number of communities associated with it, but that small number has a very high reliance on it, and so that was kind of where it's at, but, again, I do want to continue to point out this is something where we are looking to the AP for your expertise, your discretion, and, if you think that three is an appropriate scoring, then that is something that you are well within your -- I guess your task to give as your recommendation.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I'm hearing, really loud and clear, that this species is super important for those counties that Allie just pointed out, those communities that target this species, and so I would vote to move this to a one for sure. That's -- It's jumping off the page for me, but that's my opinion.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: A little bit more clarity on why a one?

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: When you look at the regional importance to you all in the Keys, you know, those, what, three or four southern Florida counties, it seems like, if this species hits the skids, that, you know, there would be a lot of stakeholders that would be, you know, negatively affected by this species, the stock health of this species declining, and so that's the reason behind my justification.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay, and, for clarity for myself, the level, the rating one through three, is a risk factor, and not a level of importance, and so if -- Are we going the wrong direction here? I need some clarification, and I thank you for your understanding, you know, for your suggestion, Paul, and I just want to make sure that we're moving in the right way on the risk scale.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I guess I would frame it in a similar way to how we discussed -- I think it was commercial value yesterday, in the sense that is this a species where the social value on it, where it holds value for communities, they base -- You know, you might base different aspects of your tourism, you might use it, and it might be like kind of a community logo, something like that, but is the importance that's based on this species such that there's going to be motivation to stay out longer, even if you're not catching the species, to try to get to this species, because it is iconic, it is associated with the area, it's something that people are seeking, and there is something to be said about the location of yellowtail.

We know that this is a very Florida-centric, and especially southern-Florida-centric species, which geographically is, you know, one portion, but it's not throughout the entire region, and so, again, there's some level of balancing to consider, and it's very important for a relatively small area of the region, the entire South Atlantic region, but it is very important in that area, and so there is some weighing of different options.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Right, and the level of importance determines the risk on the species, and so, the more important it is to the area, it puts the species at a higher risk. That's what we're evaluating here.

MS. IBERLE: Yes.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Which is a higher risk to the species --

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Which is a lower absolute value.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So we're saying -- Just to be clear here, because Paul was saying that it would be a detriment to the community if we were to lose that, and so we're okay with the high risk value that the species is going to undergo underfishing. That's -- I just want to be clear on that, because, I mean, it was initially a two, and we're saying that we're going to have a higher problem with overfishing, by moving it to a one, and just -- David.

MR. MOSS: I understand, or, well, I shouldn't say I understand, and I think I understand. It’s very early on the last day, and that's it, and this is where it gets difficult, right, when you're talking about like averages and across the whole region, and so, obviously, we have a very large region,

but, to that one specific sort of subgroup, or sub-region, it's highly important, and so I could be convinced either way, if we want to make it a one or a two.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well, again, has the importance changed to any of these communities, and, if we're assigning a low risk value, across-the-board, on status quo, our need for this species hasn't changed at all, and we're -- Along the way, we're assigning a low risk of overfishing the whole way, and so I don't see how any importance, in any community, would drive that risk factor, you know, higher. I think, if anything, it would be the same amount of risk factor that would be congruent with the risk factors we've already associated with this species. Therefore, leaving it at two might be a better balance for the entire Southeast region. David.

MR. MOSS: I understand what you're saying. The only thing that I will push back a little bit on, and this is, again, from a recreational perspective, is, particularly in the Keys, as we start to see the difficulties in anglers catching other fish, whether it's shallow-water grouper, whether it's mahi, whatever, I do think that the importance of this has gone up over the past -- We'll call it ten years, or probably even less, that now this is something that more and more rec anglers -- When they go to the Keys, they know, at the very least, they can go and get some yellowtails, and so, when the mahi aren't running through, when the sailfish haven't quite shown up yet, in the wintertime, when, you know, groupers are either closed, or you can't get to the bottom, because of sharks or whatever, yellowtails are kind of old reliable, and that importance, to me anyway, has gone up over the recent years.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay. Thank you. John.

MR. POLSTON: As far as the recs are concerned, and like you seem to be real concerned about the recs starting to catch more of them, and stuff like that, and what is -- What was the percentage that the recs are catching of the yellowtails, of whatever they're allowed? Was it like 20 or 30 percent?

MS. IBERLE: (Ms. Iberle's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. POLSTON: Okay, and that's what I thought I had heard, that it was fairly low, and so, with that being said, Paul, I was -- Even though the -- It sounds like you're onto something, but, at the same time, the real numbers are -- They're not even catching, at this point in time, nowhere near where they could be and so, in my opinion, I would have to go with two, and that would be my reasoning. I get the concern on the recs, but, if they're only getting 30 percent, you got a long way to go before I think you've got concerns right now. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, John, and I think Chip had some comments.

DR. COLLIER: I just want to point out that the -- When you're looking at the recreational catch relative to the ACL, that was based on old processes to estimate recreational landings. It's not on the new FES estimates, and so they're going way up, the recreational estimates, and that's going to be incorporated into the stock assessment, and so it's important to the relative how they were doing, but the picture is likely to change, pretty substantially, on the recreational side, and so it's hard to say exactly where it's going to end up, but I know the recreational landings are going up, and so it's going to be a much different picture.

MR. POLSTON: Yes, and I understand that, but, if I'm correct, we're supposed to be basing everything on now numbers, right? Is that correct? Okay, and so, next year, when we do the same thing, if the numbers have gone up considerably, then maybe we need to change the number.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John and Chip. Much appreciated. Paul, did you have any further --

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and I'm just -- Again, just thinking about this number, and not involved in any way in this fishery, and never having researched it, and you all have said this, David and Richie, and you too, James, that, you know, when the dolphins are maybe going on a slide a little bit, and you all are seeking other species, either for your charters or your commercial or recreational businesses, that this is a species that you fall back, you know, on as a go-to species, to keep your livelihoods going, and so, especially with other pelagics maybe not doing as well as we thought they were a few years ago, this seems like -- Again, this strikes me as being a one, as opposed to a two, again, if I'm understanding these scoring rubrics properly.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you for that, Paul. David.

MR. MOSS: What is, and this is for Allie, but what is the significance of us labeling this a one, two, or three, and I understand the meaning behind it, but like, what does that mean, big picture?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: These scores are going to go into the ABC control rule, and there -- When we presented that amendment to you all, there was a table that showed -- There's one column that has biomass, and there's one column that has your risk score, and the combination of the biomass that comes out of the stock assessment, and that's something that's external to the council, and that's done through the SEDAR process, but we get a biomass estimate, out of the stock assessment, and we combine them with the council, and their accepted level of risk, their accepted level probability of overfishing, and you get that to --

You combine those things to -- You combine the risk score and the biomass to get the accepted probability of overfishing, and so you are going to accept a higher probability of overfishing for something that you can -- I guess that you -- That is a lower-risk species, that is something that does not have a lot of things working against it. You're able to accept a higher probability of overfishing, and that means you have a smaller buffer, and you get closer to that overfishing limit, as you're setting your catch levels, because there is a good chance that, even if you do overfish that species, it has the characteristics, or the fishery associated with it, that it can bounce back really quickly, as opposed to something that would be one of your higher-risk species, and that's something that, if you overfish it, it's going to be in an overfished status for some time.

It's going to take some time to mature. It's going to take some time to get its growth back, and so there are also going to be very strong repercussions for the fishery, because there is some strong dependence on that fishery. People are going to want to get as many of those fish as they can, even in a limited capacity, that type of thing, and so I hope that clarifies, a little bit, what is being done, as far as these scorings and when they get put together.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike. Chris.

MR. KIMREY: So, so far, and correct me if I'm wrong, James, for the most part, low risk, all the way down the column, right, but, I mean -- I'll add that we keep talking about it being a very generalized area, you know, south Florida to the Keys, and so it's -- You know, if there's not a lot of access to this fish north of there, and so it shouldn't matter, because, you know, you're grading the fish on where it lives, and where it's caught the most, and so, for me, I would just put that out of my mind, just pretend that that doesn't matter, and being low risk from so many other factors, but they're -- You know, that south Florida to the Keys, it sounds like, to me, is highly dependent on this fish.

With all the other factors, he potential of overfishing, blah, blah, blah, blah, that we went through on this, being fairly low, the social concern with this fish, especially like Paul said, with all the other things that are happening, I would tend to lean towards a one on this, even if it meant maybe a smaller ACL in the end run, to make sure it doesn't end up where gag grouper is, or whatever, I mean, because, if it's that important to that general little area, I would make sure that I did everything I could to prevent, you know, any effort of overfishing, and so I'm recommending a one.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Chris, and, given our discussion, I think I could actually absolutely be in favor of that, and the way that it affects the overall score -- It just adds a layer of, you know, of being a little bit more conservative in there, that maybe we need to be, you know, be looking at. I saw Richard, and then David again.

MR. GOMEZ: I mean, as hard as we've been fishing them, for so many years, James, and they continue to thrive, I don't see -- Well, maybe possibly, as more people start fishing for them, and so let me just abstain.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Richie, and I think you did answer your own question there. We are the main threat. David.

MR. MOSS: Yes, I agree, and I've kind of been converted, if you will, to more of a one for this, and, again, I think, similar to muttons, as we did a while ago, be a little bit more proactive, and make sure that we sustain this fishery for the future, even with it migrating north, and it would be nice to make sure that we have still a bustling fishery down south.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Perfect. I think the panel recommends that be a one, and back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. That brings us to the last section, which is the environmental attributes. I do have a note in here of infrastructure impacts on shallow water, and so these fish are very dependent on coral habitat, and so definitely a consideration when we're thinking of environmental variables, and so the state of the reef, and that moving forward with climate change, but I will hand that over, and, again, remember this section is either a one or a zero, and so, with that, I'll hand it over.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. Looking around the room for hands. Initially, this was a one, or we haven't given it any value yet? I mean, I'm leaning to a zero here. If we're experiencing ongoing environmental degradation of our coral reefs, and nearshore habitats, that is a major risk factor in the future of this species, and so, if I'm correct, a zero is the highest, and then -

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It would be a one.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It would be a one. Okay, and so a zero here doesn't bring the overall number down.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and a zero doesn't bring - A zero is a blank, basically.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay, and so we're going to give it higher risk, and so I figured anything under a one would be higher risk, because the scale -- I'm just -- You know, I mean, a zero, when you count it in a column, would bring an average down. That's all.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so a one?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I would be leaning to one. Any comments? I think the panel agrees. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and that is the end of the risk rating for yellowtail, and so just keep -- Or I'll keep you guys in the loop, I'm sure, as yellowtail mutton actions come down the pipe, but that is it for me.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you so much, Allie. I think we're going to move right along into black sea bass, and Mike is going to take over.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Before I jump into black sea bass, I do just want to give a shoutout to you all, and thank you for your efforts put forth with the stock risk rating. This is a new process. It's -- You know, we changed our ABC control rule, within the last couple of years, and you all are the first group that is going through this and looking at this, and so, yes, we're tripping over our feet a little bit, trying to make sure we get the wording right, and get the process right, and get everything explained the right way, but I appreciate the work that you all have put in. We're going to take some notes, out of this process, to try to make it smoother as we move forward.

All right, and now transitioning over to black sea bass. We're going to be looking at Amendment 56, and this is not to be confused with the other amendment that was dealing with one aspect of black sea bass pots, and that has been approved by the council. That was Regulatory Amendment 36 that dealt with the on-demand pots for black sea bass and how those should be stowed when being transited through closed areas. The council has already approved that, and so that won't be coming back to you all. You saw the final results of that in the amendments update.

This amendment is dealing with how the council is going to respond to the most recent stock assessment of black sea bass, and so, as we go through, I'll give some discussion about the council's conversations thus far and what they're asking of you all with this meeting.

SEDAR 76 is the stock assessment that was developed, and one of the -- The big takeaway that came out of it, and it's something that you all have noted in your fishery performance report, is that black sea bass has declined substantially. There are a lot of areas that are not seeing black sea bass the way that they have historically, and we kind of saw that when we looked at the Southeast Reef Fish Survey results, that there's been a really strong decline on black sea bass, over the last decade or so.

In follow-up to that assessment, the council received a letter from the National Marine Fisheries Service, and one of the new things in the assessment was that there was a recommendation to change the reference points, and so the lines that define whether you're overfished or overfishing, and, to define those, basically the scientific literature has encouraged the use of 40 percent spawning potential ratio-based reference points.

All that means is that -- The previous reference points were 30 percent spawning potential ratio. What that ratio is, is that is a percentage of your biomass in a fished population, divided by the biomass in an unfished population, and so, if you are at 30 percent of the production of that biomass of fish to unfished, then you're going to have -- You're going to say it's acceptable to be at a lower level of production.

You're not going to be reaching a higher level of production within that population, and the scientific literature said, for species that have characteristics, such as black sea bass, that 40 percent, rather than 30 percent, is more appropriate.

The council is asking for some more information, and so I'm not going to dive into the entire explanation of that, because I'm not the person that is giving that expertise, but the SSC is going to have some discussion about 30 percent, versus 40 percent, and they're supposed to be giving some feedback to the council, some explanation of why their rationale of supporting this change in the status determination criteria in those reference points, and so I do encourage you to tune into the SSC meeting, which will be next week, as well as the December 2024 council meeting, if you're interested in the difference between these two different ways of evaluating the stock status.

Coming back to black sea bass, with that change in stock status, in order for us to enact reference points, and enact fishing levels, based on that new reference point, that needs to be included in the fishery management plan, and, right now, we have the 30 percent numbers on the books, and the agency has requested that the council put the 40 percent, the recommended 40 percent numbers, on the books, and so, until that happens, the status for black sea bass, from a legal perspective, from a Magnuson perspective, remains the same as the previous assessment and so not overfished and not overfishing, but there is the recognition that, once these criteria are put into place, that would indicate that black sea bass are overfished.

Not undergoing overfishing, because the catch levels haven't exceeded that fishing mortality rate, but overfished, and I know that we've discussed this previously, and overfished is a term that can mean due to fishing, but, in this case, it's overfished because the stock has just gone down. It's gone way down, and it's suffering from issues with recruitment. We're not getting enough baby fish into the adult population, into the fishable population, and so it says overfished, but there is a recognition, and the council has discussed this, that it falls into a category where you probably describe it as depleted, more so than overfished, but, from a legal perspective, it's the same result, in terms of what the council has to respond with, and so, right now, the status is technically unchanged.

What that means is that the council is not under a requirement from the Magnuson-Stevens Act to put in a time-specific rebuilding plan. The council is going -- Is looking, in this amendment, to change catch levels, such that overfishing, fishing at too high of a rate, catching too many fish at a time, that overfishing doesn't occur. That's the intent of what the council is looking to do through

this amendment, but they are not -- They stated, at the September meeting, they are not setting up a rebuilding plan that would set a time specific for -- To say this stock will be rebuilt in X amount of years.

Normally, there's a Magnuson requirement, if you have an overfished status, that you have to set a time-specific rebuilding plan, depending on the biology of the species, and the standard is ten years, but, if it is a longer-lived species, then there's a case for a longer rebuilding time period, but they're not going to be setting that time-specific rebuilding plan right now. They're going to be looking to change the catch levels to affect how quickly the fish are being caught, that type of thing.

That is something that kind of changes the assumptions that have gone into the catch projections that we've seen thus far. There have been several rounds of projections, if you've been following this, that you've seen the catch levels for the future years of what those would look like, and, up to the September meeting, those have all been based on a ten-year rebuilding plan, which now we found out the council is going to go a different direction, and they're not putting a rebuilding plan in right away.

We are going to, within the SSC meeting next week, and then the council will get these at their December meeting, and they will get updated projections, with the new set of assumptions, such that there's not a ten-year rebuilding plan, but there is maintaining a prevention of overfishing of this stock, and so I know that's a lot of explanation. I'll pause here to see -- Are there questions about the council's discussions so far, before we get down into amendment timing and what's being talked about action-wise in this amendment at this point?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mike, for me -- Might everything that you kind of outlined there be summed up as, if we moved from the 30 percent to the 40 percent, it might trigger a rebuilding plan to be looked at immediately, rather than kicking the can down the road a little bit? I mean, I think that's what I'm hearing here, is that shifting this a little bit might make a change come a little faster.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: One of the things you said, yes, and so, after this amendment would be enacted, if they put in place the 40 percent SPR-based reference points, those status determination criteria, then yes. If there's no additional information, at that point on black sea bass, that would trigger -- The council would then be required to put in a rebuilding plan.

I think there's still ongoing discussions about the ten-year, versus any other time period, because one of the difficult things with this black sea bass assessment is, basically, the recruitment has crashed, and, if you take the short-term recruitment trend, then the stock never rebuilds to the historic levels, because it's going to keep recruiting at the low levels. If you assume that it's going to go back to its average, that's a big jump from current levels, and so how does it get there, but, if you assume it goes back to its average, then it recovers, and it's back where it's been historically within a couple of years.

That's a question that we're still kind of trying to get some perspective on, some advice from the SSC, some legal guidance on, on how does that fit into the Magnuson requirement of if you can rebuild within ten years, if it is more likely than not that you can rebuild in ten years, you know, in the extreme case of the absence of fishing, then you need to put in a rebuilding plan that is within

that ten-year limit, that is no more than ten years, but, if you can't rebuild, then what does that look like, from a legal perspective, and so we're still getting some guidance on that aspect of it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and so I guess, to my black sea bass people, I would be looking to ask you guys -- You know, have we gone past the point of no return on this species? Is it -- You know, I mean, are we too little too late, or do we want to try and be aggressive and potentially save this fishery, if at all possible? I did see David Moss' hand go up.

MR. MOSS: Well, I have a question, and I don't know what the appropriateness is of this, and, obviously, this isn't a fishery I particularly partake in, but we've heard, from quite a few people, that they're catching them, again, further north, and that the Mid now is catching quite a few of them, and so I'm curious how that would work, from a rebuilding perspective, if now, all of a sudden, there's this huge biomass/stock that's now in a different management council's purview, and what it looks like over there, what recruitment is looking like on the Mid, all that good stuff.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, I mean, there are -- I think Wally brought up, yesterday, that there are samples being taken, and there's evaluation being done, of that stock line at Cape Hatteras, that has historically been recognized, and, you know, is that becoming a bit more muddled, a bit more intermixing of the southern stock and the northern stock, such that, you know, there may be some mixing with the Mid-Atlantic, and what that would look like, if there is, then I'm not sure.

Like this is all hypothetical, but that could involve some more interaction between the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic councils, and the stocks that are being managed in those areas, and it really depends on what the results of a study like that would look like.

There also is intent, from the council, to have an interim analysis, which is kind of an assessment update. It's not a full gathering of all the new -- You know, all the information that's extra to the assessment that was done. It's putting newer numbers in, in a couple of years, just to kind of have a status check on what that population is doing.

I don't know the timing of that, relative to when this amendment would get finished. I'm not -- I don't -- It doesn't seem like that would necessarily influence this. There may still be-- There is, very likely, still going to be that requirement for a rebuilding plan, once this goes through, and that rebuilding plan can get put in in a quicker fashion, once this is done. We can do that through a smaller amendment.

This one's going to explore a larger variety of things. As we get down, you'll see some of the actions that are being considered, and talked about, for this amendment. This is intended to be kind of the bigger action, and, if a rebuilding plan goes into place, after the new reference points are put in, then that would be kind of one of those shorter amendments that we can put in, you know, in probably that year to year-and-a-half timeframe, rather than a larger amendment that takes us typically about two years to complete.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike and David. I do have a list developing, and I do see your hands. Scott, go ahead.

MR. BUFF: This is something I've been involved with for probably twenty-five years, you know, off and on. We don't really put a ton of effort into it now, because it's not productive for the boats.

The revenue generated does not -- It don't make no sense to do this fishery, for us, but I think there's a lot to these fish migrations, and they're catching these fish in a lot of places that they've never had them before, and I think the same thing that's going on with the beeliners and the triggerfish, and that is -- I don't know if it's the recruitment, or if they're just moving, or if it's the water temperature, and I don't know what it is, but, twenty-five years ago, you could take, you know, ten or fifteen sea bass pots and spend the day and have a limit, you know, and you couldn't catch a limit now probably in a couple of days, and I just don't know that it's the recruitment, or if it's just they're moving, and, also, too, this new ropeless gear, and we've been involved with doing the testing for it.

It's really, really a neat thing. I think the lobster guys are really going to come out on top with that. That's something that's pretty neat to watch operate, and how it works, and it's like so simple that it's stupid, you know, and how nobody never thought of this, and it's pretty amazing.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Excellent input, Scott. Chris.

MR. KIMREY: Just real quick, and maybe not everybody on the AP is familiar with sea bass and how it's structured north of Hatteras, versus south of Hatteras, and this is something I'm really interested in, and I'm sure Jack probably is. You know, I'm assuming that the study that drew the line at Cape Hatteras, which is actually in southeast, but the limits north of Cape Hatteras have always been quite more liberal. I think that's like a twenty-something-year-old DNA study that determined that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and it's a little while back.

MR. KIMREY: It's twenty-plus years, or almost twenty, a long time ago, either way.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, it's over 20.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and I was the one that had the question to Wally yesterday of if they pulled samples on this last round of chevron traps, and he said they did, as far as DNA samples, because he said they went north of Hatteras, all the way to the southeast region line, which is the Virginia state line, and that's a big body of water.

You know, and those of you that have been on the AP for a little while have seen the sea surface presentations, how temperatures are shifting. For us, I would say our bass fishing might not be as good as it used to be, but it's still pretty good, but, you know, like Scott said, there's definitely something to this shift, potential shift, in this whole biomass of fish, and so if -- Previously, they always, off the previous study, said that it was a hard line at Cape Hatteras, between that biomass and south of Cape Hatteras, but, if this stock is shifting, you know, there's potential that there's plenty of fish, because, like everybody said, the crowd north, you know, Virginia up, the trawlers, which is, you know, one of the things Scott, and he didn't call them out, but, you know, part of the problem with the sea bass commercial fishery is the trawlers decimate the price.

That's why it's hard to make a living on a day trip, and their numbers, up there, are as good, or better, than they've ever been, and so I think it's something -- Everybody that may be hesitant believing that the sea surface, or sea temperatures rather, have an effect on sea bass, and I think

this is something for everybody to watch, because I think the potential for, you know, some sort of validation that it's really happening, and sea bass could be the poster child for that, before this is over with.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Chris. I have Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I'm just looking at some of the data here, and I think we have to be careful just thinking about, and this is just conjecture on my part, but thinking about a range shift, which we discussed this morning, versus a range expansion, and so is this population along the U.S. Atlantic Coast expanding the range? As we know, there's been a lot of successful potting activity, and this is incidental catch now, in lobster traps in the Gulf of Maine. There might be a range expansion, instead of the population shifting northward, and so, you know, I want to make that clear, that those are two different paradigms.

The other thing I'm seeing, when we're thinking about the potential impacts of climate or not, and going back to Wally's MARMAP data in the presentation yesterday, the MARMAP SEFIS data, is I'm looking at the black sea bass catch, this relative catch between 2011 and 2016, and so this is already decade-old-plus data, and the catch went from sky high.

The relative abundance was the highest on record in 2011, and, just five years later, it was well below that one reference line, and so we're seeing this transition, from this relative abundance in the fishery-independent survey being super high, fifteen years ago, or thirteen years ago, and dropping down to quite low, and staying at that level, already eight to nine years ago, and so we're seeing this transition already a decade old. This is well in the rear-view mirror, and so I caution that -- You know, just a distillation of my comment is I caution that this might not be the climate-driven impact that we think it is, and it could be something else at play.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Paul. I mean, in just a second, to add to your conjecture, you know, could the expansion of the previous species we talked about have an impact on the shift of another? That’s just conjecture. Mike, I think you did want to say something as to what Paul was talking about.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and one of the potential indicators of shift that's been talked about, with this species, is the fact that the southern end of its range has seen a decline in fish, and so like the central Florida and northern Florida area has noted, in previous fishing performance reports, that they're seeing much fewer black sea bass than they have historically, and so that's why it's been talked about in the context of a potential shift, and, if there's a shift of everything north, then that means the fish on the northern end are potentially running into other black sea bass from the northern stock, and so that's why the question is being asked, and the samples are being taken, and the study is being done to look at, is there more mixing of these.

You know, previously, they were defined as two stocks. Is there more mixing of these, such that they're a bit more uniform, or is there a different stock definition, and that the questions being asked, being looked into, and I do also want to note that's kind of where the -- You know, where some of the science end is going. We do need to, once we are able to come back to the management end, and kind of talk about this amendment, and what the council has to do in response to the most recent assessment.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike, for the further distillation. I think we're going to end up with some fine spirits here. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: The black sea bass is critically important in the Carolinas fisheries, and so, whatever is done, moving forward, it really needs to be taken into consideration, on how it's going to affect the charter-headboat industry in that area, because it can have absolutely devastating effects, if certain measures were taken to shut down, or close, and those are words that, when our customers hear that, then they just don't go fishing anymore, and it would be financially critical to keep them open, even with more restrictions on what we could keep, or things of that nature.

I remember when the black sea bass had a very limited season, years ago, and it was really, really rough just to make it through. Something like that, and you're right. It was a closure, or something that came in, and it was devastating to the charter-headboat business, and so, as council moves forward on this, just keep that in mind, and, once again, I'll go back to, hey, if we had a cut, where charter-headboats had an allocation that we could work within, and control, I think we could be able to keep fishing year-round, on a limited basis.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Cameron, we appreciate your consistent responses on these issues. Jack.

MR. COX: I've been fishing on sea bass, hook-and-line and potting, for a long time, out of the Morehead area, and my best years were 2022 and -- Well, during the financial crisis, I remember 2007, and 2008, and everybody jumped in and started sea bass potting, and we had a huge biomass of fish off of Morehead City, and I also sat in on the gag grouper, SEDAR 71, about eleven or twelve years ago, and I remember the same kind of discussions about grouper, with gags, and I knew that we were going to face some huge problems, ten years down the road, and we did, and I wanted to see us mitigate those issues, before it got to a point that gags is today.

I know that these fish -- Some of these fish are probably shifting north. A lot of them are, just like folks are saying, and I think, Paul, you would probably know, more of anybody, what's going on, because you guys have done some tagging, but I don't know why we wouldn't try to do a ten-year rebuilding program on these fish, because why wouldn't you move the spawning ratio to 40 percent, and try to focus on the problems that we're having now, rather than what if or where they are.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Jack, we appreciate that. I've got Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I just want to add a little bit to what Scott, and maybe Jack and Cameron, and, I mean, that is a very important species. I've always felt like -- I mean, our black, commercially, black bass, is December through say March. Those fish that we're catching, they move into Onslow Bay from up north. They're not -- They're coming from Virginia. I mean, we know that. I mean, those things aren't out there any other time, but you don't have to worry about us commercially catching them, because the price.

I mean, in December, you know, the Mid-Atlantic are trying to get their quota, and so they're catching them, and dumping them on the docks. In January and February, they've got new quotas, and this has been an ongoing thing, and I do think maybe -- You know, the stock we're catching, I mean, it's that narrow range. We go out twenty to twenty-five miles, and there's massive amounts of them, and some of these fish are small, you know, and they're the four or five-inch fish.

The bigger, you know, if they stop biting, you'll catch the small ones, and so I've never felt that it was our resident fish that we're catching, all through these years, and, like I said, I've been doing it for twenty-five or thirty years. You know, our resident fish, I know that, when they moved all the trappers off the beach and stuff, you know, they were going to rebuild. They could have rebuilt, and I think it does have something to do with the recruitment is just not happening in our waters, and so these rebuilding programs, and all this, it's always penalizing the fishermen.

Like Cameron said, our inshore charter guys, that's the only fish that they can catch. It's really a tasty fish, and so I would be careful about putting in that much, and this just, to me, seems like one of these fish that, like maybe the pinkies, that they're never going to be back to the historical amount. There's nothing we can do for it. If there's just not the recruitment, for whatever reason, but I don't think it's -- It's definitely not the commercial fishing, and there's just not that much recreational pressure on them. Anyway, that's -- I wanted to add that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Randy. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Just from the scope of the northeast Florida, the Ponce Inlet area, when it comes to the black sea bass, and I think that Tony kind of touched on it yesterday. This is one of those really cool times where what we're seeing from the SSC and what we're seeing on the water, you know, coincides. It makes sense, and so, in that 2010 to 2012 range, when the black sea bass stock plummeted, that's when we closed the red snapper, and so I -- For black sea bass, just from what I've seen, people don't go target them.

I don't believe that this particular stock is, you know, being decreased because of an overfishing effort. I think that, and I know that Wally touched on it yesterday, with the chevron traps, and, when they do samples from the red snapper, he said that they're not seeing sea bass in those tummies. Well, where we fish, where it's, you know, ten to twenty miles offshore, and this is just an observation, and I know that the chevron traps don't set that close to shore, where we used to catch sea bass and they were plentiful, and now red snapper and goliath grouper live there, and so just an observation.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. Jack.

MR. COX: It used to be, we didn't see any recreational effort in the wintertime. The ocean was rough, and it just wasn't really ideal conditions for recreational fishermen, but I can tell you that there's a lot of effort out of Morehead City for recreational effort on these sea bass in the wintertime.

I want to say it over and over, you know, and, when we get in these situations, and we're trying to figure out where the effort's coming from, until we get a finite number on how many recreational fishermen are participating in certain fisheries, and the impact they're having on them, it's going to be hard to make these decisions that we're talking about.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That's a fact. Thank you, Jack. In a spirit of kind of keeping things moving, and I think a lot of these things we're probably going to discuss further, and so I'm going to turn it back over to Mike, so we can move down the line a little bit here.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so the objective, for this AP meeting, is for you all to just get an update on the list of potential actions that the council has thrown out. Right now, we're in the very early stages of this amendment. We're in kind of that pre-scoping phase, where ideas are all being thrown on the table, and then, as we go through scoping, we'll get some input from the public, and the council will start sifting through those ideas on the table, to see which ones are going to end up in the later stages of the amendment.

What you'll see, down at the bottom of this document, is a long list. That's the everything thrown on the table. That does not mean that all of these things are going to end up in the final document. That's the different ideas that have been thrown out by the council, and some of them have been thrown out by the AP, different items that have just been discussed over the course of the last year or so, regarding potential actions that can help the black sea bass population. The timing that we're looking at right now, you see there on the screen.

The next kind of major jump, major step, in this process is for the council to get comments, and recommendations, from the SSC. They're going to be reviewing those additional catch projections at their meeting. They'll also be reviewing comments from the advisory panel, and then they'll have some discussion about approving this document for scoping and getting it out for some scoping hearings and getting some public feedback.

That's kind of the next big step, but, at this point, with a more or less standard timeline with the steps that we are accounting for looking into the future, that would estimate any changes to the regulations to go in sometime late in 2026. That would be the approximate timeline that we're looking at. Again, this is something that can change, based on how the council makes decisions and moves about the process in the interim, but that's the tentative schedule, at this point.

The potential actions that are included here, I have them grouped into two different categories. We have the required actions that the council is going to have to either include in the amendment, or have discussions, on based on the request from the agency, or based on the Magnuson-Stevens Act, or based on their own policies, and then we have other actions. These are items that have been talked about at the AP level, or at the council level, as things that could help with some of the issues that are plaguing the black sea bass fishery at this point.

I'll kind of briefly talk through each of them, and then we'll get to the one that has the discussion question for you all, from the council, coming out of this meeting. First, within the required actions, the SSC is going to have these catch projections coming out of the stock assessment, and the SSC is going to recommend the acceptable biological catch levels, and, once they do that, the council is going to need to make sure that the catch levels that they put into place are within the SSC's recommendation.

That's a Magnuson-Stevens Act requirement, and so, looking at the status of black sea bass, that's very likely to be a reduction to the catch levels, in some form. Until we get what that settled final catch projection recommendation is, we don't know the amount of reduction, but we're hoping to get some more information on that as the SSC meets next week and as they report out at the December meeting.

Next is revising the status determination criteria. Again, this is based on the recommendations of the stock assessment panel, and the SSC, and it's supported by the agency, and so there is going to

be an action included for the council to consider revising those reference points, and, if I say reference points, or status determination criteria, in this context, they're essentially the same thing. I kind of use those terms a bit interchangeably.

Then, finally, there's a requirement for them to review sector allocation percentages. That does not mean they have to change the allocation percentages, but that does mean they have to have a conversation and state that they do, or they do not, intend to change the sector allocation percentages at this time. That's part of their allocation review trigger policy. Every time they get a new stock assessment for a species, they have to at least look at the allocations and make a decision or are they going to change these or not in this round, and so they'll at least need to have a conversation, but that conversation is the required part. The required part is not for them to have an action to actually change the allocation percentages.

Then, finally, we get down to the other actions that have been talked about. One that has been noted has been the modifying the accountability measures. Right now, the National Marine Fisheries Service looks at the catch rates from previous years, and they set the season each year. They determine the season, at the beginning of the fishing year, for the recreational sector.

There's discussion of changing that accountability measure to be more of a different format. Other formats that we have for accountability measures are, when there's a consistent season, and there is either the ability to close mid-season, or there's also the post-season accountability measures that can be used, where, if there was an overage, then it's paid back the following year, and so those are some of the alternative options that it could go, but there's been some talk about potentially modifying the accountability measures, for the recreational sector in particular, from the current format.

There has been discussion about changing the fishing year start dates. I think part of this was motivated by if there's potentially going to be a rebuilding plan, moving forward, and being able to align the recreational and the commercial sector start dates. Right now, they have different fishing years. The recreational fishing year begins on April 1st, whereas the commercial fishing year begins on January 1st, and what this means, in the context of management, is this is when the annual catch limit, the annual quota -- This is when it resets.

That's the date that it resets, and it starts over, and so it differs for the different sectors right now, but there's been discussion about potentially aligning those dates, to one or the other, but to be the same, potentially, for both of the sectors.

There's been conversation with the development of on-demand black sea bass pots. There's been conversations about looking into opening some of the nearshore areas, where there currently is a seasonal pot closure, and that would be only -- In the context that's been discussed, it would be only open to those that are using the on-demand pots, and not the ones with the roped gear, out of consideration for the right whale migrations that move through the area at that time.

Discussions about allocating the commercial ACL by gear, and that was something that you all recommended potentially considering in your last fishery performance report. This is something that would look kind of similar to how golden tilefish has a longline ACL that's separate from their hook-and-line ACL. In the context of black sea bass, it would be a pot and a hook-and-line, but

having separate commercial ACLs for the different gear types that are used in that fishery, and then there's a kind of several sub-bullets under modification of recreational management measures.

This is one of those stocks that has a lot of the -- A lot of the removals that are coming out of this stock are coming in the form of dead discards, and so there's a large component of this stock that is caught, released, and estimated to die from that process, and, in projecting catch levels forward, that is accounted for, and so that kind of reduces the amount that's available for people to keep, retain, and land, and so there's the intent for the council to look into how can the discards for this fishery be reduced, so that there can be a larger amount of those allowable removals, those fish that are being taken out of the population, and more of those can come in the form of landings, as opposed to having a big chunk of that come out in the form of dead discards.

There's some general talk about discard reducing measures, and one that has come up in a previous amendment, in another context, has been possibly the requirement of single-hook rigs, as one of the ways to do that, but there are other items that can be included in ways to reduce discards.

There's been discussion about reducing the recreational bag limit or the recreational size limit. The recreational size limit is one of those things where they're trying to see what the balance is, in terms of if fishermen are able to retain a smaller size of fish, and does that reduce the number of discards that they produce, and that's really a question about fishing behavior, and what the response of fishermen would be, if you're able to keep fish down to twelve inches, or eleven inches, from a recreational perspective, as opposed to the thirteen-inch that's in place right now.

Would that cause you to -- Would you actually limit out faster, and would you be releasing fewer fish, or would you still be fishing quite a bit, because it's hard to catch black sea bass that are in that size range, and so you would still kind of be producing the same amount of discards, but, at the same time, you would be retaining additional fish, because you have the smaller size, and so that's a bit of a balancing act, and trying to figure out how well the size limit would work.

Possibly a size limit with a bag limit reduction might be one of those combinations that gets you to fewer discards, but that's one of the -- Those are a couple of the things that would be looked at, within that context, and then the one that you all have kind of a question from the council on, for today's discussion, is the consideration of a seasonal retention closure for the recreational sector.

This is being talked about of potentially matching the shallow-water grouper closure that occurs from January through April, and I just noted, just for context, these are the species that are closed around that time. You can take a look at the list there. I'm not going to read through them, but there are -- There's a large group of species that are closed between January and April, and noting also that greater amberjack is closed in April, and so the thought has come up of, well, what would be the outlook of black sea bass being added to that list of species, within that context, and would there be benefit for the stock from that happening, and what would fishing look like in that time, and so there are conversations around that type of discussion.

One of the projection runs that's been requested by the council, of looking at what catch would look like in the future, does include what if there were Wave 1 and Wave 2, that January through April, closure applied to black sea bass, and what would be the allowable catch levels that would result from that? The intent, in looking at that, is seeing, is there a reduction in the overall fishing mortality from fish not being retained during that period of time, and is there a reduction in the

number of fish that are dying from catch-and-release, and so one of those projection runs is seeing what does that look like.

The working assumption is that the recent landings-based fishing mortality that's associated with those first two waves would be basically converted to discard-based fishing mortality, and so the assumption, right now, is that there would still be fishing effort in the areas where black sea bass occur, because they would be targeting other species where black sea bass occur, but the black sea bass that would be caught during that retention closure, instead of having a 100 percent mortality rate for those fish that are above the size limit, they would have the 15 percent mortality rate that's applied for catch-and-release, and so a 15 percent mortality rate -- That means it's estimated that, 85 percent of black sea bass that are caught and released -- 85 percent survive.

There's not, right now, any assumption that there would be a change in the fishing effort during those two waves. This is one of the things that it's really hard to get quantitative data to inform how a fishery would respond to this type of action, and so one of the ways that we can give some information about this is to ask the fishermen, and ask the stakeholders, what do you all anticipate? If this scenario were to be enacted, what do you anticipate the reactions would be?

We have a discussion question, from the council, of, if a recreational retention closure on black sea bass were implemented for January through April, should fishing effort in areas, and so that means the trips that are occurring and going out, and should fishing efforts, in areas where black sea bass occur, be expected to significantly change, and, if so, by how much, and you can quantify that in estimating like how would it change, in terms of the number of black sea bass caught per angler, noting the catch is not being landed catch, but what are you bringing in as far as like catch that you would then be releasing, either a number caught per angler, or by an approximate percentage.

Some sub-questions within that, to kind of give some context, are how effective are recreational fishermen at targeting and avoiding black sea bass, because, obviously, in a closure, if recreational fishermen are effective at avoiding black sea bass, then there would be less effort in areas where black sea bass occur.

They wouldn't fish those areas, and they would be fishing areas where they could keep the fish that they're catching, and so how effective is that? We've heard, in other contexts, other species sometimes, that they're so mixed in with what's available that it's hard to get away from them, and so, you know, in those contexts, there wouldn't be a lot of effectiveness of avoiding that type of species, and so what are you all seeing as far as the spots that you fish where you catch black sea bass?

Are those kind of heavy black sea bass spots, and you're not catching a whole lot of else, or are you catching black sea bass kind of mixed in with everything else, and you may be targeting other things at that time?

Then, considering the other species that are already closed during that time period, are black sea bass typically caught in the same areas as those species, or are they caught kind of separately on their own, or with ones that could be retained, and then, finally, if black sea bass could not be retained, would recreational fishermen continue to fish in areas where they have typically caught black sea bass? That kind of ties into the avoidance, the ability to avoid, or are they going to

continue fishing on spots where it's really more mixed, in terms of the species that you're catching? These are kind of the discussion prompts, and I'll pass it back to the chair to open up the floor for the discussion from the AP.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Mike. There certainly sounds like there's a lot of analysis that needs to be done for the black sea bass, and a lot of considerations to be made, and I did see Randy's hand go up.

MR. MCKINLEY: I will just start it off. I mean, I would be against, absolutely, the April closure, because, I mean, that's when the inshore charter guys get geared up, and you've got all these people that's got small boats, and either their skill level is not there, and they're only fishing that, you know, from the beach out to about two, three, four miles.

Especially in North Carolina, you can't catch flounder, and so the black bass is what they're going to encounter. It's really the only fish they can keep to eat, except maybe the ringtail or something, and so I don't think you're going to keep these boats from going out, and they're going to catch them. I think that maybe lowering the size limit, from thirteen down to maybe twelve, they would be allowed to keep a lot more fish, but these people are going to go out. In North Carolina, as we all know, and, I mean, without enforcement, they're -- Right now, they're keeping whatever they want, and it's not going to change until there's enforcement, but I just don't see that this would be one bit of help. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Randy. Jack.

MR. COX: I don't know how other fishermen would feel about this, but it wouldn't hurt my feelings if we had a consistent size limit for recreational and commercial. We went to twelve inches across-the-board and did some of that discarding problems with the recreational sector.

I certainly don't want to keep an eleven-inch fish, and that's what we're allowed to have, and, now that we have a 300-pound trip limit, you know, the bigger fish is certainly worth a lot more money than the small ones, and it would be a lot easier for enforcement, and it's just easier to keep up with what you're doing, because sometimes commercial fishermen will -- You know, sometimes I'll run a charter, or something, and I want to keep a recreational limit of fish, but it makes sense, to me, to have a twelve-inch size limit on both sectors. As far as -- Let's see what else we're talking about. I'll come back to some other stuff, but that's enough for now. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Jack. John.

MR. POLSTON: I get what you're saying, Jack, about that, but it's almost like you'd have to do a sector, or something, when you're talking about size limits, because a twelve or thirteen-inch black sea bass, off of -- Down off our area, from Jacksonville or -- I don't know much about Jacksonville, but, down in the Ponce Inlet area, they don't really exist, or you don't see them, and let's just put it like that.

We don't really have guys that are commercial fishing right now, to speak of, but, at the same time, with that being said, if people were, you know, catching them, they would probably be throwing back at least 90 percent of what they're catching, and so the discards would definitely be greater if you go the other way.

I mean, I'm not disagreeing with going the other way, but, at the same time, talking about discards, it would be -- Down in our area anyhow, because I've always believed that we're the nursing grounds, where they're born, and then they've always migrated north, and they get bigger. You know, you guys catch a lot more males than females, and 90 percent of all our sea bass we catch are probably females, you know, and, anyhow, that's just saying -- I don't know if they would want to go different sectors or whatever, one way or another, and we don't catch that many. It's not going to, you know, make or break us, but just on the discard point.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, John. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Yes, to the point of discards, just from an operational standpoint, black sea bass are a really easy species to be able to utilize our best fishing practices. They're small fish, you know, and you can hold them in one hand, and use your -- Not descending device, but the --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: The dehooker?

MS. STEPHENS: Yes, either your dehooking tool or your venting tool, and so, even though, you know, you might see fish being released, they're really easy to get vented and get back in the water safely.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Again, the black sea bass is -- You know, it would be a nightmare fishery, to have it shut down at all, and, you know, I can only really speak for the, you know, the charter-headboat sector, and what we realistically do, and so anytime -- I mean, when you look at -- If you have a closure from January to April on bass, and everything else, there's really nothing else, period, to go out for, and will the consumer, and will our customer, even want to fish, if they don't even have the chance, and that's what I keep coming back to, is have the chance of being able to keep something.

With a closure like that, I mean, I just look back at our numbers from 2023, and, I mean, you know, that's sort of like the seed money that we've got to have to get going after dropping, you know, half--million dollars in the boatyard to repair for the next season, and so that would be just absolutely devastating.

You know, as everybody around the room has talked about, and, I mean, you know, we're talking about professionals, which is commercial, charter-headboat, and then we're talking about recreational, and, you know, those animals are very, very different animals, and, you know, like anything else, I think it's time -- They just have to be handled differently, if we want one to survive or not, and, you know, I'll go with Haley.

You know, when we're catching black sea bass, we're throwing tons of them back, and the survival rate I think is much higher than the dead discard rate that is plugged into the equation, because we're fishing in shallow waters. They're usually smaller fish, and there's not a whole lot of stress on them, you know, and they're making it back down in large numbers, and so, when we look at this whole thing, it's -- You know, just take a step back, and just go slow and make right decisions,

you're not going to have to worry about the headboats being in the business and catching them anymore. That's just the reality of it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Cameron. Jack.

MR. COX: One thing I noticed, when we started using the descending tool, and venting these fish, we noticed that these fish did a whole lot better. These fish would really want to float around for a minute, when you discarded them, before they would go back down, and so, you know, that's just one of those things that, as industry, that we could -- If we really jumped on that, and started doing that, and started pushing that for other anglers to do, that we could really help our fishery along the way, I think.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Certainly. Thank you, Jack. Paul, and then Chris.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and, again, I'm beating a dead horse here, over the third day of our meeting this week, but what the behaviors -- The best fishing practices, that we engage in here at the table, are likely not representative of what's going on in the water, with the average Joe Blow weekend warrior, recreational angler with a twenty-foot skiff.

I'm not seeing that level of either compliance or knowledge of these, either having a recompression device on the boat or voluntarily using a venting tool. It's super easy, but I don't -- There's so few anglers that know about these devices, and know in what situations to use them, that it's -- Right now, in my opinion, it's not effective.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Paul. I got Chris, and then Cameron again.

MR. KIMREY: A couple of things. To follow-up with Paul, in our area, and, obviously, I can't speak for everywhere, but, in our area, sea bass is one of the things I pay close attention to, partly because, from a charter perspective, for my business, March and April, they are pretty much my primary target. Now, that's not my high season, but, when I'm ocean fishing -- Not inshore, but, when I'm ocean fishing, nearshore ocean, they're pretty much my primary target, because they're plentiful in our area.

You know, we use artificial jigs, and things like that, to catch them, and we do call through them, but, you know, when we're jigging them, almost all of them are hooked in a quarter to mouth, and so the only issue you're going to have releasing is going to be barotrauma, and we're fishing shallow enough that that's not really an issue either.

So, for that March and April closure, you know, that's going to affect me, as well as all of my counterparts that do the same thing, and there's plenty of us, but, back to the releasing, and just like with me, when I'm bottom fishing, for groupers and whatever, you know, I've got my SeaQualizer rigged up, and I'm ready to go, and most of my clients are impressed that I put the effort into releasing things properly, because they're not familiar with it.

The same way on the head boats. There's no doubt that our practices are helping with dead discards and release mortality. Unfortunately, the huge percentage of the public, in our area, aren't familiar with, or don't care, don't have a desire to put the effort into properly releasing stuff, and another thing is, around Morehead City, just the number of sea bass discards, dead discards, in inshore

waters would blow your mind, just around our state port in Morehead, there's -- At any given time, there's dozens and dozens and dozens of anglers in there, and it's deep. It's forty foot, minimum, because of the shipping traffic, and it's full, and this is inland waters, inside the inlet, and it is full of sea bass.

There's no doubt in my mind that there's thousands and thousands of sea bass, immature, young sea bass, killed each year. There's no circle hook requirement, and, even if there was, people wouldn't use a circle hook. The people that fish those areas are fishing with a high-low rig, two hooks, a j-hook, a piece of cut bait, and I call it general purpose fishing. They're not specifically targeting anything. Sometimes they're going to target a sea mullet, or we call them sea mullets, what other people call whiting, and sometimes they're targeting gray trout, or weakfish, whatever you want to call them, but, a lot of times, they're just general purpose fishing.

With these high-low rigs, the release mortality, on those immature sea bass, isn't from barotrauma. It's from deep hooks, and it's through the roof. There's no doubt that, in our area, that that's causing a problem, because just from the sheer number of boats. So, I mean, all those things have to be considered. You know, as well as us professionals do with catch-and-releasing sea bass, unfortunately -- It's my opinion that the general public does a terrible job. They do.

I see it, and I hear about it, and I hear complaints, you know, of people trying to fish through to catch limits, and, you know, they aren't professionals, in their defense, but something needs to be done to improve the general attitude of the recreational angler, if they're going to partake in sea bass, especially if recruitment is low and dead discards are really high. I mean, if you were me, or Paul, that spent any time around the port in Morehead, you would sympathize with what I'm saying, and so just a few things to think about, a different perspective.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Chris. I think Mike had a comment to add, and then I'll get to Cameron and Matt.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The point raised by Chris about the inshore discards, that is something that the council is aware of, and has talked about. If you look in the materials from the June council meeting, the black sea bass document that was presented to the council then, there was a pretty detailed breakdown of where different landings and discards are coming from, in different areas of the region, and it is noted, the the amount of discards that are occurring within state waters, inshore of three miles, and that is a significant component of what's there, what's being discarded with relation to this fishery, and it was talked about at the council table, about how these are typically going to be your smaller black sea bass.

There could be effects on recruitment, but these are going to typically be your smaller sea bass, and they are going to be in areas where circle hooks are not required, and so the deep-hooking can be a bigger issue there, and so a lot of the things that you talked about, Chris, the council has discussed, and they're aware of, and we're definitely trying to have conversations with the states, to figure out, if there are changes that are made on the federal side, are there reciprocal changes, or other changes, and what's going to be done on the state side to see -- You know, to make sure that there are effects throughout the stock, throughout the population, and not just federal changes, where there's still going to be some big issues going on in state waters.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Mike. I'm glad to see that these issues are on the table and being discussed. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Just going down the bullet points that the council has asked for, and, once again, this is only from what I see for charter-headboat, not strict recreational, and so the effectiveness of fishermen targeting and avoiding, in our area, nonexistent. They're all together, and they're all mixed. You're not going to be able to do it, period.

Are bass typically caught in the same areas? Off the Carolinas, in North Carolina, South Carolina the borderline, absolutely. They're all mixed in. They're all together. The only exception is, in our area, as you move further offshore, past thirty miles, and you start to get less and less black sea bass, as you get into deeper waters. Bigger black sea bass, but less sea bass overall, and then the last question of, if they could be retained, are fishermen going to continue to fish in the areas, and, yes, they're going to continue to fish in areas, because, if they go fishing, they're all fishing on the same bottom, and that's what they're going to catch.

Then, to one of the other questions brought up earlier, inside of twenty nautical miles for ropeless gear, you know, I remember when the trap thing came in, and they pushed off twenty miles. I mean, for recreational headboat-charter fishermen, that was like a godsend to us, I mean, because it kept a lot of fish inshore, and not getting trapped, all winter long. Now with the ropeless traps, you know, I would just ask council just sort of to weigh it out, and so we've had ten years, or so, of that type of bottom, and, you know, I mean, I got to be honest with you.

In my area, some of the trappers aren't the most honest individuals in the world, and we see traps at five, ten, fifteen miles out, and, you know, just, again, just look at that, when you look at bringing trapping back inside that twenty-nautical-mile range. Some guys are professional, and follow the rules, but in that North Carolina-South Carolina borderline, where I am, the trappers are -- They do what they want, pretty much.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Cameron. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Yes, and, Cameron, you hit on kind of what I was getting at, and wanting to mention, and I think, tying it in with Chris's comments, and what you had to say, going back to these bullet points to -- I think it's a hard no. If black sea bass can't be retained, you're not going to stop recreational fishermen from continuing to fish in those areas, and it all ties back to compliance and enforcement.

I mean, that's the big issue here, is compliance with the best fishing practices, and how do we enforce it, because that's the thing I keep hearing, when I go back to Georgia and talking with these folks, is, if they keep it closed, I'm just going to keep catching fish, and keeping fish, because nobody's stopping me, and then I'm talking specifically about the private guys in the twenty-foot skiffs that were mentioned earlier.

You know, they get this bad taste in their mouth about how things are being handled, and to expect a seasonal closure to stop them from targeting the fish I think it's a lost cause, but, even if they did comply with the seasonal closure, they don't have anywhere else to fish. They're going to be fishing in the same areas. They're going to be putting hooks on the bottom in the same areas, and

they're going to be catching and discarding the fish, and not using the best management practices, and so I think a closure is -- I don't see how it could be effective. A

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate your input, Matt. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I was just going to address what Cameron said. I mean, I don't think he's got to worry about those ropeless traps. I mean, how many is in South Carolina, two, or three? There's not many, but, anyway, you don't have to worry about them going. They're not going to go for a dollar a pound on small bass. They're just not doing it. Chops, I deal with him some, and he's the only fisherman I know that's trapping in Onslow Bay, just about, and he's not going. I mean, he can't afford to go. The prices are going to stay down, because of the mid-Atlantic dumping so many fish.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks for that perspective, Randy. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just to pile on Chris's comments about the fishing on the pre-recruits in places like the port in Morehead City, and likely other state waters in our region, we've had this question of what's happening to our recruitment, and what's the cause of the recruitment failure of this species in the range, and is it climate redistribution, climate-driven redistribution, or a shift in the range, and I think just, again, to pile on Chris's comments, I think we actually consider that this might be some anthropogenic impact. I've just seen a lot of illegal fishing activity in state waters, and those are pre-recruit fish, and so another mechanism driving our recruitment failure could be anthropogenic impact overfishing of these pre-recruits before they have a chance to recruit to the offshore fishery.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Paul. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I would come back with that, just to say that that's a very unique area, that boat basin. That's not -- I don't think that's indicative of the whole North Carolina coast. I mean, I've got guys up and down our -- I mean, I've got a retail fish market. I see all of them. They set crab pots, and they're always fishing. What they encounter with the smaller black bass, there is some, but it's not nowhere near the extent of what you're saying there, and so that's a small portion. It's a very unique area. I'm not saying it's not important, but it's not indicative of the whole coast.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you. I think Paul would like to add something, and then Chris.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and that's a really good point, Randy, and I don't have a feel for how relatively that importance is in contributing recruits to the overall region-wide stock, that Morehead City area, but I will say that, if these animals are pre-recruits in Pamlico Sound, in Core Sound, in other estuaries in that mid-coast portion of North Carolina, that that could be a regionally-important area, at least for Onslow Bay.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Paul. Chris.

MR. KIMREY: Kind of following up with Paul, and mildly in opposition of Randy's comment, is, you know, for my charter business, I fish from Pamlico Sound, all the way up the Neuse River, from Pamlico Sound to New Bern, and south in the intracoastal, from the Neuse River all the way to Beaufort Inlet, Bogue Inlet, as far north as Drum and Ocracoke Inlet, and so I'm covering a big

portion of North Carolina, whether I'm inshore fishing, old drum fishing in the river, you know, nearshore, or bottom fishing in the ocean.

I'm all over the place, and I encounter sea bass in Pamlico Sound, in the Neuse River, in the intracoastal, between the Neuse River and Morehead City, between Morehead City and Cape Lookout, and Back Sound, and Bogue Sound, and Core Sound, and I encounter them all over the place, and I kind of know where to go, and how to fish to not encounter them, and so my point being that all these inshore recreational anglers -- All those areas, that's pretty much about one-third of the coastal waters of North Carolina that I fish, and there is a lot of interaction with inshore anglers and sea bass. I mean, there's just -- There's no way around it. It's just it's happening. I see it every day, 200 days a year that I'm on the water.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Chris. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Chris, and, for you guys that are interacting with these black sea bass up in that area so often, I was real curious, you know, because it sounds like you guys are encountering a lot up there. Are these small, undersized fish that you're encountering a lot?

MR. KIMREY: So I do my best not to encounter them, but, because I'm immersed in the recreational fishing world, through being a full-time charter guy for twenty years, I pay attention to what's going on around me. Yes, the majority of the fish, a huge number of the fish, are undersized. You will occasionally catch one that's legal, especially in the winter months, when there's less of those high-low rigs around. It's too cold, and there's not sixty boats fishing in a one-mile stretch, with cut bait, and you will occasionally catch a fourteen, fifteen, sixteen-inch bass, even inland, but the majority of the bass that are encountered are as small as two or three inches, and as big as, you know, above the thirteen-inch minimum size.

This is something that we've all seen, for a long time is all the interactions, with the just overwhelming number of anglers in that area with sea bass, and it has to do with, you know, the nature of a sea bass. Bless his heart, and he's not the smartest little guy, and he's -- You know, when I used to teach scuba diving, I told everybody, if these things got bigger than six or eight pounds, you wouldn't be able to swim in the sea, because they would eat you, you know, and so, because of that, there's tons of interactions.

Just the -- This is everywhere, but I can only speak for my area. Just from the sheer increase in the number of boats, the interest in recreational fishing, and the number of hooks, that you just can't help but think that, as careful as I am, when we're trout fishing, and we accidentally catch a five or six-inch bass, or eight or nine-inch groupers, as I am to let him go, the biggest majority of the recreational sector is not, and they are not careful, and they don't know how to kind of fish their way around, and so, when you see all these boats, all these hooks, all -- You know, it's easy math. There are lots of undersized bass interacted with, every single day.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that. Well, you know, and that was kind of what I was thinking, and hearing Paul, and hearing you, then you've got all these boats, and you've got all these hooks, and you're encountering all these undersized and two-inch fish. Well, that begs the question of

how could you have a recruitment problem? Do we really have a recruitment problem, because, if all these people are encountering all these undersized fish, then we may not have a recruitment problem, and so I think you got to really look at whether or not we really and truly have a recruitment problem.

The terminal data of this assessment, I don't think, and, looking at the data, I don't think that's necessarily indicative of what is happening in 2024, and in 2023, and 2025, going forward, but it's interesting that we're encountering this many two and three-inch fish, one-year-old fish, small fish, in their juvenile habitat, as they normally should be there, and we're encountering them at these extreme rates that you're talking about, yet we're thinking we have a recruitment problem. It's just something to think about. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and so I would rebuke that with the fact that I don't have current data to say that we are encountering them at the same rate now that we were a number of years back, but what I do know is, whether there's more recruitment, or less recruitment, there's more anglers, and, if you fish in those areas, with more anglers and more hooks, you're going to have a higher release mortality. That's basic math. It doesn't matter what the recruitment is. If you throw more hooks in there, that aren't circle hooks, and people that aren't doing best practices, you're going to have more dead discards. I know that for a fact, and so I can't speak on the recruitment issue.

DR SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and just making sure, and just putting in a note of clarification, and so remember recruitment, that we're talking about here, recruitment doesn't necessarily only mean the fish that are produced, as in like spawned juveniles and eggs, but recruitment is surviving to the point that they can be encountered by the fishery, that they start being selected by the fishery, and so that means they need to grow to a certain point, and, in the context of a fishery like this, that has a size limit, you're talking about fish that are getting to that eleven-inch for the commercial, and thirteen-inch for the recreational, size limit.

There may be spawning levels, but recruitment would still include that interim period of the fish is produced, but it still needs to grow to the point where the fishery can actually access that fish, and maybe that's the place, in the development of the fish, where the recruitment issue is occurring. I think that might be clarifying a little bit of what Tim might be indicating there.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Mike. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, you know, all I can say is what we've seen, in our business, and, really, what we're catching appears to be relatively constant. There hasn't been a massive drop, or a massive fluctuation, and I've been doing it thirty years, and so, you know, I don't know where the mix is that the recruitment is so drastically low, from what we're seeing, and I don't know if anybody has ever -- If the numbers that we've sent in for thirty years, for fish reports, are even used in the mix. I mean, that's a viable record for what's caught, and what's released, and is there -- Are there peaks and valleys in that, that coincide with the state of the way we're saying the fishery is right now?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Cameron. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: I guess this question is for Chris. Understanding that law enforcement is a major problem for you guys, do some of these rec anglers keep those two to four-inch fish?

MR. KIMREY: So, yes, enforcement is an issue, but, and I'm sure that there's a number of the smaller fish that are kept illegally. That's another thing I stumble across, on a pretty regular basis and, I mean, I could draw a list, as long as every wall in here, for all the infractions I see every day, but, you know, I think, in general, most people try to follow the regulations. The problem, with our area, is just the sheer number of hooks, and the general public's, and the recreational sector's, perception of what's okay and what's not. They -- You know, they just don't care about those little sea bass, you know what I mean?

They're trying to catch a croaker, or a spot, and they catch that little sea bass, and, you know, they just rip him off the hook, and there's no circle hook requirement, or nothing like that, and there's a lot of deep hooks, and, you know, it's just one of the minute details, in the big picture, that needs to be addressed, you know, that release mortality in those inland waters for our area, on the sea bass specifically, is not good.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Chris. I have John, and then Paul.

MR. POLSTON: Once again, with the black sea bass, I really don't have a dog in the hunt, but my question is -- So, in the past we've gone thirteen-inch recreational, and eleven-inch commercial, and, if there's not good fishing practices going with the general public, as you guys are saying, and they're basically meat fishing, would it be better to lower their size limit, to where there's not as many discards then, with it being as high as it is? It's a question.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: There's been discussion about that, and that's one of the things that's being looked into with some of the projections, the earlier actions that were listed. One of the items on the table is talking about changing the size limit, potentially lowering it for the recreational side. There's also talk of kind of what Jack brought up, of, you know, making it even, either at the eleven or at the twelve level, and so the conversations are in that direction.

One of the difficult things for that is, if fishermen are going to be at the same spots, and they're going to be fishing on the same spots, right now, very few recreational fishermen, from the information, the trip-level information, that we've seen to this point, and very few recreational fishermen are limiting-out on black sea bass.

They're not catching that seven-fish limit, and so, if lowering the size limit means that they're only going to be going from catching one to two black sea bass per person, and now they're catching three or four black sea bass per person, they're still going to spend the same time fishing, because they haven't limited-out yet, and so they're still going to be discarding fish, throughout that time, trying to get the keepers, trying to get the ones that they can keep at that time, and so, if the current bag limit is retained, and there's not a significant effect, such that they're going to be limiting out faster, then that kind of dilutes the effect of, you know, having that retention more on the discards, from reducing the discards.

Now, if there was a combination of the size limit and bag limit, such that they could limit-out faster, and they're moving off of a spot where they're fishing for black sea bass, then that effectively reduces your effort in that area. That lowers the amount of time that you're spent on a black sea

bass spot, and it lowers the number of fish that are caught and released, for every one that could be kept, and so it's trying to find that balance in between, but the discussion is being had, and we're looking at the numbers, to see how they can balance out, but there is -- You know, it's not -- There are multiple layers to that discussion.

MR. POLSTON: I appreciate that, and one other thing they might want to consider, and I'm sure they are, but maybe a combination, like you said, of -- But actually lower the amount of fish they're allowed to keep as well, and maybe take that from -- You said seven, and take it down to four or five, and then they would have to stop fishing. Maybe lower their length, and lower the amount they're allowed to keep, and then they do have to stop fishing, and they won't be discarding as many.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just one more thing to note, and there's been a lot of discussion about the inland waters, and one of the big factors for this fishery is the inland waters. When we looked at the breakdown of where people are catching black sea bass recreationally, like I said, there's a lot going on -- There's a lot going on in the inshore, inside of three miles, which is not the council's jurisdiction.

There also -- When we looked at the breakdown of the average number of black sea bass caught per angler, on trips where they reported catching black sea bass, and not just landing, but catching black sea bass, the vast majority of trips that catch black sea bass don't retain them, which means they're catching them incidentally, probably undersized fish, you know, and probably fishing in that nearshore, close to the three-mile line, or inside of the three-mile line, and so that's the majority of the encounters that are happening for black sea bass are on trips where they're catching and releasing.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Mike. I guess, to exactly what you guys are talking about, do we have information on a mean size, in inches, of the average discarded black sea bass that's caught? If it wasn't between the eleven and thirteen-inch mark, then lowering the size limit wouldn't have any effect, was basically my point.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So I'll say this with a word of caution. We would throw back a ton of twelve to thirteen-inch fish, all right, and the reason I say with caution is because, if we start messing with the size limit, without a reduction of the bag limit, you know, anything that we do that makes it faster to hit the weight of the fish, that causes the fishery to shut down, is very dangerous, and so, if we reduce the size limit, and we're taking more, my concern is, hey, you take those out of the water faster, and then your season is closed down quicker, which, you know, it goes back to the different sectors.

For charter-headboat, that is extremely detrimental. Now for recreational, I don't know. You know, if they catch their limit on bass, and move on to another area, that's possible, and we just don't have any areas to move on to. I mean, we're going to go out, we're going to fish for two hours, or two-and-a-half hours in the same spot, period, no matter what, and that's just what we're sewn into, and so there's a big divergence in what charter-headboat can do, versus a six pack or a recreational angler. They're two totally different things.

Like I've got buddies of mine who go out fishing, and they can, they can move around, and, hey, we caught our limit of X, Y, and Z, and we'll go trolling. You know, we just can't do that, and so anything with a size limit, and a bag limit, that causes a season to shut down quicker, you know, has to be -- It has to looked at very carefully, of how detrimental it would be to the charter-headboat business, because, if it closes faster, then that's super bad news for us, basically.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Cameron. I did have you on the list behind Paul here. Paul, go ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just wondering if our conversation is getting a little too weedy at the moment, because I'm looking at this management strategy evaluation from Wednesday, and I'm at the Sensitivity Run Number 3. where recreational removals were reduced by 40 percent, and I think the terminal year, for this consulting scientist's run, was 2032, and here it is for black sea bass, and it's showing that we're all in the red here, and so the probability of rebuilding, even if we reduce recreational removals by 40 percent, and the probability of rebuilding by 2032 is still really, really low, and so I wonder if some of this discussion of reducing the bag limit, or the possession limit, by a couple of fish, recreationally, is a little premature, and a little too detailed, for the moment.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate your input, Paul. Cameron, are you good?

MR. SEBASTIAN: Yes, and I covered the same thing.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Moving on to Scott.

MR. BUFF: Thank you. I don't know how to tell you this, without making it sound bad, but, you know, at the end of the day, I left here ten years ago, and we're talking about the same things that, you know, we discussed then. You know, it's just a reoccurring problem, and the bottom line is, whether if we like it or not, there's thousands and thousands of boats, and these people really -- It's like these guys over here, and I feel for you all, because I used to do that, and they're really limited to where they can go, what they can do, what they can sell their tickets for.

They have a small area that they can go fish, and they can't run all over the ocean, but, at the end of the day, they're going to be the ones that gets penalized for all these people in these recreational boats every day, and like, on our docks, I mean, there's people out there, four or five people every day, fishing, and they don't even know what they're catching. They don't know what they're putting in their coolers, and, honestly, I don't even think they care. You know, they're just there to fish for the day. They don't even have a boat. You know, on Sunday, you can go to our docks, and there's probably fifteen people standing on that dock fishing.

There's little groupers in their coolers, you know, flounders and, I mean, all of this comes back to the license, I think that we talked about ten years ago, and people knowing what they're doing, and some way, and I'm not blaming those people. Maybe they just don't know, or maybe they don't care. I don't know, but, at the end of the day, we're taking the people that depend on this for a living, and we're all the ones that are putting in all the information, the work, doing what we're supposed to do, but we're going to cut them off at the knees for doing their job and what they're supposed to do, and so I don't know what the right answer is.

It's just my opinion, and, also, too, I had a question a while ago, and this probably ain't the right place for it, but, on all of this migration of these fish, how does Magnuson-Stevenson take that into account? That's something I would like to know. You know, where does that play a part? How do we say that we don't have a recruitment problem, and we've got a migration problem, and how does that factor into what the rules, or the laws, are?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Scott. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and that's a very good question, because we're still figuring it out. I mean, this is something that, yes, it's been going on, you know, in recent times, and this is something that we're having to react to. I know, at least from the council staff point, one of the aspects that we're having to do is we're having to do a lot more communicating with the Mid-Atlantic Council, on a few different species, and talking with them about what's happening down here, what's happening up there, but, as far as what Magnuson defines as the limits, I think that we're going to continue to get some additional legal guidance from General Counsel. We're going to need to continue to consult the agency, to see how should some of these principles of Magnuson be interpreted, and so I don't have a great definitive answer. It's that we're figuring it out right now.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Scott.

MR. BUFF: Thank you. I talked to James yesterday about this. There's a really good article, that just came out this week in the *National Fisherman*, about the rules, and the laws, of how all this works, and how they're trying to change it. I'm going to send that over to Kim, and I'm going to have her send it out to everybody, because I don't have their emails, but just take five minutes and sit down and read that. It's pretty neat little article. It came out this week in the *National Fisherman*.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That's great, and thank you, Scott. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: I'm not sure if Cameron answered this yet, and so I'll just propose it again, but what about a smaller bag limit? How would that affect you?

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, for the charter-headboat in our area, the smaller bag limit is absolutely fine, because, I mean, I'm in the full realization that what we do is we sell the experience, and, if they can keep something, then we can sell the illusion that, hey, you can catch this, and we're good at it. We flat out tell them, from June until August, hey, the half-day trips are fun, entertaining trips. You're going to go out, and you're going to catch fish, and you're probably not going to come back with anything, and they're 100 percent fine with it during those months. Then you have people who want to go catch fish, and those are sort of in the shoulder seasons, and so those are the guys who are a little bit -- They don't come if they can't retain anything, basically is the way it works.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Certainly. Looking around the room, I think we've addressed everybody that had their hand up. Mike, back to you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I think that you all provided a lot of great feedback. You've definitely answered the questions, and given some perspective to the council, and this was really the main

discussion having to do with black sea bass at this point. This will certainly not be the last time you see this. I'll be back with this, in probably a couple of future meetings, but I definitely appreciate your feedback, and so I think, at this point, I can turn it back to you, Mr. Chair, and we can hit possibly a break or further points on the agenda.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Certainly I think it's time to take a break here, and we'll settle back in by maybe 10:45, or 10:50, at the latest.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right, everybody. Welcome back to the final segment of our AP meeting for this portion of the year, and we're moving right along on the agenda to best fishing practices, and I'm going to hand it over to Ashley Oliver.

MS. OLIVER: All right. Hi, everyone. Good morning. My name is Ashley Oliver, and I am the council's Best Fishing Practices Outreach |Specialist, and so a lot of your conversations this week I think -- You know, it moves nicely into this best fishing practices campaign update.

I first wanted to just start off talking about some of the outreach events that the best fishing practices and citizen science teams have been a part of since April of this year, really since the last time I gave you guys an update. I also really like to share this with you all, because you guys give some really great suggestions on events and places and things for us to attend, and so, you know, continue keeping that in mind. I'm always open to suggestions.

So, first off, seminars. We're really fortunate to continue partnering with tackle shops, fishing clubs, and fishermen on these, and we have found it to be very fruitful to partner with local fishermen, and so what they'll do is kind of talk about bottom fishing tactics, for a good chunk of the seminar, and then we'll start talking about -- Afterwards, we'll talk about descending devices, best fishing practices, and SAFMC Release, and so the number of seminars have been growing over time. As we're making more connections, we're getting more opportunities, and not just for new seminars, but also repeat seminars and so, especially this year, we're seeing a lot more invites back to clubs and tackle shops to do these, which is really great.

We're also continuing our tackle shop outreach, both in-person and through the mail. For a second year now, we have been partnering with Pitman Creek, who is a tackle distributor. They're based out of Kentucky, but they have been really kind of spreading into the saltwater realm, and so what we do with them is we will package up materials, in these nice looking mailers, and that's best fishing practices and citizen science materials.

We'll send those mailers to Pitman Creek, who then stuffs them in the tackle shop orders, and we took their list, and we just chose all the South Atlantic tackle shops, and so those materials get sent to those tackle shops, and the hope is that they're putting them out on the counters for us. I know Christina mentioned this the other day, but we are a small team. We have very limited resources, and it's hard to get to these tackle shops as often as we would like, and so this is just one of those ways we're really trying to get our materials in shops a little more often.

We also attended ICAST again this year, back in July. I'm sure a lot of you guys are very familiar with ICAST. This is the world's largest sportfishing trade show, and it's put on by the American

Sportfishing Association. This is where companies come to, you know, promote their products, showcase their new products really for the next year, and so something that's I think really awesome at ICAST is this specialized area called Conservation Corner, and so this is where all the conservation and preservation booths are located. That's where our booth is housed, and this is where this event called Donuts and Descending Devices was held.

This event is put on by various organizations, and that includes FWC, SAFMC, The Nature Conservancy, and specifically Dave Moss over there, and he was a huge help with this, SC DNR and then Return 'Em Right. Then, new as of this year, the Guy Harvey Foundation and Florida Sea Grant joined us.

This year was the third year that we've done this event, and what we do is we promote descending devices, of course, but FWC had some really great sponsors, and so we were able to give away some really cool prizes, and we're also just trying to increase the presence in Conservation Corner. When people are doing all that, they're also enjoying fresh hot donuts and coffee that's provided by the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida.

I mentioned FWC sponsors, and the prizes, and some of those prizes included Engel Coolers. There were rod-and-reel combos from CCA, ASA, Daiwa, and The Nature Conservancy. Return 'Em Right provided their descending device packs, with each of those rod and reel combos, and the Guy Harvey Foundation provided signed Guy Harvey lithographs, which were really cool, and Jessica Harvey was there to present those. Guy even made an appearance, which is really neat. Then, with every winner, they also received a conservation pack that was filled with materials from all the Conservation Corner partners, and so, overall, this was a two-hour long event.

New this year, what we did was incorporate trivia, and so that really kept people engaged, and so the trivia was barotrauma, descending device, and best-fishing-practices related, and so that kept people in our booths, and that kept them asking questions, and, overall, it was a really successful event, and we're excited to see what 2025 brings.

Then the other thing that we've been really busy with this year is implementing our Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program, and so, again, this is those regional in-person workshops that are training volunteers to become experts in best fishing practices and just learn about involvement opportunities with the council. Also, it's for staff, for us to just learn from fishermen, how we can get the messages out there, you know, within those communities, and so this is a very new program. It's a structure the council hasn't really used before, and so we pretty much spent all of 2023, you know, developing this program, and then we've spent this past year implementing it.

Before I get into how the workshops have been going this year, I just wanted to take a step back and kind of talk about the structure, starting with the goals, and so the first goal is, again, we're looking to expand the reach, by empowering key members of the fishing community to spread this best fishing practices message and methods on the council's behalf.

Second, and this goal is pretty much kind of the main goal for our entire best fishing practices campaign, but we're looking to increase the awareness and the proper use of those best practices, when we're talking about snapper grouper species, and you've probably noticed this trend this week, but we're really trying to increase the council's regular interaction with stakeholders, in the hopes that it grows their involvement in the fisheries management process.

So, talking about the target audience, this first bullet here is definitely, I would say, you know, our main target audience, and that's the key members of the offshore fishing community, and so this would include the folks that are well-known, well-respected, and they're a trusted source of information to others.

The second bullet would be kind of the new fishermen entering the fishery. This group was targeted a little more indirectly. I mean, they were more than welcome to come, and we definitely had some great people in the room, but we're hoping that those key members would be the ones to kind of share that information with that group, and then our state and federal agencies, and we wanted them involved, and they were, which was great, and then our last bullet here, port samplers, they were a target audience, and they still are, and we did find out it was a little tough to connect with them. Our schedules did differ, but I'm hopeful, you know, if we do something like this in the future, that we'll kind of restructure in a way that we can connect better with that group.

We structured this workshop to have discussions and activities throughout. We really wanted it to be conversational in nature, and keep people engaged, and so we would start off the workshop by introducing the facilitators, and who we were, and then we would turn it to the group and have them kind of talk about themselves, and tell us a little bit about them.

Then, in the first main section, we take a big deep dive into best fishing practices, and so starting off with general practices, landing, handling, and something new this year, that I've really been talking more about, is perceptions of best fishing practices on social media, and also websites, you know, tackle and retail websites.

We would then get into a section about barotrauma. We would talk a little bit about that, and we would have a discussion on what, you know, folks are seeing out on the water. Then we would wrap-up with a few videos, and talking about those mitigation tools and the regulations involved there.

Then we get into the getting involved section, and I hand things over to the CitSci team, and they talk about all the awesome projects within their program. One of the activities in this section that I think was probably the most well-received is when either Julia or Meg would throw up a photo, one of those FISHstory historic photos, and have folks kind of, you know, identify some of the fish in there, and that just kind of kept people engaged. It woke them up a little bit, and so that was great.

Then after that, because I am a nerd, and in fisheries management, I threw in some fishy puns, and that always gets a good laugh from people, and, again, it wakes them up, because then I get into management, which can be, I would say not, for me, a dry subject. I like talking about it, but we try to distill it down a little bit, so that it's understandable, and people can take away the main points of kind of how the process works.

I get into kind of the regional fishery management councils, and Tony Constant actually came to one of our early workshops and suggested we talk more about Magnuson, and hone-in on that, and so we definitely do that now. Then we get into the SAFMC, talk about the process, talk about who is involved, and I introduce them to their council members. A lot of times, the council members have been able to join us, which is awesome, but I also have photos up on the screen, to kind of

personalize them a bit, and also stress that they are -- You know, contact them if you guys have questions.

Then the last little bit here is I do talk about the Marine Resource Education Program. I really enjoy this program a lot, and so I just wanted to always put a plug in there, to get folks more involved that way, and then the last little section is there's an opportunity for our states to share some information about kind of what's going on in their world, and maybe some efforts that folks might be interested in.

This takes about two hours to get through, and I -- For the longest time, I was like, oh, that's a long time. You know, that's a lot, to ask a fisherman to come sit through this, and I ask -- Every single time, I ask attendees if two hours is too long, and what do you guys think, and they always tell me that, you know, people are here for a reason, and this is very important information that they need to hear, and so we've been keeping it at the two hours, and it seems to be going all right.

Then something that every participant receives is this educational binder, and I wanted to just walk through it with you guys and show you all what's in here, and so every participant gets one of these, and, within this binder, there's all kinds of goodies and materials in here. To start, everybody gets one of these snapper grouper fishery management unit sheets, and so, basicall, the idea behind this is so that people just realize how many fish are in this. A lot of times, they don't realize there's fifty-five fish in here, and so I often will kind of point out a couple too that they may not realize are in this unit, and so I usually bring out, you know, black sea bass and spadefish.

When I talk about the descending device regulation, I always circle back and point to this, and this has actually become kind of quite the hot commodity, I would say. I was kind of surprised, but the states were really interested in this. They all wanted PDFs of it. They're printing it on their own., and fishermen were asking for extras, and so I do have extras, if you guys are interested in taking some of these home with you all.

Then, additionally, of course, they get a best fishing practices koozie, for all their cold drink needs. They get a sticker, because they become official BFP MVPs after this, and they also get a copy of the presentation. Within the presentation, there's tons of QR codes, and resources, and so the hope is people will go back to those QR codes and share with others, and then probably my favorite part about the binder is this kind of informational material packet, and it has all of our BFP and citizen science materials. They're all packaged up, and I try to give folks ideas on how they could use these.

If you give a seminar, you know, put these out on the table, especially if you're talking about bottom fishing. If you have tackle shops or marinas in your area, take those there. Friends, whatever it may be, and this is for them to give out to others, and so this has been going over really well. People -- I mean, people like to take things, from workshops like this, but I'm really hopeful that folks are using these and giving them out to other people.

As for 2024, we are almost complete, which I can't believe it's already almost November, and so we have been in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. We'll be up in North Carolina, I guess in about a month now, and Wilmington, Morehead City, and Raleigh.

I just wanted to share kind of a few takeaways from the workshops that we have done so far. The first one, quality over quantity, has, I would say, become our mantra a little bit. In the development stages, we kind of figured out that about twenty-five attendees was the max that two staff members could handle in this structure, and we only came close to that once.

However, we are really wanting to get tackle shop owners and charter and headboat captains in there, and we wanted commercial fishermen in the room, and we did get just that, and so maybe the amount of people in the room isn't quite as important as the types of people we were getting to share this information with.

Second, discussions and activities are needed to break up the content. Nobody likes to be talked at for two hours. Nobody likes to be talked at for ten minutes, and so it's really important that we had these different activities and discussions, to keep folks engaged. We received a lot of great positive feedback and suggestions from attendees, but something that I noticed that kept coming back up was fishermen were suggesting that more fishermen need to take a course like this, and so that's good, good news, as, you know, 46 is coming down the pipeline, and it has that education component.

Then, lastly, outreach from our state partners, advisory panel members, and council members are an absolute must to make not only these types of workshops, but everything else that we do successful, and I wanted to take a moment and just talk a little bit about these two photos. The top photo, this is our New Smyrna, Florida workshop, and I know Haley mentioned this earlier this week, and so Haley, along with council member Jimmy Hull, were boots-on-the-ground getting people here.

Jimmy even did a video, with Coastal Angler, talking about the program, and, you know, a call to action, to come to this workshop, and you need to come to this workshop, and Coastal Angler put that on their social media, not once, but three or four times, and so, because of their efforts, this room was filled.

Then the bottom photo -- This is a tackle shop in St. Augustine. I met the owner of this tackle shop at ICAST, and I invited him to the workshop that was going to happen there the next month after, and Meg and I went to his shop, the day of that workshop in St. Augustine, just to chat with him, to continue building that relationship, and I noticed he had put up these flyers.

I didn't ask him to do that, but he had put up two or three of them, and so, again, it's really important to have you guys, council members, or state partners involved with this. I can't do it all by myself. I definitely can't fill a room, like Haley and Jimmy did, and so I just want to thank everybody that has been involved in this so far. I will say, again, we're going up to North Carolina, here in a month and I will definitely be pinging all of you North Carolina folks very soon about that, and so that was BFP MVP.

I did want to shift gears, just slightly here, and give you guys a quick update on the Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellowship. As a reminder, this is a collaboration between the council and Sea Grant, where Sea Grant is providing a fellow to continue to help advancing stakeholder understanding of these reef fish issues and management, as it relates to best fishing practices and improving the survivorship of those snapper grouper species.

Almost three years ago, I was the original fellow. Then I transitioned into my current staff position with the council. I know a lot of you guys know David Hugo. He followed after me, and he finished up his fellowship back in May of this year, and then now we have Greyson Webb on board. Greyson is a Charleston native. She's got an extensive communication background. She's actually currently in Alabama, at another reef fish meeting, and so she couldn't be here to present on this, but I am sure you guys will be hearing from her soon.

I just wanted to touch on a few of the things that she'll be working on. Today, and in other updates, I've talked about the tackle shop visits, seminars and events, and media tours, but two of the things that she's been working on, and developing, and will really be focusing her time on, is this media and press outreach and audience analysis.

For media and press, she'll be producing content and stories on current reef fish science to local, regional and national media outlets. Like I mentioned, we're a small team. We have limited resources, and it's hard to get everywhere all the time, and you guys talked about it. We realize that stakeholders have lives too, and it's hard for you all to get out to events and meetings as often as maybe you would want to, or we would want you to, and so the goal with this is to reach stakeholders through the media that they are already using.

Then, as for the audience analysis, this is looking at gaining a better understanding of the communication preferences of stakeholders, and so Greyson, and Sea Grant, will be conducting this survey that looks into communication behaviors, the preferences and barriers of South Atlantic fishermen, and so really the goal with this is to inform the council and Sea Grant outreach, as they're kind of planning their future communication campaigns.

Anyways, that is kind of the best fishing practices, what we've been up to the last few months. I don't have like any set questions for you guys, but, this week, I've heard some really great, you know, ideas. I've heard there's not enough education at boat ramps, you know, stuff like that. Any types of suggestions you guys have, I'm all ears. Chris was talking about circle hooks, and we need more education on circle hooks, and so, if you guys have any suggestions now, or in future, I'm all open, and I'm also happy to take any questions, and so thank you guys.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you so much, Ashley, and it's been a real pleasure watching this program develop over the years, and I think that you, and your team, have done a wonderful job, and it was a great presentation. Looking around the room, anybody -- Haley, I see a hand up.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Ashley, for the presentation. Yes, we were very fortunate to play a small role in the success of one of these stops, and, you know, the Best Fishing Practices and CitSci team really do an incredible job. From hearing what you're saying about limited resources, you know, I thought that it was a nice touch, when we go back to port meetings, stakeholder engagement, and I thought it was a nice touch that there were fresh baked cookies in the Tupperware.

Now I'm thinking that maybe that was a limited financial type thing, but, whatever the case may be, it worked, and I will say this, just from an observational standpoint, but, when folks showed up, they were angry, okay, and they're angry with management, and they're angry with the way that things have been going, and rightfully so, and I think, you know, I might speculate that most people are. These girls are on the front lines, and they're boots-on-the-ground, and they did an

excellent job of defusing any type of anger, through education, and looking to restore the trust, you know, by saying, hey, we do have problems, and there may be a light at the end of the tunnel, by doing these best fishing practices, that have been proven time and time again to work.

I think something like this would be -- You know, it would serve as a framework for an educational requirement, if we go back to talking about recreational permits, because it explains the why, right? If I tell my five-year-old that you have to wear your helmet when you're riding your bike, he's not going to listen. If I tell my five-year-old that you have to wear your helmet, because, if you fall off and get hurt, you can never ride your bike again, well, then he's going to comply, and, on a much larger-scale level of fisheries management, I think focusing on the stakeholder engagement, the education, and the why is how we're going to turn this fishery around. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Haley. I see, Paul, you have your hand up.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and the question, for the presenter is are these devices, recompression devices and venting tools, are they given out as part of the workshops? I missed that.

MS. OLIVER: I actually forgot to mention that. So, with our partnership with Sea Grant, they have some funds to provide descending devices, and so we do give away some inverted hooks, when we do these types of workshops, that is the BFP MVP. During seminars though, often we'll have the SeaQualizers that we'll raffle off, or give away, or Sea Grant will.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just to follow up, just urging all hands-on-deck, and whoever is in charge of these types of programs should move heaven and earth to give these devices out like Halloween candy, just to push them. We have a $5 trillion federal budget, for fiscal year 2023, that just recently ended, and it's amazing that some of these devices are still not being used, simply because, understandably, a lot of stakeholders aren't willing to pay the monies to obtain them, and so any programs that can divvy these things out, free of charge would be, I think, really, really helpful to the snapper grouper fishery.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Paul. Jack.

MR. COX: Thank you for the hard work you guys are doing. We really appreciate it, because it helps us tremendously on our end, what we're trying to do, but, yes, I was just going to say that maybe you could reach out to some of those manufacturers, that make those tools, and see if they can give out some discount coupons and stuff that you could hand out, and people like a deal, and so they might be more apt to go out to the tackle shop and buy something if they get a 20 percent off or something.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jack. David.

MR. MOSS: At the risk of being the bad guy again, and so a couple of things. Number one, you can -- For recreational anglers, and this is just more informational than anything, recreational anglers, you can actually get one of the more expensive devices, which is the SeaQualizer, if you go through Return ‘Em Right. It's a Gulf-based program, and you just have to tell them that you fish in the Gulf, and they'll actually send you a free descending device and weight, you know, three-pound weight, all that stuff, for free. That's number one.

Number two, I'm going to push back a little bit on people complaining about the expense. You can get one for about ten-bucks, for more like one of the inverted hooks. The most expensive one, or the more expensive one is SeaQualizer, and I think that's about $60, or $70, and so, for recreational anglers that are out there, in, you know, half-million to a million-dollar boat, and paying for fuel, and paying for bait, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, that $50 or $60, that's not a barrier to entry, to me.

It's just the constant work of what this group is doing, getting out there, as you said, boots-on-the-ground, and they're doing great work, but it's -- The unfortunate truth is it's a drop in the bucket of the amount of recreational effort that's out there, and so, as Ashley said, it's really incumbent upon us, as leaders in our communities, and our fishing communities, to keep up with the education of all this stuff.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, David, and, Ashley, something you mentioned about the QR codes in the book, and reflecting on some of the words that Paul brought up, when talking about information not being available at boat ramps, I think a simple QR code where you launch, where you pay, you know, to kind of jump into the water, as far as what's expected of you while you're on the water, and, you know, you open that link, and it's with you on your device, and you don't have to stand there and read it and analyze it. Maybe something like that might help go a long way with some education. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: My opinion is that the expectations right now are currently really sloppy, and they're loose. These are vague expectations that you have to have a recompression device on the boat. I mean, on the boat, and that doesn't mean we have to use it, and so I think there should be, moving forward in some of these amendments that we're considering as a Snapper Grouper AP, that, you know, these guidance get more firm, like usage is required, as opposed to just needing to have a device on the boat, which is -- Again, it's simply too loose, and it's wrought with failure.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I think the verbiage is aboard and ready to use, but, you know, I mean, it does tighten it up a little bit, but not all the way. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Yes, absolutely, and I just want to agree with everything that you both just said, and, you know, taking it that step further is explaining to the why. Hey, do you like fishing? Do you like catching fish? Then you have to do this, if you want there to be any fish available to catch, and something that I learned from the workshop, that I thought was really cool, and it wasn't mentioned in this, and maybe Julia will touch on it later, but you can make your own descending device, and so it doesn't come back to, you know, whether you have $10 or $60 to spend, and there's no excuse why it shouldn't be used, because it's been proven, and just getting that word out there about why it's so important. I just wanted to reiterate that, and thank you, guys, for your comments. I agree completely.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, Haley. All right. Ashley.

MS. OLIVER: Yes, and I'll just add onto that. Because we have gotten the pushback of it costs too much to buy these devices, we have been promoting more on how to create your own, and I also wanted to say, James and Haley, your thought of the, you now, what's expected of you on the

water, and I think a call to action, just kind of almost a hard truth, might be the way to get through to folks, and so I really appreciate that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right. Well, thank you very much, and I think we're going to move on to citizen science.

MS. BYRD: All right, everyone. So I'm Julia Byrd, for those I haven't met. I kind of oversee the Citizen Science Program, and this is Meg Withers, and she is the project coordinator for the program, and so we're going to kind of tag-team this presentation, just to give you an update on what's been going on with the program, and then also pick your brain on a few questions we have in regard to our projects, and so we'll turn things over to Meg to take it away.

MS. WITHERS: Yes, and so we're going to touch on a few of the projects we have going on in the program, as well as a touch on the citizen science project idea portal and our CitSci Projects Advisory Group, but we wanted to start off with SAFMC Release. This is the project that I primarily work on, and we have some Release participants on the AP, which is wonderful.

As I'm talking about the project, or if, after this meeting, you would like to check out our website, for additional information and resources about the project, you can scan this QR code, and it will take you to our webpage, but, just to kind of share a few updates with you on the project, fishermen are continuing to record their released shallow-water grouper and red snapper in the free SciFish app, and so they're recording information like depth caught, length of the fish, what kind of hook they used, optional fishing location, if they saw shark depredation, or if they used a descending device.

We're really continuing to focus a lot of our efforts on outreach. A lot of that is done in collaboration with the best fishing practices crew, which has been fantastic. We're also continuing to do a lot of communication with our project participants, and to recognize them through our participant recognition program, which I'll touch on in a little bit, but, overall, one of our main priorities, at this time, is engaging with our participants and retaining them in the project, which is something that I'm going to be asking you about in a little bit.

To provide a little bit of background on our communication with our participants, once someone joins the project, we sign them up for our monthly newsletters, and, in these newsletters, we share information about the Release project. We have a dedicated best fishing practices section, and then we'll also cover, you know, maybe a more general citizen science topic, like one of our other citizen science projects, or some CitSci resources.

On a kind of one-on-one basis, when someone submits an entry to the project, we'll thank them. We're really appreciative of everyone's contributions to the project, and so we want to make sure that we communicate that to our participants, and then, on an annual basis, we have a data summary, and so, once a year, we look at the data that's been submitted to the project, and we summarize it, and, initially, we only make that available to Release participants, because, if it weren't for the fishermen in this project, we wouldn't be able to make a data summary for the project, and so we want them to be able to have at least a couple of months to kind of peruse the data summary and ask questions kind of at their leisure, and then, after a couple of months, then it's posted to our webpage and made publicly available, and so that's kind of an overview of our communication with participants.

We also kind of recognize our participants, for their achievements within the Release project, through our Participant Recognition Program, or PRP, and this program really started last year, and it did really well, and so we've continued doing it this year, and we're recognizing folks who meet certain milestones, like submitting a certain number of submissions, or entries, submitting the smallest and/or largest of each species, and we have kind of a continuous milestone that runs across years, and so someone who meets the Around the Reef milestone will have submitted all the species in the project.

Then we're also really fortunate to be able to partner with Sea Grant, who has kind of adopted some of our milestones, primarily our photo categories, and so, when someone submits an entry through the SAMC Release project, they have an option to include a photo of their released fish, and, if that photo meets kind of certain guidelines set out by Sea Grant, they can earn a thank you packet from Sea Grant. If you're interested in reading more about the milestones, we have a link down below that goes to our overview document.

Just to provide a little bit more background, before I kind of take us into our discussion questions, I wanted to provide some context about where submissions came from in 2023, and so these plots are from our 2023 data summary, and they look at where submissions came from.

In 2023, about 52 percent of our submissions came from Florida, almost 30 came from North Carolina, and about 18 percent came from South Carolina, and then, looking at sector, about 74 percent of our submissions came from the recreational sector, about 26 percent from charter, and about half a percent from commercial, and, again, if you would like to check out the data summary, there's another link down below that you could check out.

With all of this communication, and kind of recognition that we've been doing, over the lifetime of the project, we've seen some great engagement with our participants, but we did notice a reduction in the submissions coming through the app, in June of this year, and, in my emails with folks, which I do kind of periodically, and I'll just check in with people, some participants kind of volunteered the information that they haven't been recording lately because of time and other obligations, whether that be familial or work, and they've also said that the weather's been really bad, and so they just haven't been able to get out, in order to submit data, and so those are some of the cited reasons.

There's potentially other reasons that have not been mentioned to me, but this is just what's been mentioned, and so I wanted to kind of pick you all's brains on two questions. What are some possible methods that we could use to kind of reactivate some of our participants? You know, we have folks who are reading our newsletters, responding to our emails, but they're just not submitting at this point in time, and so how might we be able to kind of re-engage them? Then my second question is what are maybe some kind of motivating aspects of the Release project that you think would be wise to highlight in our communication, either with current participants or potential project participants?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: All right, Meg. Thank you very much. We have some questions in front of us. Would anybody like to give any input on any of this? You know, I would say, from a reactivation standpoint, you know, sometimes I download an app that I thought I was going to use, and then it just kind of goes away. I don't know if you have like in-app push notifications, if most

people turn them on, or leave them off, you know, but like a, hey, here I am type of thing, something like that. Anybody else have any thoughts, or comments, on either of these two questions? Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: I have to say I'm surprised that such a percentage came out of Florida, and such a percentage came out of the charter industry. I'm just curious and did you get anything from Key West?

MS. OLIVER: Yes, we do have some entries from the Key West area. Yes, we do.

MR. GOMEZ: Even more surprised.

MS. BYRD: The Islamorada area.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: David.

MR. MOSS: Yes, and it's not a magic wand, and I know, Julia and Meg, we've had these conversations before, but it's just like with anything in marketing, and it's you've got to repeat, repeat, repeat, and figure out a way to expand your reach. Again, as I highlighted on -- I don't even remember which day it was, the first day that we were here, and the unfortunate truth is the council's, you know, Instagram following is about a thousand people, and then you've got the influencers, who have like 40,000 or 50,000, and utilizing them to constantly push this stuff. I know that you guys -- It's not like you have a huge marketing department, and so it's going to be the best way, is utilizing the people that have the reach to continue to use their reach.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Certainly, David. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Like it or not, death and destruction sells, and so, if you say save your oceans, and they could be closed, people might fricking respond more, and take interest, because, I mean, at the end of the day, that's sort of what works. Whether it's true or not, and you can pitch anything out there, and it's just who picks it up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Cameron. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Just to kind of continue what you guys just said, and Ashley mentioned it as well, and one of our councilmen did the video with Coastal Angler, and that information, that was short and sweet, said, hey, anglers, do you want to learn how to turn discards into landings?

That doesn't mean retention, but it means landings, and, for our general population of recreational fishermen, you know -- To them, it says, oh, how can I keep these fish, and so, yes, that is the goal that we're generally going to work towards, but I don't want to throw out the term "bait and switch", but from, you know, a marketing standpoint, an educational standpoint, and, you know, rallying the troops, I guess it just comes down to do you want people to turn up? Do you want them there? Because, if you do, this is how you do it, but, if you want to kind of keep it low-key, then don't do anything, but, yes, I think education, and why it's important, are huge. I know I've said it before.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Haley. Jack.

MR. COX: Well, it's no surprise that the commercial was not reporting a whole lot, because we already have so much burden on us, but it would be nice if they could give you a little information, and I'll do what I can on my end to talk to them about it. I have before, but that's why we probably don't show on the chart as good as we should.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jack. David.

MR. MOSS: The one caution I'll throw out too, and, again, this isn't anything that we haven't discussed already, and not in this forum, but be very careful about what it is that we're promising, because better data doesn't always mean more fish, especially in the rec sector, and, with a user group that is already angered for any number of reasons, don't give them a reason to get more angry, and so just, you know, be careful what we're promising in the communications.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Appreciate that, David. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Jack, one thing I'll say, in your defense, is that percentage of the various stakeholder groups, the various sectors that participate in the citizen science, that's not adjusted to the number of people out in the water, and so, if it's comparing, within each group, how many participants there are, I actually think the commercial -- The participation in the commercial sector is pretty commendable, based on the fact that there's so many fewer commercial folks than there are recreational.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mathematically speaking, I completely agree with that. Chris.

MR. KIMREY: One of the things, for me, because I've made not as many entries as I should have, but I've made a few, on this particular app, but one of the things is, years ago, Julia approached me about undersized scamp, and, back then, I hardly ever caught any undersized scamps, and so, once this app came out, I started encountering undersized scamps, and I remembered that, and so that's one of the things that got me involved.

I would say, to reactivate members, if you would reach out, via email or however, and like Julia has texted me many times with specific things, and, if you jog your memory, maybe with one species that -- Like, for me, it would have been the scamp, and it kind of rejuvenated me to pay attention. It was like, holy cow, I got an undersized scamp, and I used to never catch these, and so I better make an entry, you know, that sort of thing, and so that might be one way to reactivate current participants, as well as, you know, the warsaw grouper. I was trying to figure out how to submit this warsaw we caught, and there actually wasn't a place, but I tried.

MS. OLIVER: Well, you did, yes. We did get it.

MR. KIMREY: Because we caught a beautiful warsaw grouper, in less than sixty feet of water, which was a very unique catch, and I've also submitted quite a few gags that I've caught, and not just in inland waters, but as far away as the rivers, you know, and we catch these undersized gags, and so I think that's important, but, you know, maybe just to jog people, with a specific task, might make them recollect a little better that, hey, I need to make some entries.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Chris. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Just to touch back, I kind of agree more that you have to be so careful about what you do, and what you say, especially on the internet, because it can go downhill very, very quickly, as we all know, but I think, you know, perhaps something to be considered would be an approach to, hey, do you want to learn more about management, and just some insight, from a communications perspective, you know, these videos, and information sharing things, that you see go viral, you know, almost 90 percent of them are under eleven seconds. The average, currently, and it changes all the time, but, currently, the average attention span for something on the internet is eight seconds, and so you have to be very quick, very brief, very direct, if you want to maximize your yield, or reach, and just some insight on that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Good stuff, Haley. I scroll like every two seconds. No, I'm just kidding. Looking around the room, I don't really see any more hands. Did you have a little bit more to present?

MS. BYRD: Yes, and we've got a couple more things that we wanted to share with you guys, before turning things over to the SEDAR crew, and the first is I just wanted to share a little new information about the SciFish platform, and so this is the app that the Release project is housed in, but we've been working to develop this kind of SciFish platform. It's kind of an umbrella app that can house multiple projects. We've been working, over the past three years to develop it, and now it's kind of available for multiple folks to use along the Atlantic coast, and so just wanted to provide a little bit of information on this.

So, again, there seems to be kind of increasing interest in having kind of citizen science projects, or mobile apps, ways that recreational fishermen can share what they're seeing on the water for-hire fishermen and commercial fishermen, and so we worked, over the past three years, with North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries and the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, or ACCSP. That's kind of the data warehouse where a lot of the fishery-dependent data is shared, and stored, along the Atlantic coast.

What we were trying to do is to develop kind of a mobile application that also had this project builder interface, so you could kind of build an app on the fly, kind of by choosing from specific data fields, and so you wouldn't have to kind of create standalone apps for every new data project and data collection need that you have.

We've heard a lot about there being some app fatigue, and then the other thing we wanted to really do with this project is, as more of these citizen science projects are developing, we wanted to try to standardize the data that are collected through them, and so, again, the drivers for working on this project are really to try to reduce the cost and time it would take for getting kind of an idea for a mobile app, and getting it out into the world, and then also really trying to increase consistency in the data fields and structure.

If you had a citizen science project that was collecting information on the hook issues in one project, in Project A and Project B, they'd be doing it the same way. They'd be using the same kind of format, and so the SciFish platform itself has kind of two parts. One is on a computer, and it's called the project builder, and this is what allows you to kind of build the components of your data collection project, and so what it does is it has kind of set data fields. If you want to collect

species, you'll say that I want to collect information on gag, and scamp, and you check off the species you want to collect, and so they are set fields.

You're able to include information on kind of websites about the project, social media accounts about the project, and you're able to change the branding of the project, so it can have its own look and feel, and then there's also the mobile application.

How we kind of describe the SciFish project is it's kind of an umbrella application that houses multiple projects. We kind of use a gaming console analogy. You guys are, -- So like SciFish is like your Atari, or your Nintendo, and then the projects underneath it are kind of like the games, Donkey Kong, or Frogger, Pitfall, Mario Kart, that sort of thing, and so the cool thing is, if you want to build a project in the project builder, if you know what data fields you're collecting, in fifteen minutes, you can push it onto the phone. You can push it onto the mobile app you have on your phone. If you guys are interested in checking out a video of how kind of the project builder works, there's a link on the screen. It's about a five, or six, minute video clip that shows you how it works.

Then another cool thing is, as we were developing this -- We were originally, you know, thinking about SciFish would be this kind of umbrella app that would house multiple projects, and so it launched, and it has our Release project in it, and it has a project from North Carolina that's collecting information on released flounder, and then, as it's become available along the Atlantic coast, more people have applied.

There's an application process to get access to the kind of SciFish tool. More projects are coming up under this umbrella, but another thing that we didn't originally think about is that there's some apps that already exist, that already have a user base, that kind of anglers are sharing their information with, and there's also kind of a SciFish API, and so I'm not super technically savvy, but that's basically how the app communicates with ACCSP's data warehouse. That's how the kind of data from the app gets pushed to the data warehouse.

Other applications, that are already out there, are also able to use the SciFish API, so that all those data can get pushed to the ACCSP data warehouse, and I think one of the challenges in getting some of this kind of citizen science data kind of considered for use in management, or assessment, is a lot of people don't know about all of these projects going on, and so, if a project were to use the SciFish API, that data could be stored in ACCSP's data warehouse, which is where a lot of kind of the assessment scientists, or managers, know to look for data, and so that's just a little bit about kind of SciFish. It's being administered through ACCSP, and now it's available to kind of anyone along the Atlantic coast to use.

There's a short application process that you'll go through. Once you go through the application process, you get to use the tool for free, and so that's a little information on SciFish. We'll pause here, to see if there are any questions, before I flip gears to our next project.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I did have a question about the cloud, if you will, and other apps that have access to the information and get shared, and I don't know if any of those apps, or some of the more popular ones, you know, like Fishbrain and some of the other things that kind of focus on freshwater species, but if there are other apps that are being used where people are sending photos in of catches and, you know, boasting about their fish, and if that data went into the same database,

and it could help come out and re-engineer, you know, some of the information that we're looking for, and is that a possibility?

MS. BYRD: So I will say -- So SciFish just kind of launched and is available to everyone as of this year, and so in the spring or kind of summertime of this year ,and so, right now, we've just had kind of two projects officially go through the application process. One is to kind of develop an app under the umbrella, and it's a Northeast kind of data collection project that's focused on collecting biological information on groundfish. The other app, the other kind of project, that applied is a recreational fishing app that's used by folks in Rhode Island, and they're using this -- They want to use the SciFish API to share their data.

Those are the only two projects that have kind of had access to this. We've been kind of presenting a lot on SciFish, over the past several months to let folks know that this is available, and so, right now we don't have folks like Fishbrain or others, who are using it. We've been at meetings, kind of sharing information about this with many different kind of workshops, where there are a lot of other commercial apps were available, and so I think the word is spreading about it, and the other thing I'll say is we've also presented on SciFish to the Gulf and to folks along the West Coast.

I know at least folks along the West Coast are interested in standing up their own SciFish out there, because they thought it would be a cool tool, and so I guess that's a long-winded answer of, no, not right now, but, in the future, if those apps wanted to share their data with ACCSP, the SciFish API is a way for them to do it. Did that answer your question, James?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It absolutely did. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So would this be like pertinent to like the SEDAR process, when you're participating, and you see, you get these emails, you know, for the data scientists to submit, or whoever the actual -- Like the people who are participating in the assessments to submit their final documents and stuff, and is this like a place where they could be going in and seeing a project that -- Like and then submit it to be part of an assessment? Is that what I'm understanding?

MS. BYRD: So hopefully in the future, but probably not in the short-term. So, right now, at least typically, I think, when a SEDAR is coming up, there'll be a call for does anyone know about any kind of data that are available for this assessment, and so, a lot of times, you may not know about some of these citizen science projects, or other projects that aren't typically -- That haven't typically been used in assessments, and so what we're hoping to do, with the SciFish app, and hopefully using the API, is to get some of those projects that are interested in sharing their data through this API into ACCSP's data warehouse, which makes it more easily accessible to kind of scientists and managers.

In the short term, you know, I think we just -- Folks have to be made aware of kind of data sources that are available, and then someone will need to take the lead on getting that data and kind of analyzing it for use in an assessment and so hopefully in the future, and maybe not kind of immediately.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Chris and Julia. Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: So, you know, North Carolina's issue that they've got coming up, with recreational reporting on trout and redfish and all that, could they utilize this for that recreational reporting? Does it have the capabilities?

MS. BYRD: So I don't want to speak for North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries folks at all, but they have been very closely involved in the development of SciFish, and so they're kind of aware of it, and, you know, I'm not sure kind of what avenues they're -- What all avenues they're exploring.

MR. KIMREY: Well, and I didn't expect you to speak for them. I'm just -- I'm asking more, under the umbrella, would it have the capabilities to handle a million recreational anglers, if they designed it through the --

MS. BYRD: So ACCSP is the one who's standing this up, and so kind of data storage, and usage, and things like that, they should be able to handle a large volume of information coming through, and that's one of the reasons we wanted to do this with ACCSP, because they are experts.

MR. KIMREY: What about the Catch U Later? How much participation is there with that? Do you know?

MS. BYRD: I am not the right one to ask about that, Chris, but I can hook you up with the folks at North Carolina who are.

MR. KIMREY: I was just curious. I know that, you know, NC DMF is -- They just postponed that recreational reporting a year, because it was kind of slid in the back door on them, and they were panicking, but so they got a year extension on it, and I'm just curious if something like this might be an easier solution for them, versus having to start from scratch. Maybe?

MS. BYRD: Maybe, and, again, you know, I think the folks -- There are many folks at North Carolina DMF who were integrally involved in developing SciFish, and so they're aware of the tool, and, you know, it may be one of the things they're exploring, as they're kind of moving forward with the mandatory reporting there.

Okay. If nothing else, I'll go ahead and move on, and so next is just a quick update on our FISHstory project. Just a quick reminder that this is the project where we're using kind of old historic fishing photos to help us learn more about kind of what was being caught, and the size of fish that were being caught, back before there was catch monitoring in the South Atlantic, and so, thanks to all of you guys, we've been able to increase our photo archive. We had over 600 new photos that were archived and are being analyzed now. We're still busy collecting more photos, and a shout out to Captain Freeman, who has already volunteered to share some more of his photos with the project, and so thank you so much.

Just a reminder of kind of what we're looking for in photos to analyze, and you guys have seen this a lot, and so I know I'm kind of beating a dead horse here, but we really want pictures that are taken at the end of a fishing trip, where the harvested cash is displayed, and we need to have at least a year, and at least know the state that the kind of photo was taken in, and then what's even better is if those fish are hanging on a leaderboard. We can get size, and more specific date and location information is great, too.

After we archive all these photos, the next step is to analyze the photos, and we do that using Zooniverse, which is basically an online website where we've built a project to kind of train folks from all over the world to help us count and identify the fish and people in these photos, and so the FISHstory project kind of relaunched in Zooniverse, with new photos, in July, and we've had really good participation thus far.

The way we've done it is we've kind of broken up the kind of fish classification into four levels. The first level, people are just counting the total fish and the people in the photo. After you do a couple of photos, they are unlocked in these higher levels, where you're actually identifying specific species of fish, or species groups, for some of the things, like amberjack, which are really hard to identify the species within the photos, and so, as you kind of identify fish in level two, you do a certain amount of photos, and it unlocks level three, and then you go to level four.

We're still working hard to kind of recruit more volunteers to help us complete analyzing the photos we have, and then we're planning to add some new batches of photos into the project before the end of the year, and the way it kind of works is, for each photo, there are twenty volunteers who identify and count the fish within a photo, and so we do that so, if there are people who may not be as great at species ID than others, you can hopefully kind of get a central tendency of what's in the photo, by having twenty people look at it.

However, what I wanted to do next, if you guys will bear with me, is do a little bit of fish ID with you guys from the photos. It may be kind of hard to see, but this is one of the things that Ashley was talking about at the BFP MVP workshops. We have folks help us identify some of these fish in these historic photos, and so I wanted to just see if folks could identify that fish right there. What do people think it is? So I heard scamp, yellowmouth, and I heard red grouper.

I know it's hard, and it's very far away from many of you, and so we've got some more red groupers here, and it's a red grouper, and I had -- If you look at the tail, which is really dark and hard for you to see, it doesn't have kind of the broom tail that you'll see on scamp, and then the other thing is there's a captain in North Carolina that told us this trick, that I hadn't heard before, but, in the red grouper in some of these photos, you'll see this kind of ribbing across the skin there, and that was one of the kind of key traits that he shared with us to help us identify red grouper.

All right, and I'm just going to do one more, and then I promise we'll move. Okay, and so next is this one. So yelloweye? Yes. All right. Silk snapper, or yellow eye, right, and so you guys know your fish, and it's sometimes challenging to identify these fish in historic photos, and so, once we have twenty volunteers look at each photo, we have a validation team review photos, when the volunteers had a lot of disagreement, and so they're doing exactly -- Our validation team was doing just what you guys were doing, looking at some of these historic photos and telling us what was in the photo.

This is a shameless plug, but I know you guys know your fish IDs, and so I had two questions for you for the FISHstory project, and one of those is if anyone might be willing to join our validation team. It's not a heavy lift. You'll probably be looking at about twenty historic photos in a month and just helping us identify some of the fish in those photos, and, if you're not interested in joining the validation team, do you know others, or other organizations, that may have folks who would be willing to help us kind of validate some of the information in these photos?

That's one question, and then the other question is, as we're looking to gather more photos, we're having a hard time finding photos in the Carolinas and from the 1980s, and getting photos from the 1980s is critical, because what we're trying to do is -- In current stock assessments, the earliest index normally comes from the headboat fishery, that survey, and it started in the 1970s, the mid-1970s, depending on where you were along the coast, and so we're trying to make sure that we have photos that overlap when that headboat survey logbook came into place, so we can compare them to one another.

Again, I know I've asked you multiple times, and you guys have provided wonderful kind of suggestions, and many of you have provided photos, but we're specifically trying to zero-in on photos from the Carolinas and photos from the 1980s, kind of across the South Atlantic region, and so, if you guys have any new suggestions there, I'm definitely all ears as well, and so we'll pause here, before moving on to the next thing.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just a question for the North Carolina crowd, like Bobby, and do you think the Sanitary Market, or the Captain's Table have 1980s photos? Those might be two good leads for Julia to pursue on this.

MS. BYRD: So I -- Chris actually connected me with Jeff Garner, at the Sanitary, and he was wonderful, and he let me come in and take all of his photos off the wall, and take photos of things. Most of them were older, and he said that -- I think it was Hurricane Florence came in, and they lost a lot of photos, due to that hurricane, but he has been a great resource.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: You could put me down for that identification process, and that sounds like fun.

MS. BYRD: Awesome. Thank you, Richie. It's fun to look at these old photos. Chris, you too? Awesome. Thank you. Thanks, guys. I'll be reaching out, probably in the next month or so, to kind of ramp-up kind of the review of these photos. All right, and I know we're getting close to the bewitching hour, and so I'm actually going to skip on to the last thing that I feel like it's most important for me to cover.

This is we have two citizen science advisory panels. One of those advisory panels is called the Projects Advisory Committee, and that's basically a group that's made up of representatives from all the other council advisory panels, and so this group normally meets once a year, via webinar, and it's a half-day, and it's normally not kind of a heavy lift, but one of the things this group does is it helps us kind of identify research priorities for our Citizen Science Program, and so it's really important to have representatives from all of our different APs, because you guys may have some great ideas that folks on other advisory panels might not be thinking about.

Right now, last fall, Andy Piland and Richie Gomez volunteered to kind of serve on this group. The group hasn't met yet. They'll be meeting the first kind of few months of 2025. Andy is getting ready to kind of term-off of this advisory panel, and so I wanted to see if there was anyone else who might be willing to volunteer to serve on this group, and take Andy's place, since he'll be

rotating off the Snapper Grouper AP. Not a heavy lift, and they normally meet once a year, and it's only a few hours, but I think it's really important to have representatives from all the APs, because it kind of drives the kind of what projects we pursue. David, did I just -- Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Julia, now that you mentioned Andy, you know, I did want to mention that he was not able to make this particular advisory panel meeting, and this would have been his last, and I did want to acknowledge him, for all of his years of service here, and really state that he gave some really positive information, and really informative stuff, and was a great participant here, and so we do thank him for all of his services. Go ahead, Julia.

MS. BYRD: Great, and I think that's it. Just thank you, David, for volunteering for this, and, again, please feel free to contact Meg and I about any of the kind of the projects and stuff that we've got going on in the Citizen Science Program, and thank you, guys, for all you do for our program and our outreach. It's huge.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Do we have any other questions, or comments, for Julia or Meg? Thank you both very much for an awesome presentation. I think we're going to move on to SEDAR.

MS. OTT: All right, and so I've just got about forty slides to go through. No, and rest assured that it's two minutes. I have a two-minute update and so I'm Emily from SEDAR, and I'm going to go ahead and say, for those of you that I have not met, I'm the new SEDAR coordinator. I just wanted to quick pull up -- I'm on the wrong -- There we go. This is the most up-to-date project planning grid for SEDAR, and so this is posted to our SEDAR website.

It has all of the projects that are underway. The ones you probably care the most about are the South Atlantic assessments, which are on the far-left, and so, diving right in, SEDAR 92, blueline tilefish, hat was supposed to be complete -- That was supposed to be complete, and let me scroll over. I know it's kind of blurry up there. It was supposed to be complete this year. However, we are still doing some topical working group webinars, regarding life history, and it is now set to be complete in spring of 2025.

SEDAR 89, tilefish, that is complete, and is going to the SSC for review next week, and so stay tuned. Jumping over to SEDAR 79, mutton snapper, that was a joint review, and so that is why it is not under the South Atlantic part of the project grid, and that review was last month, and so that report is actually already up on our SEDAR website, and so, if you're curious, I encourage you to take a look.

Then, lastly, SEDAR 90, red snapper, is underway. We have our data scoping webinar next month, in November, and I know we have Paul that is on the AP representative for that assessment. However, I wanted to echo what Mike said yesterday and encourage those that are interested in the assessment to participate. We would really value your input throughout these assessments. SEDAR is a public process and so, if you're interested, please see me after this, and I'll be happy to add you to the interested party email distribution list, and so, that way, you're notified of any meetings we have coming up for this assessment, and for any other upcoming assessments, and so that is all I have for you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you very much, Emily. I guess we're at the point where we're going to discuss Other Business. Jack Cox.

MR. COX: When you do your presentation to the council meeting, the meeting coming up in December, would you let them know the conversations around sharks and enforcement that we had in this meeting, please, and that it continues to be an ongoing conversation.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Certainly, Jack.

MR. COX: Not that they'll do a whole lot, but maybe they can send another letter to HMS about the shark situation.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Certainly. Any other business? Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Just a quick summary. Going along with what Scott and Jack said, I mean, we've got to -- Let me put my glasses on. I made some notes. In North Carolina, we've definitely got a problem, I mean, with the commercial fishing, with the stocks. Until they define that recreational, what's going on with that, and those new GPS motors and stuff are just making such a big impact on our fisheries, and, logically, there's no way that we can determine what a stock is doing, unless we know what the recs are doing, and so I think we need to move forward with that.

Then if there's -- You know, whether it's geographical moving of fish, or shark depredation, or stuff like that, and maybe we'll get a clearer picture of that. That definitely needs to happen, and I just -- I truly believe that we need to keep the most species open, as long as we can, to keep the commercial guys from targeting one species, and it's just -- It creates that overfishing on that. I'm glad to see that the council has formed a subgroup on the -- To discuss some of the snapper grouper issues that I've been a proponent of for a long time, especially getting rid of the two-for-one, and I just want to thank all the staff, and the council, for having this meeting. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Randy. Any other business anybody would like to bring up? Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just want to be able to put a date out there, for you commercial guys that are interested in listening to that subcommittee meeting, and it's going to be November 5th. It will be November 5th, and it'll be that morning. I think we start at 9:00, and go to 1230 probably, that day, but it will be a webinar. There'll be information on the council website about that, if you want to listen-in.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Kerry Marhefka with an addition to that.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and just let you know that this is the beginning of us talking about, you know, these commercial issues, and any ideas you guys have, now or after listening to us talk, that we might not be talking about, and this is sort of our opportunity to throw a lot at the wall, and see where we want to go as an industry, and so feel free to reach out, to me personally, or anyone else, whichever council member you're most comfortable with, but there might be ideas that we're not thinking of that you guys have, and so please reach out to us, if you have them.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That's great. Thank you, Kerry. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: Mike, is there going to be any discussion on limited entry for the charter-for-hire group in the near future?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, if I remember correctly for that one, the council has been discussing it, and I believe they initiated an amendment on it. Right now, we are trying to get permits data from the Southeast Regional Office, and that's one of the things that has that amendment on pause. They're experiencing some technical issues with their permits information, and so, once we can get that from the Regional Office, then that amendment can pick its progress back up, but the council has initiated an amendment that would be considering that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Along with that, Richie, and I'm glad you brought that up, and that was one of the topics that I did discuss with my charter boat friends, and the general consensus that I got, and maybe this little bit of information will help moving forward in the development of this, but I think, almost unanimously, they are wanting an income requirement, along with an open access still, and so maybe not limited entry, but an income requirement for entry, and so you have had to live and work in the industry for a period of time.

That way, if you're second-generation, and your dad, or your mom is still working in the industry, you can work alongside them, without having to buy a permit. That is the consensus that I'm hearing, and so I don't know if -- You know, I don't know, but I'm just putting that out there. I had Haley, and then John.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman, and I'll be really quick. I know that this is an issue that is above any of our pay grades, but I just really want to reiterate, you know, as the founder of South Atlantic Headboats United, and alliance that represents the last forty remaining headboats in operation in the South Atlantic, any type of bottom closure would be absolutely detrimental to the last few remaining headboats, and so we -- You know, on behalf of South Atlantic Headboats United, are 100 percent against bottom closures in federal waters for the head boats. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Haley. John.

MR. POLSTON: As far as other business, I was just -- Vinnie just texted me, and he wanted me to just put on the record that all the golden tile endorsement holders were considering -- Like so we haven't got consensus on everybody, but well over three-quarters, that I've already discussed with, and we're considering going to the council that -- I would like them to know that we're going to be coming to them, in the near future, with a proposal of catch shares for golden tile.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Great, and I think Kerry Marhefka would be wanting to communicate some of that with, you know, from the commercial sector, and it's an idea, and so you just said you wanted ideas. Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: Just a question for Haley. Are the Key West headboats in that group. I think there's two of them, maybe.

MS. STEPHENS: The Cora Beth, that fishes out of Key West, they are a part of that, and that actually used to be the Sea Spirit II, and that's one of our old boats, and so we have been in contact with them, and it gets a little wonky, once you get down to south Florida, because they don't have to fish in federal waters. You know, down in the Keys, I know they hold -- You know, some boats

hold both Gulf and South Atlantic permits, federal permits, but, as far as like the southern region of Florida, Miami and that sort of thing, they don't necessarily need to fish in federal waters. They're just making their days in the state waters.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, everybody. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Just a note on the limited entry for charters. You know, I think the historical background for someone to be able to enter -- It should be the keyway to get your foot in the door. Without that -- I think it should -- You know, because we're talking about a very limited resource, and we're talking about major catastrophic shutdowns of different fisheries, and so, if we continue just to have an open door -- Not even recreational, but to define the population of charter people getting into the business, and then, you know, it's got to come to the point where we're limiting the number of people, because the resource is limited. You know, it's just the way -- It's the nature of the beast, it seems to me.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Certainly Cameron, and I'm sure there'll be lots of discussion on this in the future. Looking around, I don't see any other business. I also don't see anybody physically in the room for public comment, but I did want to acknowledge if anybody was online who had comments to share, comments to make, and, Mike, is there anybody online?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If you're online, and you would like to make public comment, please hit the raise-hand button. I'll give a second, to see if folks are raising their hand. I'm not seeing any. I'm not seeing any online there.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So, at this point, I would like to thank all of the panel members for attending, and being involved in pretty much every aspect of what we were asked to do here. Staff, you know, tech people, scientists, council members, thank you all for being here and sharing in our patience and frustration. This meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 17, 2024.)

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
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Attendee Report: Oct. 2024 Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

Report Generated:
10/17/2024 02:39 PM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time
955-270-883	10/15/2024 12:04 PM EDT

Staff Details

Attended	Interest Rating
Yes	Not applicable for staff

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Curtis	Judd
DeVictor	Rick
Dukes	Amy
Finch	Margaret
Foss	Kristin
Griner	Tim
Hordyk	Adrian
Huber	Jeanette
Iberle	Allie
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Klibansky	Lara
Lorenzen	Kai
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Mehta	Nikhil
Oliver	Ashley
Ramsay	Chloe
Schmidtke	Michael
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael

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moss	david
spanik	kevin
thomas	suz
Barrows	Katline
Howington	Kathleen
Kean	Samantha
Spurgin	Kali

Attendee Report: Oct. 2024 Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

Report Generated:

10/17/2024 02:39 PM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time
955-270-883	10/16/2024 07:31 AM EDT

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Yes	Not applicable for staff

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Foss	Kristin
Glazier	Edward
Griner	Tim
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Ramsay	Chloe
Smillie	Nick
collier	chip

Attendee Report: Oct. 2024 Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

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10/17/2024 02:39 PM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time
955-270-883	10/17/2024 07:42 AM EDT

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