

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**SNAPPER GROUPEr ADVISORY PANEL**

**Drury Plaza Hotel North Charleston  
N. Charleston, South Carolina**

**October 27-29, 2025**

**Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel**

Chris Kimrey, Chair	Randy McKinely
Haley Stephens, Vice Chair	Jeff Marinko
Vincent Bonura	David Moss
Gettys Brannon	Paul Nelson
Scott Buff	John Polston
Chris Conklin	Stephen Ranney
Jack Cox Jr.	Paul Rudershausen
Andrew Fish	K. P. Scott
Robert Freeman	Cameron Sebastian
Richard Gomez	Darrin Willingham
Joe "Matt" Mathews	

**Council Members**

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Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair	Judy Helmey
Amy Dukes	

**Council Staff**

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John Hadley	Nicholas Smillie
Kathleen Howington	Suzanna Thomas
Allie Iberle	Christina Wiegand
Kim Iverson	Meg Withers
Dr. Julie Neer	

**Attendees and Invited Participants**

Dr. Walter Bubley

**Observers and Participants**

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Drury Plaza Hotel North Charleston in North Charleston, South Carolina, on Monday, October 27, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: Hello, everyone. I guess everybody is here, other than a few online attendees, and so this is our introduction. I would like to thank everybody for coming, the council staff for setting everything up, the council members, and, of course, all the AP, and other support staff that is here.

This is my first time sitting behind the gavel, and so you all bear with me as I figure out how to roll through this. My name is Chris Kimrey. I'm a for-hire out of North Carolina. Most of you all know that. From here, we're going to go into introductions. We'll go around the room, if you would. We'll start with Bobby, and just come around this way, over towards Steven, and everybody with an introduction and which sector you represent.

MR. FREEMAN: Bobby Freeman, semi-retired charter boat and commercial fishing in the Morehead City, North Carolina area.

MR. BUFF: Scott Buff, commercial Holden Beach, North Carolina.

MR. MOSS: David Moss, recreational, south Florida.

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

MR. BONURA: Good afternoon, everyone. Vincent Bonura, commercial fisherman and dealer out of Florida.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Paul Rudershausen, North Carolina State University, biologist, out of Morehead City.

MR. CONKLIN: Chris Conklin, and a I'm a seafood dealer in Murrells Inlet.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian, operations manager, Hurricane Fleet and Little Red Fishing Fleet, charter-headboat, North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

MR. MCKINLEY: Randy McKinley, commercial, dealer, Topsail Beach, North Carolina.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish, Florida representative, commercial.

MR. MARINKO: Jeff Marinko, commercial, North Carolina.

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

MR. RANNEY: Stephen Ranney, charter-for-hire, Hilton Head Island.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We've got a couple of our AP members that are signed in online. We'll go through those folks, and so, first, we'll go to -- I don't see Gettys online anymore. We'll go to K.P. Scott. Go ahead, unmute yourself, and give your introduction.

MR. SCOTT: I'm K.P. Scott. I'm a charter-headboat, Hatteras, North Carolina.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, and I think we also have Darrin Willingham online. Darrin, if you can go ahead and introduce yourself. I just saw Darren sign-off. Okay, and so I think that's all the online folks at this point that I'm seeing.

MR. KIMREY: So, next, I'm assuming everybody has had time to briefly review the agenda. We need to approve the agenda. Does anybody have any opposition to the agenda? A show of hands if you do. All right. Agenda approved.

From there, Approval of the April AP minutes. By a show of hands, approval of the AP minutes from the April meeting. All right. Approval on those, and, from here, we'll go to public comment.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It looks like we've got one of our AP members. Darrin is online now with his hand up. Darrin, you can go ahead and do your introduction. We got you here for a second. Now you're coming through. Go ahead.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Very good. Darrin Willingham, Jacksonville, Florida, recreational fisherman, and president of the Offshore Sport Fishing Club.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, Thank you, Darrin. Now we'll open up for any public comment. Are there any members of the public? I don't see any members of the public in the room at the moment. Any members of the public online that wanted to provide any comment before we get started? Not seeing any hands, I'll pass back to you, Mr. Chair, and we can move on to the next agenda item.

MR. KIMREY: So here we're going to go to Jessica McCawley. I'm assuming -- Here she comes. She was on the other side. Here she comes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to give you guys a short presentation, and then maybe you'll have some questions for me, and there's other council members here as well, as well as Mike can help answer the questions. We've had two council meetings since you guys met last, and so we're going to cover both the June council meeting and the September council meeting.

As you guys know, there were a number of people from the federal government, including from NOAA Fisheries, that were laid off, and now we're in a government shutdown, but, at the June council meeting, the council worked on changing our priorities and timelines for several projects that were previously in progress, and this was due to the reductions in staffing and workload capacity at NOAA Fisheries, and at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, as well as we worked on the direction from the new presidential administration, Executive Order 14-276, which was to prioritize deregulatory actions, among other things.

The council, at the June meeting, deprioritized amendments, including Snapper Grouper Amendment 46, which was the private recreational permitting and education amendment, and the for-hire reporting improvement amendment and the for-hire limited entry amendment.

Regarding red snapper, and so the Snapper Grouper Amendment 59, which was the secretarial amendment, and it was implemented in July of 2025, and it revised the overfishing limit, the acceptable biological catch, annual catch limits, and the proxy for determining red snapper overfishing, and, based on the revised proxy, and the SEDAR 73 update stock assessment, red snapper are no longer experiencing overfishing, and, also, per the SEDAR 73 update, red snapper are no longer overfished, but not yet rebuilt, and so the secretarial amendment did not include area closures.

MSY proxies, and so MSY is the main reference point of federal fisheries management, but it can be difficult to reliably estimate, depending on available data, and so, therefore, a variety of proxies have been developed based on more commonly available data and biological relationships, and, at the June meeting, the council had some discussions about this, including with Luiz Barbieri from FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, as well as folks from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, including discussions about MSY proxies and situations where different proxies might be appropriate.

Black sea bass, this is Amendment 56 and Reg Amendment 37. The council received updated projections from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and catch level recommendations from the Science and Statistical Committee for black sea bass, and the council decided to postpone Amendment 56 to address modeling concerns noted by the SSC and incorporate updated recreational data that will be available in 2026 and develop long-term management measures for black sea bass.

In the short term, the council initiated Regulatory Amendment 37 to more immediately reduce fishing mortality and increase recruitment, and council staff will describe some of the discussions that led to this decision later in this meeting.

Commercial permits and trip efficiency, these are included in Amendment 60, and so the council has formed this commercial management subcommittee. It met in both June and September to start the development of Amendment 60. Scoping was conducted ahead of the September meeting, and staff this week will update you on the progress thus far.

Detailed comments from the AP on this amendment will occur at your April meeting, and so it needs to get a little bit more meat on the bones in there, and then we're going to be asking you guys more about what you think about what's in Amendment 60, and so we'll continue developing this amendment through this subcommittee process, which has been meeting during the council week.

There was an amendment for joint state-federal management of the recreational sector for red snapper that was initiated in September. This will consider state management, and just so the recreational component. States will develop exempted fishing permit proposals for the council to review at their December meeting, and these short-term EFP projects will inform this long-term amendment. The amendment will not necessarily follow the Gulf's model, given the regional differences between Gulf red snapper and Atlantic red snapper, and there's a link there inside this presentation for reference, if you want to look at this summary report.

Some other council activities and discussions, and so the council is developing a snapper grouper innovation plan to adapt to changes in NOAA Fisheries and maximize fishery goals through innovative and comprehensive management. The council is also working on our Lines of

Communication workshops, or conversations with the council, and these will be conducted in two states per year. The ones for Georgia are listed there, and then North Carolina is in February, and so Georgia is in November, and North Carolina is in February of next year.

Here are some of the topics for this meeting. You guys are going to be busy, and so council staff will give updates on the following items: Reg Amendment 37 for black sea bass, Amendment 44 for yellowtail and mutton, Amendment 61, which is the fishery management unit revision, the abbreviated Framework 5 for blueline tilefish, an update on the snapper grouper management strategy evaluation, commercial trip limits on sale of fish, updates on Florida red snapper exempted fishing permit research projects, golden tilefish assessment, recreational aggregate bag limit, headboat vessel limit, and Amendment 60, which is that commercial permit and trip efficiency amendment.

With that, I'll take any questions, but I'll be here for the duration of your meeting, as well as Kerry and Amy and Judy are over there as well, and so, if you don't have any questions right now, we're certainly here for the next three days, to answer questions you guys might have, but, if you have anything at this time, I'll certainly take that.

MR. KIMREY: Could you put the first slide back up, please? Okay. Thank you. Anybody have any questions for Jessica before she goes back to her little table? Anybody? I'm sure there'll be plenty of questions to come. Okay. I think, next, you're up, right, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I will pull up the document from your briefing book that's looking at kind of updating you all on several of the ongoing actions and projects that the council is involved with. This is Attachment 2a in your briefing book.

First of all, for golden tilefish, for the stock assessment related to that species, that assessment -- I think we did have an update for you all back in April. It's hard to kind of remember the timing of when all of this got started, but in June was when council staff -- When we informed the council that there were some discrepancies among some of the commercial data sources that were used in the SEDAR 89 stock assessment, trying to line up the numbers of what was in the assessment, versus what was in the annual monitoring page, and some of the numbers weren't adding up.

What happened is Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program, ACCSP, and they're one of our -- They're one of the partners that we have that works on gathering the commercial data together for the stock assessments. They worked with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to identify kind of where that discrepancy was, what the source of it was, and then update the information that was going into the stock assessment model, and we are anticipating a revised stock assessment to be presented by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center at the December 2025 council meeting, after which the council will have an opportunity to discuss any response to that action.

Previously, they had talked about updating the catch levels via an abbreviated framework, and so they'll discuss whether they want to now pick that up again, or pursue some other type of action, and so I'll pause here and see -- Are there any golden tilefish stock assessment questions, and, if it gets too sciencey, I may not be able to answer it.

All right. Not seeing any, we'll move on to the next action, and so the council has introduced, a couple of times, the discussion about the current recreational vessel limits as they are applied to

headboats, and the council has had a couple of discussions about how to address this issue. Most recently, there was an opportunity for the council to kind of request of staff what information they need to develop an amendment that would include this action.

Right now, the vehicle for this type of action is yet to be determined. We're trying to figure out if it's more efficient to pair this with some other action that's running along the same timeline, or if it can -- If it needs to be in its own standalone amendment, and that's something that the council will need to have in its future discussions, but the direction that the council gave most recently was basically for staff to gather the information on catch rates per six passengers for the following species, for black grouper, gag, scamp and yellowmouth grouper, and snowy grouper. Those are our snapper grouper species that have vessel limits, have recreational vessel limits.

What we would be looking at in this action is if those could be adjusted to be on a per six-passenger basis, or some other type of format that would be discussed within an amendment for this action, and so the next discussion for this action is scheduled for March of 2026. That will be kind of when staff brings back the information, the analyses that have been requested, and there will be the next step in development of this action, and so I'll pause here. Any questions regarding the headboat vessel limit?

Not seeing any, we'll continue moving down, and so another action that has been -- That the council has initiated, in terms of passing a motion to initiate an amendment, but this is another one of those actions where the exact vehicle, whether it's going to be a standalone amendment or whether it's going to be grouped in with something else, is still being decided, and this is for a recreational aggregate bag limit.

What's been discussed is something along the lines of what's being tested right now through the exempted fishing permits in Florida, in which there would be some set bag limit where a large number of the snapper grouper species, or all of the snapper grouper species, and that's one of those things that's yet to be determined, of what would be included in such a limit, but you would have a per-person limit on those collective species, after which -- The way that it's being used in the Florida program is, after anglers catch their limit of this group of species, then they're supposed to stop bottom fishing for that day, and so figuring out all the details of how that would be applied in other contexts would be some of the tasks associated with this type of action.

The most recent information that the council received was in September, where they received an analysis of recreational catch and discarding rates for snapper grouper species. They requested that this information be presented again, this time at a sub-regional level.

The first time it was presented, it was for the entire region. They wanted to see kind of a breakdown, looking at different areas, possibly by state, so that they could look at some of those sub-regional differences and factor in the different species compositions in different parts of the region, and so that is what we're working on related to that action. Any questions at this point related to the recreational aggregate bag limit?

Not seeing any, we'll continue moving to Amendment 60. This is the amendment that is addressing commercial management measures, and it has really two main objectives. The first one is to address issues related to the SG 1 permit. Within that, looking into possibly removal of the two-

for-one requirement associated with that permit, and then the next objective is to increase commercial trip efficiency.

The most recent information that the council has discussed related to that was to kind of set forward the actions that they want included in this amendment. They've gone through the scoping process at this point, and they -- I see the hand. Okay. That is probably for an earlier action, and so I'll pause on Amendment 60, and we can go to Darrin online for one of his -- Go ahead, Darrin.

MR. WILLINGHAM: There we go. It looks like my microphone is working now. Can you guys hear me?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, we can.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you, and so if you can scroll back up to the recreational bag limit, and I've been able to be involved with the exempted fishing permit, both the first year and the second year, and one of the things that I scratch my head about is are we actually going to be able to get good data for what that recreational bag limit would be per angler, being that the first year we tried fifteen-fish bag limit.

This year, it's a ten-fish bag limit, and, again, we're just trying to collect data, but very rarely have we been able to -- Actually, we've never been able to get anywhere near our fifteen-fish bag limit, because we always limit out on the red snapper before we even have a chance to get to that bag limit, and so is there some consideration for that outside of the exempted fishing permit process? Does anybody know?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Darrin, I think, at this point, for the bag limit action, what's been discussed right now is the information that we have from Florida, and Florida is kind of making the adjustments, as you spoke about, of moving from the fifteen-fish to the ten-fish limit. I think one of the areas where we are looking into what a potential bag limit, from the analytical end on the council side, is in the management strategy evaluation that's being conducted.

There's a lot of information that goes into that, in terms of what species are included in the bag limit and how those species differ from one part of the region to another. You would be catching different things in Florida, versus North Carolina, and s, right now, that's part of the discussion. I know the council has kind of talked, at different moments, about including the aggregate bag limit discussion within the management strategy evaluation, and there's also been another discussion where they pulled it specifically out, because they wanted it to move faster in the management strategy evaluation.

That's why they're kind of in the place right now where we haven't quite figured out the vehicle in which we're going to be able to really dive into the different options to construct what this would look like on a region-wide basis, you know, kind of in a larger area than just Florida, but I think - - Hopefully I addressed at least part of your question. I'm not sure I have all the answers for it at this moment.

MR. WILLINGHAM: I got you, and so the management strategy evaluation, and I'm, obviously, new to the advisory panel, and so what is the big picture of that? Is that what we're trying to develop, or is it already out there, and we're trying to tweak it?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm trying to think of a good analogy. I don't know, and it's not coming to me at the moment, but, basically, the framework for running the information has been built. Now we're trying to figure out what specific types of management we want to test, and there will be a little bit more discussion on that later on in the meeting today. We'll have an update on that item, and kind of where the council sits for that process, and so it may be good to hold the questions related to the MSE just for a little while, until Chip comes up.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Jumping back to Amendment 60, I think I had kind of introduced the main purposes of the amendment. The actions that the council is considering at this time for that amendment are, number one, considering a revision of the two-for-one policy, and, number two, establishing step-down trip limits on a larger basis, and number three is establishing some form of incidental or out-of-season allowance for the harvest of deepwater species, and number four is revising the existing stowage requirements for gear onboard.

The intent of that last one is really to facilitate the ability for fishermen to be able to switch gears while they're on the water a bit more easily. Right now, gear requirements, the way that they have to be stowed or what's allowed to be onboard, don't allow that, and so that action would be geared towards trying to revise those, with that goal in mind.

Right now, we've gone through the scoping process for that amendment. The next step would be the council is going to see a draft amendment, and so we're going to kind of -- We will put in as much work as we can at this point among -- There's a lot of federal workers that are within the development team, and so we'll put together as much work as we can ahead of the December meeting, to present the council with what we're developing for that draft amendment, but the full draft amendment that we're expecting to give them is due in March of 2026.

Kind of the plan is, after that, then it would go out for public hearings, and go into the later steps of the process, and so that's kind of the timing that we're working with for Amendment 60, and then you all kind of heard the update for the state-federal. Jessica really covered that mostly in her PowerPoint.

At this stage -- That was formally initiated in September of this year, and so, at this stage, it's been an initiated amendment, and we're starting to -- The states have been requested to put together information for any EFPs that they would be applying for, and then there will be further discussions as we go into future meetings and move through the process for that amendment.

Then the rest of the items that are listed in this document are things that we will hit on later on in this meeting, and so I'm not going to dive into them at this point, but I can pause here and see if there are any final questions on some of the things that are not on the agenda that you all had questions about that you've heard kind of the council discussing and developing to this point.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Randy McKinley, Topsail Beach. Is all these things here that you're working on, is this part of the new administration's effort to deregulate and prioritize stuff, or is this stuff

that was already in the works, and, if not, is there a list or something that you're working on that would apply to that, or is this just amendments that were going forward anyway?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It's kind of a -- I would say there's some mixture in there, in the sense that a lot of these actions were introduced before the current presidential administration came into place, but the way the discussion has progressed since the beginning of this year might have shifted a little bit, or has certainly come into play, the idea of actions, whether they are deregulatory or whether they are regulatory, and that's definitely been brought up in the discussion.

I know, thinking of the commercial amendment of Amendment 60, it's been brought up when they were initially going through, well, what -- You know, kind of put all the ideas out on the table of what could be done, and then kind of going through and seeing, okay, is this action deregulatory, and is this action something that is going to put an additional burden on, and so there were a lot of discussions along that frame, and so it's kind of in the middle, but there is not-- There's not necessarily a specific list of new items that have been developed.

I know the council did have to respond to the executive order, and we've kind of highlighted the things that the council has moved up in its priority list, and a lot of those were already being developed of these are ways that the council is trying to deregulate, to have deregulatory actions prioritized within some of its some of its plans.

MR. KIMREY: Was it Richie? Go ahead.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, and it's good to see that two-for-one moving forward. It sounds like, maybe by the end of 2026, something may be happening for these fishermen, number one?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That's the current schedule for it to go through, at least on the council end. How it would go through on the NOAA Fisheries end, after the council gets through that amendment, would -- That's the timing that's a little bit more uncertain for me, because I would need to get more information on what their permit system would have to do to kind of adjust to that framework, but, at this point, yes, the council is scheduled to have gone through that amendment. Their scheduled timeline is to be is to have that amendment finished within 2026.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay, and I think I know the answer to this, but I just want to double-check. There wouldn't be any new licenses issued, and we would still be working with the licenses that are already out there?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Correct. All the discussions that the council has had at this point have -- None of -- The council has said that they are not trying to change the limited entry nature of the commercial fishery at this point. All they are discussing is potentially removing the two-for-one requirement.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Scott.

MR. BUFF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just -- I've said this and said this, and I am going to say it again. I just want everybody to be aware, when you open this two-for-one back up, that the main agenda is to do away with the leasing process, and that's not going to correct that problem, because

you're still going to have people that's going to lease them, and, when you throw all of those permits back in that people don't want to lease, you're going to have so many boats.

We can't even survive now, and so, when you open them other couple hundred permits back up, because the guy don't want to lease the permit to somebody, and it's just sitting there stagnant, and so I want you to keep all that in mind. Most of the people, that are a lot of the people I know, have done the two-for-one, and, at the end of the day, I don't want to see that go away.

When me and Jack and Chris done that EFP for the beeliners, the number that we needed to get to was 300, and I think we're still over 500, if I'm not mistaken, and so I think somebody ought to put some work into that, before this is voted on, because that was put in place to have a sustainable fishery for everybody, and, right now, if all these permits are opened up, you're going to have too many boats in this fishery, and nobody is going to survive, and we're already on the brink of -- I don't even know why half of us are still in it, to be honest with you, you know, but, anyway, that's my two-cents.

MR. KIMREY: Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: I guess it depends on where you're fishing, and what kind of obstacles you're seeing, but, you know, for us in the Lower Keys on the Atlantic side, there's a whole lot less snapper fishermen, because they've had to, you know, buy one, and give one back, and now that fishery is dying, not because the fish are gone, but because the fishermen are gone.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Scott.

MR. BUFF: If the fishermen are gone, it's because they can't survive. It's not got nothing to do for the two-for-one. All I'm saying is -- I've been in this business for twenty-five years, and there's been good times and bad times, and this is the worst year that we have ever had in this business, as far as the commercial side. You have to compete with the weather, and then, if you've got them, they ain't worth nothing. If you ain't got them, they're astronomical.

Me and Chris was just talking about that, trying to run a retail market, but, at the end of the day, and I'm going to say it again. If you open all this back up without getting these permits down -- They ought to be at least below 500. That is almost double what the number was to start with, and so I just think that there ought to be a little bit more research put on where we're at before it's actually just changed, and not doing what was intended to be done to start with.

MR. KIMREY: Real quick, Randy, and somebody -- Maybe Mike or --

MR. MCKINLEY: I thought that the number was under 400, or around 400.

MR. BUFF: I think it's still over 500, but I don't know. The last number I heard, accurate number, was a year or two ago, and it was like 546. I'm sure there's been a few go away since then.

MR. MCKINLEY: But I mean, and I don't want to get into arguments, Scott, about this, but I feel like the ability of the fishermen now -- These young guys, they don't have to catch fish. All the guys are aging out. We just don't have fishermen, and the young people just -- I'm buying fish from a couple guys that their parents bought them permits, and they don't have to fish, and we just

need to somehow get some of the experienced mates into the fishery, and the two-for-one is making it impossible, and I just don't -- I know that it is hard to survive, but I think it's a lot more factors besides the boats that are doing it. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: So real quick, Scott, and maybe Mike can elaborate on this briefly, and we don't want to go down a rabbit hole on this, for sure, but you had said, in reference to the two-for-one, opening the permits back up -- I mean, I'm fairly familiar with the permits, and I know that a lot of the permits are leased or owned by people that are not full-time fishermen, and a lot of the permits barely get fished on, like Randy was talking about.

He's got some fishermen that mom and daddy bought him a permit, but they barely catch anything, and so do you think the number of permits needs to go down, because I don't think all the permits are catching a lot of fish. You just think they need to go down in general, because there's still a number that high, because there's too much commercial pressure? I'm just trying to understand your point a little better.

MR. BUFF: The actual number that it needed to be back then, when we had done the study, was between 300 and 400, and is that not right, Chris?

MR. CONKLIN: I vaguely remember, and it's been a long time since we got shut down on that one, but I think basically what Scott is trying to get to is that we have shrinking quotas every year, and so we're having to divvy up less fish among a certain amount of permits, and I guess doing away with the two-for-one wouldn't make any more permits, but it would make it easier for people to transfer them, and, you know, fish on them, I guess.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and that's what I was trying to understand, is --

MR. CONKLIN: But the magic number and the problem is --

MR. KIMREY: Doing away for the two-for-one, all the permits that have been bought two-for-one, and one of them has been returned, is still one permit, and so that number is not going to change, and so, if they do away with the two-for-one, the only thing that's going to change is there is won't be a reduction in permits moving forward.

MR. CONKLIN: That's right.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. I just wanted to make sure I understood that, and I don't know if anybody else had that question.

MR. BUFF: It's going to free up all the ones that people don't want to lease. That's what I'm trying to get everybody to understand. A lot of people --

MR. KIMREY: See, that's the thing I'm still a little fuzzy on. When you say it's going to free up the ones--

MR. BUFF: Well, let's just say he's got a permit, and he don't want the liability of somebody running that boat, and so he's not going to lease that permit, but, when you do one-for-one, he can just sell it, and so all those permits are going to go back into that fold.

MR. KIMREY: You're saying it's going to make the trade of permits easier.

MR. BUFF: Yes, and that's correct.

MR. KIMREY: Because you're not cashing one in to keep one.

MR. BUFF: All the ones that are being leased -- The ones that are not being leased, and not being utilized, because they don't want the liability, is going to get thrown back into that pile. That's what I'm saying.

MR. KIMREY: Right.

MR. BUFF: It ain't got nothing to do with if the guy's daddy gave him a permit, and he can fish or not. That's irrelevant.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and that definitely seems feasible to me. Okay. That's the part I was trying to understand. Thank you, man.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so anything else related to what was introduced in the updates portion before we move on to the next item? Not seeing any hands, and, especially related to that Amendment 60 conversation, like was brought up, you'll have the opportunity to have a fuller conversation, with a bit more information presented to you, in April of next year. That will be scheduled for then, and so back to you, Mr. Chair.

MR. KIMREY: Okay, and so we covered everyone's questions, hopefully, and so we can move on to Number 3, which is Jessica McCawley, again, talking about the exempted fishing permit, and here she comes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so this is the three exempted fishing permits that Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has right now. This is not state management EFPs, and so I talked to you guys about these projects before, and the council will get a full report-out on year-one at the upcoming council meeting in December, and so then you guys can see kind of a broader report-out on this data at the April Snapper Grouper AP meeting, but a little bit about this.

These are the three exempted fishing permits that we have. Two are in northeast Florida, and one is from Cape Canaveral down through the Keys. Two of the projects are lottery based, where you apply through our Go Outdoors Florida licensing system, and then a certain number of people are selected to participate, and so then that individual can either go out on their own boat or on a charter boat or a headboat. Then one of the projects, that is called the study fleet, where the entire vessel is participating in the project, and so there are private vessels and charter vessels, and now we're in year-two, and there's also one headboat that's allowed to go out per quarter.

It's 210 people selected per quarter to participate, and they're testing out a number of different things as part of this project. One of them is the snapper grouper aggregate bag limit, and you heard Darrin, one of the participants, was talking about, in the first year, that snapper grouper aggregate limit was fifteen fish per person. Now, in year-two, we have it down to a ten-snapper-

grouper-aggregate per person, but, in year-one, I can tell you people weren't even meeting ten fish. In year-one, it looked like they were getting around six fish, maybe, per person, max, in addition to their red snapper. In year-two, the red snapper that they get to keep are part of that ten-fish aggregate.

The other thing that we're testing as part of this is an education course. Before you go out, you have to take a number of different education courses about kind of what's going on in the fishery, but also how to use the reporting app that we're going to be asking people to use when they come back to the dock to report their fish. Also, we are asking people to take like a pre-EFP fishing survey, like an angler satisfaction survey, and then at the end of the quarter, then they take a post-EFP fishing satisfaction survey.

Also, some folks are selected for further study on angler satisfaction, looking in -- They have like semi-structured interviews with our staff, to try to get into more details about what they thought about the project, what they think about the current regulations, et cetera, but I would say that just some off-the-cuff observations are people really love the EFP.

They don't like that it's only 210 people that get to keep red snapper per quarter. People seem to like the education course, and most people seem to like the phone app reporting. Also, and I know this is a shocker, but the pre-angler surveys indicate that they don't like current management, and they're looking for something else, whether it is something like this EFP with the snapper grouper aggregate or some other different type of management in the recreational red snapper fishery.

Some of the things I guess is what you would expect out of the project, but we'll have more specifics, and looking at lots of different components of this data, at the December council meeting, and then we can show you guys that also at your April Snapper Grouper AP meeting, but I'm happy to take any questions, if you have any questions for me.

MR. KIMREY: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Not so much a question, but just a couple of observations. You know, we've had the privilege to participate in both years so far for the EFP in Florida. What we're seeing from our guests, you know, that pre-fishing survey and educational component -- With the charter-headboat, we are responsible, as the operators, to provide that education course.

We take it ourselves on the computer, and we then reiterate it to our guests, before they're able to come aboard, and they're excited. You know, when we talk about cooperative research, this is really like the meat of it. The people are excited to be involved. They're excited to learn. We have a huge array of angler skillset, and we do -- We have to rate each angler, and are you a first-timer, or are you a weakened warrior, and are you an experienced bottom fisherman, and what's been really cool is that we have seen that huge diversity, and how that interacts with the stock.

I think that it's important to note, and maybe we can get into it more as we move through into the MSE, when we communicate the expectation ahead of time -- Something to note about the study fleet is its full retention.

If you catch red snapper, you have to keep it, regardless of if it's six inches or twenty pounds, and so, when we communicate that to our guests, of, hey, if you catch one, you've got to keep it, they're a little bit scared ahead of time, but, as we know, you know, the stock is healthy, and there's a good array of fish, and so, when they come back, and they have retained the red snapper, they're like, oh, you know what, and that really wasn't so bad. I was kind of scared, and I was kind of hesitant, but I would much rather do this, because the goal is to reduce discards. Once you hit your fish, your red snapper, you have to stop bottom fishing, and the trip is over, and people have been really receptive to that.

The other thing that I'll note, just an observation here in year-two of the full retention, is, you know, it's science-based, right, and so, when we have our mini-seasons, and people are harvesting the larger fish, because they can only get one, a lot of the times with those dockside samples, you're only getting, you know, the measurements, and the scientific measurements, from the large fish.

With the full retention, if you catch one that's this big, you have to retain it, and it's coming back to the doc, and they're taking the samples. They're taking the otoliths, lengths, weights, et cetera, and so we have had trips where there have been notably smaller fish, whether it's, you know, catch per unit effort related or condition related, and so that's been really exciting to see, and we've seen very small juvenile fish with, you know, their spot still very prominent, full of eggs, that may not have been sampled, you know, and so how that works in later on down the road, when we talk about, you know, fecundity and things of that nature, I think it's really, really cool, and so just an observation, and they're doing a great job, and so thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian, charter-headboat, North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and so, Haley, you were saying that, in this program, when you hit your limit of Americans, is that the limit for a person stops, or, when you hit your limit for the boat, then everybody stops, and the trip terminates, and you come back? I just want clarification on what that exactly --

MS. STEPHENS: Sure, and so we're a part of the study fleet headboat component, and so we're allowed thirty-six red snapper for a vessel limit, and it's kind of at the discretion of the captain and crew how you want to, you know, organize that, and is it a free for all? Do you allow eighteen guests, who can harvest two each, and then they stop fishing, or is it derby style, where everyone catches the fish, and then you come back to the dock, and you divvy out the fillets?

You know, that's another really cool thing, that we get to test how it works, and I can tell you that we have experimented with several different approaches, and all of them have been successful, and so I guess it's just up to how you want it to work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So, in that study fleet, basically each individual angler stops bottom fishing when the vessel reaches their thirty-six red snapper limit or each individual angler reaches their snapper grouper aggregate, and so it's kind of choking you out, and this is how you're reducing discards, is because you're reaching either the aggregate or the overall red snapper vessel limit, and then you're stopping bottom fishing.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody else have a question or comment? Anybody? Thank you again, Jessica. All right, and so, before Chip comes up, and he's ready. He was getting ready to pounce on us,

but we're going to take a break, but we're a tad ahead of schedule, which doesn't happen often, and so let's not make it a long break, about seven or eight minutes, and that will put us back here at two o'clock.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. KIMREY: Okay. Here we go. You all failed miserably at our break time. We ran over a little bit. Luckily, hopefully it won't matter. We have a little extra time, and so Chip is going to start us off here. after our break, and everybody is just about settled down, with MSE, management strategy evaluation.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, and so I know we've gone over this quite a bit, but we're going to go over it again, because we're revising, or continuing, the management strategy evaluation, looking at refining some of the management measures that are in it, and so, starting off, what is a management strategy evaluation?

It's a quantitative approach to evaluate different management scenarios, and so what we're trying to do is take basically the council management process, and put it into different scenarios, and quantify those, based on what the stakeholders would like to see out of the fishery, whether it's getting the maximum yield that they want out of the fishery, it's decreasing the number of discards, it's having the longest season possible, it's looking at different management approaches and trying to meet those objectives that the stakeholders identify.

The goal of a management strategy evaluation is to inform management. It is not to prescribe management, and so there's not something that's going to be coming out of this management strategy evaluation that says this is the only way to manage this fishery. It is looking to compare the different scenarios and look at how they operate. It is not going to be saying you have to do this, and this is the only way to get there.

Once again, we're trying to compare different performance metrics to evaluate how the approach could achieve different objectives. I listed off a couple objectives there earlier, where it's looking at the yield, it's looking at rebuilding overfished population, it's looking at the fraction of discards relative to kept fish, or it's potentially looking at different things, such as how long the season is, the number of angler days that you could have.

Those are all different management objectives that could be incorporated into a management strategy evaluation, and one of the most important parts of this is it's a repeatable process. Ideally, you can put in these new objectives that come out that, as we're developing things along the way, and let's say the stakeholders want something else out of the fishery, then you can put it into the management strategy evaluation, keep everything else the same and evaluate how it works relative to that, and so it's an adaptable process that's repeatable, and that's what we really want.

We want to make sure that this is not a black box, and this is open and transparent, as much as we can. I know there's a lot of math that goes into that management strategy evaluation, but we want to be as open as we can with the information that's going into it, and looking at the outcomes that the stakeholders want out of it.

I don't think I have to reiterate this first statement. The red snapper fishery has been a challenge for the council. It is a population that is doing really well. We're seeing the highest abundance numbers, based on the stock assessment and everything that's being reported by the stakeholders, and so the population is doing very well. However, the fishery itself is not doing well, based on the population. It is struggling. It's a single day that you're allowed to harvest red snapper.

Most recreational fishermen do not like that, and it's not going over well, and it's not the only species that we're having struggles with. Black sea bass is another fish that's likely going to be coming down the management track, that's going to be a problematic species.

This management strategy evaluation, we're not looking to adjust the acceptable biological catch or annual catch limits. Those are going to be coming from the SEDAR stock assessments. What we are going to be looking at is adjusting the fraction between the number of fish that are being discarded and the recreational fish relative to the number of fish that are landed, and so what this is doing is taking that overall pot of landed and discarded fish, putting it together, listening to the stakeholders, to see what they want, and trying to maximize that yield that the fishery could get, or maybe even maximize the number of angler days, trying to balance out the desire for landings, as well as the desire to rebuild the stock and the desire to access in the fishery.

The number of discards in many of these fisheries has been increasing, and, like you all know, it's been limiting the landings in the fishery, and so it's been problematic. The other thing I forgot to mention earlier is species like gag and red snapper are both in rebuilding plans, and so those are must-haves in a management scenario, where we have to rebuild those populations.

Red snapper has been going pretty well, and I'm hearing reports of gag grouper -- Seeing increased signs of gag grouper on the water as well, and, finally, the council has identified a desire for a new approach to manage this fishery. No longer is it wanting to have the discards be there all the time. We want to make sure that the stakeholders are engaged in figuring out how to address these discards, and so one of the EFPs out there, that Jessica was just mentioning earlier, that's a way to reduce discards. Stop fishing once you reach your aggregate bag limit.

Just a little bit of background on our management strategy evaluation that's being developed for the snapper grouper fishery. It started in 2022, and it sounds like the work is fairly easy, and it's just another model. However, it's looking at incorporating the stock assessments for three different species, looking at black grouper, gag and red snapper, and it was trying to match those assessment outputs, and so it matched those assessment outputs very well.

Then it looked to evaluate the status quo, basically fishing as we're currently fishing, and it looked at full retention, based on some spatial components. It looked at the impact of minimum size limits, and then it looked at spatial closures.

Looking at the performance of the different management scenarios, it included -- For the performance metrics, it include the probability of rebuilding, and this is one of those must-haves. You've got to rebuild these fisheries if they're in an overfished state. It looked at relative short-term landings, relative long-term landings, and so that's looking at yield in the fishery, and then the fraction of discarded, and that's what it's trying to do, is reduce the number of discarded fish.

Then, finally, there's a robustness test that was put in there, and so this is what if you had your information wrong, and we tested different scenarios if the information was incorrect, and so there's a natural mortality that's assumed for all stocks going into a stock assessment. We looked at a range of different natural mortality rates for the three different species.

There was information on recreational catch levels. Remember that MRIP had some -- It had discovered a potential telescoping error, which was potentially increasing the overall recreational catch, and so it explored different recreational catch levels. It explored different levels of recreational effort, and then, finally, it looked at different levels of recruitment. Black sea bass, gag, and red snapper all have different levels of recruitment that are going into it, and just trying to make sure that what was tested had different -- Matched different, potentially different, sources, or different scenarios, of recruitment going forward.

Going back and looking at the outputs from the management strategy evaluation, it developed -- Like I said before, it developed a framework to work on multiple snapper grouper species. It matched the BAM assessments very well. I know some people don't like it to match the BAM assessments that well, but we're not trying to develop ABCs. We're trying to develop a scenario in order to evaluate the management, and, when we presented this before, I don't know if you all realized how many different management scenarios you were looking at on the screen.

I found the graphs were pretty overwhelming to begin with, because we were looking at 132 different scenarios. That is overwhelming for one graph, and so it can be a bit confusing, but, to highlight what was in those 132 management scenarios, we had five different categories. We had the status quo, we had the full retention, changing minimum size limits, and we had the nearshore spatial closures and offshore spatial closures. To make it more complicated, there was combined different management approaches that could go into it, and then it evaluated different levels of recreational effort.

Just going into what some of the findings were for the three different species, on the bottom here, we have the probability of rebuilding, and so what you want to get closer to is one for this, on this bottom axis, and then, on the Y axis, that is the short-term yield, and so, ideally, you're going to have higher levels, indicating you're getting higher levels of return from the fishery.

We have three different scenarios that I plotted up here. We have the status quo, we have the status quo with 35 percent of the current recreational effort, and then we have full retention offshore, and so we're looking at a variety of management scenarios here. I'm just highlighting a few. Then, once again, we have our three different species. We have red snapper, gag grouper, and black sea bass.

Going into these graphs, here you can see the status quo had the lowest probability of rebuilding, but it had relatively higher short-term yield than the status quo with 35 percent recreational effort. It makes sense. If you have lower recreational effort, you're going to have lower yield.

However, for red snapper, if you did a full retention of just the offshore fishery, and, when I'm referring to an offshore fishery here, it is greater than 100 feet, and you can see that the yield greatly increases. For gag grouper, you can see, for the status quo, the probability of rebuilding is less than 50 percent, and then, for the other management scenarios, you have slightly greater

probability of rebuilding, but the overall yield in those two different management scenarios are less than the status quo.

Then for black sea bass, you're seeing a much different picture, where it's much lower relative yield. You can see it's pretty small for all. There's not much difference in the different management scenarios, but the probability of rebuild for the status quo is low, and that remains consistent for all the scenarios and for the three different species.

AP MEMBER: Were there timelines, Chip, on the rebuilding on the X-axis species graphs? I'm trying to remember if there are specific timelines associated with each species.

DR. COLLIER: So, for black sea bass, it didn't necessarily have a timeline, because we're not in a rebuilding plan, but, for gag grouper and red snapper, it's within the probability of rebuilding within that rebuilding plan. I can't remember the date for gag grouper. I know, for red snapper, it's been burned into my brain at 2044.

Going into the long-term yield, very similar to what you saw in the short-term yield, and this is just looking at the yield in the fishery for the longer scenarios, and then we'll go looking at the fraction of discarded, and so, if you look at status quo for red snapper, you can see that the status quo and percent discarded stays about the same. You get less discards with 35 percent recreational effort, and then, if you move all the fish offshore, move all the fishing to offshore, you get a much lower percent discard.

Those scenarios are the three different scenarios that were described, or those are three scenarios I highlighted that came out of the last management strategy evaluation, and so what I want to highlight is the status quo was the worst of all for the spawning stock biomass. Full retention seemed to perform better for red snapper and gag grouper, but it performed worse for black sea bass, based on these management scenarios, and so we wanted to continue working on this, and we have a contract with Blue Matter to work through September of 2026 to revise the MSE, based on feedback.

What we would like to do is describe different management scenarios, and, for some of these management scenarios, we would like to maybe have a little bit more reality into it, because a closure of all inshore waters less than 100 feet just doesn't seem feasible for the fishery. Potentially look at what a closure might mean, but the council has also described some management scenarios that they would like to include in this.

We would like to review the objectives, to make sure they're matching what the stakeholders would like to see, and then see if there's some additional sources of uncertainty, basically what we might have wrong in the model, just to make sure that the model is robust to any conclusions that are coming out of it.

In addition to this work that we're doing with Blue Matter, there's been a couple pieces of work that the University of Florida has been doing. They did this thing called a situation assessment, and, basically, they investigated the stakeholders perspectives on the management strategy evaluation and the management scenarios, and this was designed to help gather future stakeholder -- It's to help gather future stakeholder input to this second part here, the stakeholder input.

You might be hearing from the University of Florida on some different management strategy evaluation processes. They have a panel. Some of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel members are part of this panel for the stakeholder input that's being developed right now, and then they're going to be developing a survey to go out to the public and get a greater perspective on the management scenarios.

In September, the council talked about refining some of these management measures and changing some of the management measures that they had been or management measures that they had been -- Or management measures that had been analyzed in the previous version, and what the council really would like to investigate is an aggregate bag limit, and, with that aggregate bag limit, they would like mandatory stopping once a bag limit is reached.

The council recommended investigating aggregate bag limits for different species groupings based on state or region, and so potentially, where there is different species to be considered in the aggregate, they would like to keep those. For example, if yellowtail snapper is a species that is recommended to be included in the aggregate, yellowtail snapper aren't caught up here very frequently, and so it's not going to have very much impact.

However, in Richie's region down in the Keys, it would have a huge impact. Yellowtail snapper are very common down there, and so we're trying to investigate it based on a region, making sure it matches the species that are in that area. Now, if this aggregate bag limit does not achieve rebuilding some stocks, they also recommended, begrudgingly, but they recommended considering spatial management and seasonal management.

When we're talking about an aggregate bag limit, this would be in place on top of the current aggregates that are there currently, and so, for the recreational fishery, for the groupers, there's a three-fish aggregate. For the snappers, there's a ten-fish aggregate, and so those aggregates would remain in place. This would be added on top of that. Also, the seasons, or the size limit and seasons, would also remain in place.

Sometimes I've gotten confused when we're looking at an aggregate bag limit, and really thinking about it, and aggregate bag limit doesn't necessarily mean full retention, and so what I have plotted up here is a graph of full retention.

Well, let me start off with what's in yellow. That's the historic, and so looking at how the population was doing historically, and then we have three different management scenarios. We have the current effort, and so status quo in blue here. Then we have full retention in green, and then no discard mortality in black, and so, the no discard mortality, although idealized, that's unlikely to ever be achieved. Catching a fish is likely going to cause some discards, and some of them aren't going to survive, especially with the number of sharks that are out there, and so full -- No discard mortality is likely not to be achieved.

Looking at the top one, we're looking at biomass, but what I really want to highlight is the landings, and so, if you look at landings going through time, they gradually decrease, and then you change to this full retention scenario. Basically you spike your landings, and you crash the population, and that happens just within a couple of years.

If you go with a no discard scenario, once again, the landings stay relatively stable, very similar to where they are with the current, but the population does begin to rebuild, and you can see the overall positive output from that. These are just three scenarios that were investigated. These aren't going to be the only outcomes that we're going to be looking at.

What we would like to talk to the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel about today is five or six species to include in the management strategy evaluation, and this would be for the recreational fishery, focusing in on that at a regional level.

Some of the performance objectives, once again, we're going to be looking at successfully rebuilding stocks, and also keep them from being overfished, making sure we don't have a population crash as the management scenario is going on. Another performance objective is to keep the short-term landings, looking at the average landings from years-one through three, and then looking at long-term landings.

Then, getting into some of the social side of this, you know, lower the discard mortality, or lower the fraction of fish that are being discarded. Lower is obviously better here, but what we've also been hearing, from many of the stakeholders, is access is key for the recreational fishery, and so trying to maximize the number of days, or number of trips, being available for the recreational fishery.

Looking, or trying to figure out -- The questions for the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel is to comment on an aggregate bag limit with mandatory stopping, and so what is an appropriate range of aggregate bag limits to consider? Are we thinking -- Jessica had mentioned fifteen fish is what they started off with, and they've dropped it down to ten, but, commonly, they're catching only six fish, and so what is a good aggregate bag limit to analyze?

What level of compliance do you think we would have with this aggregate bag limit and mandatory stopping? Would it change after the first three years? Would it be low, then go gradually be increasing over time, or do you think it would be low, with probably minimal buy-in, or be very high, because people are excited to be able to keep red snapper?

For spatial management, the council had requested no large spatial closures, and so if the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel could give us an idea of what a large spatial closure is, and maybe consider it to the closures that are out there now, like we have for the deepwater marine protected areas or the spawning special management zones, and then, finally, if seasons are needed, how should seasons be designed?

Should they start off to that grouper spawning closure that occurs January through April? Should it start -- Should we make sure that we keep June through September open? That seems to be the highest recreational effort time period right now, and then, finally, should south Florida have a different season, given that their seasonality seems to be very different from the other areas?

Then the last group of questions for the group is what species to recommend, including in the analysis, maybe five or six species per state, and, if there's any recommendations, include recommendations for north and south of Cape Canaveral, and so, with that, that was my long-winded presentation to you all. Hopefully it was understandable and starting to make sense with this management strategy evaluation.

MR. KIMREY: So, Chip, I have a question. I didn't forget about you, Chris. When you talked about the regional, five or six species to regionally -- Are you talking about inside the Southeast region or the entire Southeast region to evaluate with the MSE? Are you talking about a spatial part of the Southeast or the entire region, when you said "regionally"?

DR. COLLIER: So you could do it state-by-state, if that's easiest. We were thinking a region within this would be potentially Cape Canaveral and north, and then Cape Canaveral and south, would be the two regions, potentially, but state-by-state might be easier.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. I had a question. When you said that the model matched the BAM model, could you explain that a little bit more? What was the motivation behind selecting the 35 percent for the recreational effort?

DR. COLLIER: So within the -- I'll start off with the last question first. That was just highlighting one scenario. Within the management strategy evaluation, they evaluated from 5 percent of the current recreational effort up to 100 percent, and so that was just an example of how things were coming out. Go ahead.

MR. CONKLIN: So you presented the 35 percent. Is there some significance to that? Is that like an ideal number you're trying to get to or anything?

DR. COLLIER: No, and those were just examples. Don't -- Take those with a grain of salt. We're not managing to that or anything. It was just an example of outcomes that came out from the previous MSE. We're exploring the aggregate bag limit as our primary management scenario, and so that 35 percent is no longer going to hold water, necessarily, and then why did we match the BAM.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and, I mean, what do you mean when you say it matched it? Did it match like those catch level recommendations and stuff like that, is what you're saying, or the math is the same, or you put the BAM outcomes into this tool kind of thing?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and you're right there with the math. It's basically making sure that the math going into the management strategy evaluation is matching the math from the BAM model, and so what we're trying to do is looking at the resulting output of catch that can occur for a species, whether it's landings or discards. We put those all in a single pot, and then we can develop a management scenario based on that new pot of fish. Is that making sense?

MR. KIMREY: Does anyone else have any questions, or comments? Okay. Move along, or I think we have an online question. Was there someone else before that? Okay, and so Gettys has a question. He's online.

DR. COLLIER: Gettys, you should be unmuted on our end, if you want to unmute yourself. I think we hear you.

MR. BRANNON: Yes, sir. Sorry for not being there in-person today, but I think you all would rather have me at home. Chip, you asked about the spatial closures, and I'll just be the one to say, until we understand the dead discard numbers more, and until we understand what the true stock assessment is, that any spatial closures of any magnitude are too large, for the recreational side especially, and would just kill our industry, and still not going off the best science available, and so I would suggest that we just continue to try to manage it as best as we can until we have those numbers back, because any spatial closure is too large, and it should be a last resort.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Not as much of a question as it is a comment. Sorry. Thank you, all.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you. Go ahead, John.

MR. POLSTON: I don't know if it's time to bring it up or not, but I've always said, and I still have a major problem with the recreational or commercial industry and the season opening up in July. Everybody knows that's when the fish spawn, and I know the scientists say it doesn't make a difference and, if the fish is dead, it's dead, but I don't see how it can't make a difference if you let the fish lay their eggs, and I think that could help tremendously, opening up to where the fish have already spawned, before or after. I just think that would be huge, personally.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John. Anybody else? Any more questions, comments? Darrin, online.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you so much, and so a couple of things on this. I want to echo what our last, or two speakers ago, said for the spatial management and spatial closures. I think we need to avoid that at all costs, because that's going to -- That would be devastating to at least the north Florida, northeast Florida, fishery, and so anything we can do to stay away from that. I mean, they tried that with that most recent NOAA thing, which, fortunately, the Secretary of Commerce shot that down, which was wonderful, and so I would very much not try to push that forward to the South Atlantic Council.

As for the aggregate bag limit with mandatory stopping, I had mentioned it earlier on, but I think that we're putting numbers out there and, Chip, you had commented to saying, hey, that, even when they're doing the exempted fishing permits, and pulling that data, that, well, they're commonly only catching six fish, and I think that's a skewed viewpoint, mainly because, during those, where, the first year, we were allowed to catch thirty-six red snapper, but every one of us trying to catch our fifteen-fish bag limit, and, if we didn't have a mandatory stop to try to catch our fifteen-fish bag limit, we would still just be out there trying to catch them, but it says something to how many red snapper that we all know are out there, at least in the northeast Florida waters.

There are so many red snapper that it forces you, even if you bounce around, and I've been out there bouncing around to six or seven locations, trying to avoid the red snapper, and still limit out, the first year, on thirty-six red snapper, and can't even get close to our aggregate bag limit, and so I think it's -- I don't think it's wise to say, look, they can only get six fish, even when they're trying to get their bag limits, and now, even with it down to ten fish for the aggregate bag limit, you're still -- It doesn't change the fact that these snapper are so abundant out there.

Maybe some of this -- You know, some of these misconceptions of actually what the snapper count is, and, if a government would not have shut down, we might have had some stuff come out by October 15<sup>th</sup>, you know, that would have said, hey, look what the Great Red Snapper Count is telling us, and so I think we're still -- We've got to be -- I think we should be cautious with saying that, hey, you can't even -- They can't even get out there and get their recreational bag limit.

With addressing the seasons, the best seasons to try to get out there, our fishing club, just last month, sat there and tried to come up with ideas for this, and we heard a lot of folks saying that, you know, fishing for these, for red snapper, during the spring, and fishing for them during the fall, with certainly, just like the last gentleman was talking about, say, hey, stop hurting these fish during those summer months, when they are full of eggs, and so that type of stuff.

The other thing that I didn't see put in here, in any of the recommendations, would be a potential slot limit, you know, a slot size. We had mentioned between like -- You know, I think it was eighteen and twenty-six inches, somewhere in there, but just having some idea, and trying to keep the smaller ones in the population, and trying to protect the older, bigger breeders. That's all I've got right now.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. Yes, and I don't think there's a lot of support for the spatial closures, and not from any of the people I've spoken with over the past little while, but thank you for your comments. Go ahead, David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss, Florida. A couple of things I'll throw out there. For the aggregate bag limit, my fear, and I don't have a good solution to this, is, whatever you set that number at, and let's say, for the sake of argument, it's ten fish, and my fear is that people are going to catch nine fish and then keep throwing back that tenth fish until they get the trophy, and so I -- I don't know how you would quantify that data, and I don't know how you would extrapolate that, or -- I just felt like throwing a couple of big words out there, and so I threw those out there. It makes me feel smarter.

To answer a couple of these questions here, in the first three years, compliance is going to be very low. We all know that, and for any number of reasons. Number one, people aren't going to buy-in, and, number two, people probably just aren't going to know. As we've found out, outreach can be tough, particularly amongst the recreational community.

I think you're definitely going to have to have two sub-regions, if you will, as you were talking about, you know, kind of a Canaveral north and then a Canaveral south, as you alluded to, Chip, that fisheries are very different the further South you go, and, you know, the issues down in south Florida are very different than the issues everywhere else.

I agree that spatial closures are not going to be the way to go. You're going to have a lot of hurt people with that. The summertime closure is probably not a bad thing. I understand, as people have said, that, you know, if you're going to kill these fish, you're going to kill them regardless, but you do have concentrated effort when the season is open, and so you're going to have more people out there trying to catch them in the summertime, if that's when it's open, or whatever it's open. You're going to have more people out there trying to catch them, and that's just the way it is.

Again, for me down in south Florida, you know, we'll travel north for red snapper season at times, if we know that, you know, we're going to be able to hit it, and so if you could not have the open season when they're most likely spawning, which seems to be in the summer, it's probably the best way to go.

From a total number of fish is, as we've said, if you're -- Most people are catching six, and somewhere in that five to ten range is probably okay, particularly if one or two of those fish are something like a gag or a nice-sized red snapper. I mean, that's a pretty good bag, if you can have one or two of those fish be a sizable fish in there.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, David. Go ahead.

MR. MATTHEWS: I just wanted to kind of tag on to what he said with a question, because I think what's different about having this aggregate bag limit is that the -- The enforceability side of that, and compliance, is the real violation of that is going to happen fifty miles offshore, and I think it's going to be almost impossible to enforce, because how do you prove that somebody let fifteen fish go to get the biggest red snapper they could get, and so I think there's got to be some sort of consideration of how you enforce it, tied into the decision about whether it's a good management strategy or not.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Matt. Let me remind everybody to state your name before your comment. I've been bad about last names, but go ahead, Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley Stevens. A lot of thoughts on the MSE. I will go ahead and reiterate, and beat the dead horse, that any spatial closure is too much of a spatial closure. I think that the stakeholders and folks have been very vocal about that. We have tried it. It is -- It should be off the table. It should not be incorporated.

When we talk about things that we can incorporate, I'm curious if we can incorporate, you know, best fishing practices, how the implementation of circle hooks in that northeast Florida region has helped, you know, venting devices, or venting tools and descending devices, and how that affects the discard rate. Has that been incorporated at all?

DR. COLLIER: So, for red snapper, it's directly incorporated into that stock assessment, where it has different time blocks of discard mortality. The first one is pre circle hook regulations. The next one is the circle regulation that goes in place. The third one is when the descending device regulation went in place, and then those are -- I'm making sure I have them all. I think those are the different time blocks that are there for red snapper.

For the other species that are in this model, and so black sea bass and gag grouper, those are not incorporated into it. The model has not -- It has not been developed to incorporate those values yet, but we could look at the potential impact of differences in these, where we would continue a different scenario forward for red snapper. I'm not certain, and I'm probably looking at the other end of the table over here, looking at Paul, if there's differences in discard mortality rate for black sea bass, given circle hooks or descending devices or people using venting, different things like that.

MR. KIMREY: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chip. Haley Stephens. Then I guess another input to consider would be the economic impacts. I know that we're talking a lot about the fishery, and the landings, but, you know, keep in mind, as we have the big picture of optimum yield, the economic data is going to be very, very important, and that kind of -- I'm kind of alluding to the larger picture of this, and I understand that the MSE can be a very useful tool, but it's only going to be as good as the data that we put in.

If we don't have good data on the frontend, and we put it into this model, hoping for a miracle, you know, what does that look like? I feel like, at this point, with the snapper grouper MSE, there are certainly things that we can incorporate, but my fear with this is that it is just lagging behind a little bit at this current time.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, Haley. Anybody? Go ahead, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just to dovetail with what Matt said, I mean, we know that circle hooks are a conserving device. We know that venting, and using descenders, are a conserving device in this fishery, but, like Matt said a few minutes ago, what's the level of compliance going to be with this aggregate bag limit, and so we're heaping rules on top of rules on top of rules, without knowing the level of compliance, and potentially without the enforcement on the water, the necessary enforcement on the water, to monitor these activities, and so I'm just worried that some of the things that we come up with with this MSE might just be pie in the sky, if there's low compliance and low enforcement.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley Stephens, and thank you, Dr. Paul. That reminded me of another point that I was going to mention when we look at shifting effort to offshore in that a hundred-foot-plus range. You know, you've got to look at the reality of different, you know, user groups. Sure, that might be fine for a smaller boat with six anglers on it, but, when you get out to a hundred foot of water, and this is just the scope out of northeast Florida and Ponce inlet, the tide is ripping.

It is a significant difference of 100 foot versus sixty, versus eighty, and so that could potentially propose a lot of challenges for multi-passenger vessels, you know, with twenty, thirty, forty people onboard. You can't successfully fish in a hundred foot of water, if that were to be a thing, and so I guess I would, you know, just keep that in mind.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Haley. Go ahead, Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: This is Matt Matthews, and I think, on your point, it applies to smaller vessels as you move north, and so, if you're setting that depth range at a hundred feet, and you look to Georgia, that's going to cut a lot of recreational private anglers out of the picture for trying to target these fish.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks Matt. We've got Darrin online has a question.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Darrin Willingham, in northeast Florida, and so, just out of curiosity, because I am the new kid on the block with this group, and so the management strategy evaluation, and you talked about the Blue Matter group, or what have you, and is that the only entity that we have out there to choose from to evaluate management strategy, you know, programs, or has that been already whittled down to that Blue Matter group? I just don't understand.

DR. COLLIER: Just to respond to that, what we did was we put a call for proposals out last year, or earlier this year, and I can't remember when we did it, but we had different groups apply, and then we had a review panel get together and look at the technical merits, and then we had a group of executive council members, as well as executive council staff, get together to review the proposals and make a recommendation, and so there are multiple people that can do it. They don't do it for free, and so that's what we were looking at, is trying to get the best group for the project that we were looking into.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Okay. Great, and this is Darren Willingham again. What Haley Stephens had mentioned earlier about the data, so there's so many of us in the recreational fishing realm that don't trust -- I would say not a hundred percent of the data, but at least a substantial part of the data that's already been out there.

We think that it's just not good data, and, of course, that's what's been biting us from the Magnuson-Stevens act, which is that best available data, or best scientific data, and then we sit there and we hear these, you know, folks coming out and say, well, that's 40 percent overestimated, and, well, geez, if we take this away and then NOAA -- You've seen it where they've put some of the -- They've added a couple of extra tidbits of data in there that haven't been peer reviewed.

Then we look at this and say, with the whole idea of garbage in and garbage out, what does this management strategy evaluation, and what are they going to accept as the data? We've got that Great Red Snapper Count information that should be coming out when the government, you know, gets back together, and that should be coming out sometime in the near future. What goes in, because, if you've got existing bad data, and then you put good data on top of that, it either waters it down, or it just makes it look stupid again, and what is the plan for that data, because what you're using right now is the old data, if I'm not mistaken.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and that's correct. It's the information that went into the previous stock assessment, and so it does incorporate some of that recreational information that is of question, but the landings that were going into it for red snapper was based on the mini-season information from Florida. Probably the biggest issue that most people would have is the recreational discard estimates coming out of MRIP, and so you're absolutely right that those -- There would be questions with those.

The good thing with this management strategy evaluation is, as that new stock assessment is completed, that can be incorporated into this model, and it can be rerun, and so there's not a big challenge with that, putting it in there, assuming that all the data frames remain the same, and that that should not be a big issue.

If it's incorporating the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program information into that stock assessment, that can be incorporated into the management strategy evaluation. If there's other data streams that you would like us to investigate, you know, recommending that there's X percent of

error associated with it, we can look into that, but, you know, if there's bias with the data, that's easier to address than the information just being wrong.

Just being wrong as a challenge, because you don't know, year-to-year, what directionality it is, and so with -- Let's say the recreational estimate, where you had mentioned it was greater -- It could have been up to 40 percent overestimated, and it's easy to just apply a multiplier to the current recreational catch by 0.4, and you're getting that new value, but if it is just a random value that you're off by, that does make it more challenging, and so is there -- Are there pieces of information that you would like us to dive into and make sure that these evaluations of the management scenario is sufficient?

Like Paul had mentioned, you know, we probably need to look at different level -- Well, he didn't necessarily mention it, but how I heard it was we need to look at different levels of compliance. You know, are we doing -- What would happen if we get 50 percent compliance, versus 10 percent compliance? Is there a difference in what would be recommended as the management strategy, and so we can look into those different levels of -- Or different levels of compliance, to make sure that the management scenario is robust to the different realities that might occur on the water.

MR. WILLINGHAM: This is Darren Willingham again. Just a comment that I had heard earlier was, you know, as open as we can with the data, and I wrote that down with a question-mark, as open as we can be, versus just full transparency, because I know that a couple of -- One or two years ago, when NOAA was reaching out with for public comment, and we were asking about, well, can we review that data ourselves, and it was -- We were told, by some folks from the South Atlantic Council that, well, no, that's not available for public review. Well, that did not land well, and so would this management strategy evaluation be fully transparent?

DR. COLLIER: No, and we can't be. There's levels -- There's pieces of information that are confidential, and we cannot give that out, and so we would not be able to give raw landings information for the commercial or for the headboat fishery. We can supply raw information for the recreational data collected through MRIP. Since that is not a census, that information is readily available, but other pieces of information are confidential.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Okay, and I get that, but then that points, again, where there has been a huge issue of trust when it comes to NOAA Fisheries, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the South Atlantic Council, and I brought that up multiple years ago, is how do we reestablish a level of trust, and so that's the type of stuff there, and no offense to you, but that's the type of comment that goes, and it's like so this is not fully transparent, and so who do we believe, and nothing personal by any means.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I don't take it that way, but we're also building trust with the people that do report, where we told them that this data is confidential, and so, if we were to give it out, we would be breaking that trust, and so there are different ways to look at it. I see where you're coming from, but those landing streams are, you know, just some of the pieces going into the stock assessment. The age data, the maturity data, all the other information that would be going into the stock assessment, is open, and is it discussed on how it was developed.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you for your comments, and my last point is I'm just trying to, you know, see the best management strategy evaluation, and so, when you say that it is -- I forget the

word that you use, that it's a repeatable, or you can use it over and over, once you've established that strategy system, that, you know, that it's really truly on the up and up, and that we can rely on that in the future, and just plug in different data. Thanks so much.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. Andy.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish. I think it might not be a popular opinion, but, if you're wanting to reduce the amount of discards, I think a slot limit on red snapper would definitely keep people from culling, and I think that runs rampant in all locations. You can look at the pictures of these, when red snapper is open, and every fish is a fifteen to eighteen pounder. I don't think that's realistic without culling. One thing to consider. Maybe with, you know, a slot limit, with a trophy per boat, or something like that kind of thing.

MR. KIMREY: Chris. Thanks, Andy.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Chris Conklin, and so I'm just trying to think, if you did the aggregate bag limit with mandatory stopping, and I know that like the Florida headboats are doing, you know, a pilot project or whatever, but, if it proved that that was something that the council wanted to implement, could they do it in the recreational sector just for the federally-permitted vessels, I mean, more like they're controllable people, to prove to the SSC, or whatever the people are, that the compliance is actually happening, because it's mandated for the federally permitted recreational for-hire fishery, and could you do it with that, or would it have to be like a top-down comprehensive all recs and charter-for-hire and private?

DR. COLLIER: I mean, there's definitely the option for the council to do it whichever direction they can, because they can establish that recreational aggregate, and, basically, you're saying no one can bring back more than this number of fish on a trip, and so the mandatory stopping would just be a piece of information where we use outreach to get up to the folks, to let them know, but you're right.

There could be some measures that are established on the permit holders, to make sure that they are following the compliance regulations. If you look at how the exempted fishing permit is being put together for Florida, they do have other requirements that are on there. Some of the vessels have observers onboard, and some of the vessels have some electronic monitoring, and so there's different ways that they're trying to get at compliance within that, and so I think there's different techniques that the council could use to try to address that issue.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. Chris Conklin again, and so what I was asking is, if you did this, do you have to apply to all the recs, or could it be done without having to separate the headboat and charter-for-hire out of the recreational sector? Could it be done without doing that, if you're making them abide by a separate set of rules for accountability, because it sounds like what you really want to demonstrate here is compliance, and you have to prove it some way, and so it seems like that would be a great place to start, with the people that, you know, are supposed to be the most accountable part of that sector.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, I mean, you can definitely start with that group. I would say that we are going to have some information on compliance from the FWC studies, and so I think that could be the number that we start off with, just to see if it works.

As far as what this management strategy evaluation is trying to address is discards are a big issue, especially in the private recreational fishery and so, if you do not include them, as far as trying to restrict the aggregate bag limit, and trying to encourage stopping fishing, that's not really going to address the discard issue that's going on in the overall fishery, and so the rewards would be diminished quite a bit, and it probably would be hard to see a difference in some of these management strategies if you're not incorporating the private recreational into that.

MR. KIMREY: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian. I mean, you know, when it comes to compliance, the professional fleets, the headboats, the professional charter captains and stuff like that, you know, my take is the majority of us are in compliance with what goes on in the law of the land, because it's very important to us that, hey, we don't want to get boarded, and we don't want to get tickets and all this stuff, and so, our guys out there, they follow the best fishing practices.

They use descenders, and they use venting, and so, if anything, we're the guys who are on the front lines of doing shit right out there, to make sure that, you know, it benefits us, because, if they are no fish, then we're all out of business, and so we really -- You know, we really take it to heart that we follow the rules that are set, and, you know, at the end of the day, are the ones who, you know, will suffer the most pain if the rules get too tight.

MR. KIMREY: I agree with that. Go ahead, Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: Richard Gomez, Lower Keys, charter-for-hire, and I had a question for Haley. You were speaking earlier, and I just needed to know, and, I mean, do you reach that aggregate, and, if so, you have to stop bottom fishing. Do you do something else, or do you bring the people in early, and, if you bring the people in early, are they upset?

MS. STEPHENS: So, typically, on a normal day, as a normal headboat in operation, you're selling either a half-day trip or a full-day trip. If something like this were to be implemented, I think that it would move to the flexibility of a trip. What we have found, in just the handful of study fleet trips we've participated in so far, is that it ends up being a little bit of a three-quarter day, and so it is right there in the middle, and, no, folks are not upset.

There were side-bet Calcuttas going on of who was going to reach their limit first, who was going to be the last, who was going to get the biggest, who was going to get the smallest, and so it adds, you know, a little bit of a level of excitement that is unprecedented, but the folks were okay, because they were going home with fish in the box, and they've been conditioned, for the past decade, to not come home with fish, and so, you know, that reward for participating in the cooperative research is, you know, one or two red snapper, that's going to feed them for a week, that's going to feed their family for several meals, and so, yes, they were okay with that, and that's a really good question. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, Haley. Haley again.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley Stephens, and thank you, Chip, for being so patient with us. I think that we're having a lot of really good discussion, and I apologize that we haven't answered any of your questions, and, you know, what to include, what species does the AP recommend including in the analysis, and, again, this doesn't answer your question, but maybe what not to include would be those species that are up for consideration of removal from the unit, the snapper grouper unit. I think we're going to have a discussion tomorrow about that, and so maybe, you know, depending on time today, we can circle back to that, or if anyone else has any ideas, but, if a species is going to be removed from the snapper grouper unit, I don't think that it should be included in the MSE.

MR. KIMREY: Paul. Thanks again, Haley.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Paul Ruderhausen here. I just want to follow-up on what Haley said, and I don't know if this becomes a technical consideration, as far as rulemaking, if a species that we're going to talk about tomorrow, like Haley said, and like the tomtate I'm thinking about, falls out of the FMU, then is an angler, by law, still allowed to fish for that species, because it's no longer a managed species by the council, if you go to an aggregate bag limit with a certain number of species?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, if it's no longer federally managed, then there's the potential for somebody to say they're going to spot to target tomtate, and that would definitely be a possibility, but, like Haley had mentioned, for the species that would be included, we would definitely not include some species that are in the consideration for removal.

However, one species seems to be, or two species, and I can't remember if they're both in there for consideration of removal, is gray triggerfish and white grunt. They seem to both be becoming increasing in importance for the private rec and the for-hire, and so those would be species that we potentially would include, and the catch rates of those are fairly high.

There's decent information on those species, and people seem like they want to keep them. A species like tomtate, it doesn't seem like people want to keep them. They're only keeping about 20 percent of those fish now, and so telling them that that is part of your aggregate, and you should be keeping it, I don't think that's going to go over well, and so allowing people to release fish that they want to currently release is -- You know, that's something that needs to be considered in the development of the species.

MR. KIMREY: Correct me if I'm wrong, and I don't have the list memorized, but, out of the seventeen species, I think white grunt was included, but gray triggerfish was not, for removal from the grouper snapper FMU. Go ahead, Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. Haley Stephens, and so there are already aggregates and bag limits for grunts and for triggerfish and for banded ruddersfish, and so, you know, just because they're like over to the side, it doesn't -- You know, if these species are removed from the snapper grouper complex, they already -- You can only have ten grunts. There's already those regulations in place, and so I think that the way that that is right now is fine, because it is being managed one way or another.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, Haley, and you're right, and so grunts and porgies, they're in that twenty-five aggregate, of which you're only allowed to have a maximum of ten from a single species, and so, if they were to be removed from the snapper grouper fishery management unit, that would remove that regulation, and so they could go from, you know, being limited to ten to not having a limit at all.

MR. KIMREY: So what about commercial sale? Is that just a recreational, if they're removed from the FMU, and does that open them up where they're like spadefish or blackfin snappers? Does that take them off of the requirement to have an SG 1 to sell them commercially?

DR. COLLIER: Yes. It would remove that requirement to have an SG 1. There's -- Well, you know, the catches of these species in your region, and so it's -- It varies by state, and how many people would target, and whether the fish house would even take them.

MR. KIMREY: Oh, they'll take them. There's some of those they'll take. Does anybody else have a question? Okay. Hold on. I've got David on my list. Anybody else? Okay, and so we'll go to David, and then Darrin.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. David Moss, and so Haley said some of what I was going to say. A lot of -- Well, most of the species that I would say including in the aggregate, and certainly, in the south, they're already part of like a snapper species aggregate, and then the same thing with the groupers, you know, for the blacks and gags.

Richie, just to highlight on what you had asked Haley, one of my good friends runs a partyboat out of Islamorada, and not so much this year, but, last year, they limited out a lot by like 1:30, and it's usually a, you know, until 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon boat. They limited out a few times last year by like 1:30 or 2:00, and headed home, and everybody was just tickled pink, because they had a load of yellowtails, and they were more than happy with that than to stay out all day. As long as they got their limits, they were good.

MR. KIMREY: We'll go to Darrin online.

MR. WILLINGHAM: So, just to clarify, on that slide that we have up right now, the advisory panel input, the recommended -- The recommend species, are you asking which species to take off that fifty-five species snapper grouper list right now, which my understanding is the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is responsible for evaluating probably each and every one of those species, and do they really just have the manpower, the time, the resources to look at all of those species?

The question there is are you asking which ones to take off of that, which, of course, is what we want to try to talk about tomorrow. You know, grunts, I don't like grunts and grits, and so I don't want to keep grunts, and so, you know, those would be a great one to take off of the snapper grouper, you know, complex, so you don't have to go out and feel obligated by federal mandate that you've got to know what their -- You know, what their SEDAR counts and all this other stuff is, or are you asking -- In this recommended species request for the advisory panel input, are you asking five to six species per state of the fish that we think should be evaluated, you know, so our gag grouper and, you know, some of the other -- Or red grouper and some of the other stuff that we can be concerned about as recreational fishermen, and which one are you asking?

DR. COLLIER: The second one. Which species, which five or six species, are most commonly caught in the recreational fishery with red snapper, and so what we're trying to do is -- You know, when you're looking at the data, it really is driven by just a few species in the recreational fishery. It is not the whole fifty-five. Once again, that's why the council is considering removing seventeen, but there's other species that are important out there.

I just don't think that blueline tilefish and golden tilefish are a species that's commonly caught with red snapper, and so maybe those are a couple that would not be considered, but other species that are quite frequently observed with red snapper are -- Like you had mentioned gag grouper, and I think vermilion snapper, red porgy, black sea bass, and those are all species that are commonly observed with red snapper, and so whatever species you all think are commonly caught with the recreational fishery, along with red snapper, please let us know, and it is a manpower issue, and it's also a brain power issue.

If we were to include twenty species in this, along with those 132 management scenarios, that would be a nightmare to go through. I don't think anybody would enjoy that. I think, you know, looking at the most important species to the recreational fishery, we'll get a similar response, and you're going to find the trends on what is working best, as opposed to what is the overall picture for every species in there. The idea for this is just really looking at the different scenarios that seem to work and not, you know, the scenarios -- You don't need to evaluate it for every single species that's out there.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Gotcha, and are you asking for this five to six species per state before December's South Atlantic council meeting, and, if that's the case, should the members on this advisory panel that are in each state potentially meet outside of this meeting, and then advise back, or are you expecting -- Are you asking for that right now?

DR. COLLIER: I would prefer to get it right now, if possible.

MR. WILLINGHAM: That makes sense. Gotcha. So David Moss, and Haley, what do you guys think?

DR. COLLIER: There's smoke coming out of their gears. They're thinking hard.

MR. KIMREY: We'll let those two think for a minute, and we'll take a question from Andy, and, after that, we do want to try to comprise a list north and south of Canaveral for five or six species.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish, commercial, and my home port is Cape Canaveral, and my comment is possibly for north and south of Cape Canaveral. I think the fishery doesn't really change, as far as the species, until like Fort Pierce, as far as more mutttons, or more yellowtails, and so I think -- I don't know if that's what you're asking it, is for that to be the line, but I don't think it really changes, in my experience, until you really get to the Fort Pierce-Stuart area.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thank you, Andy. Should we move forward with that, Chip, and try to make this list? I can't say much about south Florida, but I would say, and this is just me starting, and feel free to amend my recommendation, but gag grouper, and, if somebody wants to write this down, but gag grouper, red snapper, vermilion snapper, gray trigger. What am I leaving off? Black

sea bass. Is that five, or did I say six? There's so many, and I can make a much longer list. Yes, and so food for thought. Somebody makes recommendations. I'll actually handwrite a list here. We do have a question from Darrin.

MR. WILLINGHAM: So just it seemed like the management strategy had already looked at -- I believe it was black sea bass, gag grouper and red snapper. Am I correct in that, or is that -- Was that just examples?

DR. COLLIER: It had looked at gag grouper and black sea bass. However, it did not evaluate the aggregate bag limit that the council is recommending this new version of the management strategy evaluation look into.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Gotcha. Darrin Willingham again, and I will say, from the recreational fishing sector, and the worries about trust and this, that, and the other, and so I'll spit out gray triggerfish.

We've seen a pretty unfortunate decline in our gray triggerfish over the last two years, but then we've also seen some swings where some of the smaller ones are in the shallower waters, and let's just say, you know, eighty to a hundred feet, but if I -- If I say that to you as a recreational fisherman, then are you going to go now evaluate this thing, and then potentially shut down that fishery, depending upon the information you find, and I'm not trying to sound stupid about it. I'm just trying to say that's probably what the recreational fishing folks are going to say, is, well, geez, don't sell them anything, and don't tell them anything, but, on the flip side, we're also trying to do the best thing for the species, and for generations to come.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks ,Darrin. Do you all see where Chip is making a little list up here off of my recommendations, and please let's have some input. This is going to be north of Cape Canaveral, and, obviously, it will be different south, I would assume, but that's -- That's definitely five that I would highly recommend. Haley first.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman Haley Stephens, and, yes, Andy had a really good point, in regard to the areas, and so I think that would be also really good, to kind of look at the federal permits from, you know, Cape Canaveral, and from Fort Pierce south, because, you know, the boats further south, they don't necessarily have to operate in federal waters, and so they may not necessarily have federal permits, and so kind of keeping that in mind, as far as the coordinates. Back to the question you asked us, that I promise I'll answer at some point, red snapper, gag grouper, triggerfish, vermilion snapper, goliath grouper. Thank you.

DR. COLLIER: Was that north or south of Cape Canaveral?

MS. STEPHENS: That would be north of Canaveral.

MR. KIMREY: Andy, did you have a question, or a comment?

MR. FISH: Yes, and I'm really not sure what -- Andy Fish. Sorry. I'm not really sure, the five or six species you want on this list, and what are they going to do?

DR. COLLIER: So these are five or six species that are commonly caught with red snapper. What we would be using that for is to analyze the management strategy evaluation, to basically compare different alternatives for those species.

MR. FISH: I think people that are trying to catch the bigger red snapper, and the gag grouper, are also interacting with amberjacks.

MR. KIMREY: Absolutely on the jacks. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Yes, and that's what I was going to say. The only thing that's not up there that I had on it was the jacks, was the jacks complex.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Cameron. Was there somebody over here? David Moss.

MR. MOSS: I get a little nervous about putting anything into this aggregate for the south, for a couple of reasons. Number one, I mean, who are we kidding? The genesis for all of this is red snapper, right? It's obviously much less of an issue for us, and not saying that we don't get them, but you don't really start seeing them until kind of the Middle to Lower Keys, and, you know, so it's an issue there, but to have an aggregate limit outside of what's already the snapper aggregate bag limit, for particularly south Florida is -- I don't know how you would do that, right?

It's already ten snappers, five of which can be mangroves, or all ten can be yellowtail. You can only have five muttons of that. I wouldn't want to change a whole lot of that, for really anybody, because ten yellowtails is a pretty good bag, but only five is not that fantastic, and so I don't --

I don't know how to do that for the south, which I understand isn't the answer that you guys want, but, again, you know, the red snapper is less of an issue for us, because there's other things for us to go catch down there, and we can kind of get away from them a little bit easier than certainly the people up north can, and so I think it's more of a -- Exactly what Andy said, and it's -- The delineation line should probably be like the Fort Pierce-Melbourne area, rather than Port Canaveral. That's where you really start to see the species change.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, David, and that's definitely maybe a consideration. That's been mentioned several times, about the potential for moving that line, and, Chip, what was -- How was that imaginary line derived? Was that off of data, or just a recommendation, or what?

DR. COLLIER: No, and it's really derived off of the logbooks for the headboat, and so maybe it's not Cape Canaveral exactly where that line is drawn, and I'll have to see where it is again, and my mind, not living in Florida, I just see everything north and south of that Cape, and so it is a little bit south of it. I just don't know exactly where it is right now.

I would have to look at the details, but getting into what David was talking about, you know, it's still helpful to have recommendations on species down south. You know, they are doing that exempted fishing permit down south, and trying to gather information, and so, although red snapper isn't an issue, discards are an issue for the recreational fishery in general, and so knowing how to minimize discards down there I think could be beneficial. It doesn't mean necessarily that the council has to take management action on it at all. This is just to provide guidance on what

could work. Is it better than status quo? Maybe it's not, and maybe that's what the model will come back and say, is status quo performs just as well as all these other options.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chip. David.

MR. MOSS: Thanks for that, Chip, and, there again, so like the species that we really go after down south, particularly in the snapper complex, mutttons, yellowtails, mangroves, they're all doing pretty good, and so, from that aspect, yes, the status quo is working. Yellowtail fishing is really good, or at least it was last year. This year is not quite as good, but mutttons have done really well. We're starting to see more and more small red grouper, though we're still not necessarily getting the keepers, but it's doing okay down there right now, status quo anyway, red snapper aside, again, once you get further south.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, David. We have Darrin online.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Yes, and, just to go back to that north of Cape Canaveral list, and I don't know when the most recent data was for the red porgies, but we find an abundance of red porgies, which makes us scratch our heads as to why we've got a two-month season, and so that would be a good one to put on there to ask the South Atlantic Council to take a look at. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I would just add, to the north, that, instead of just greater amberjack -- I think, if you're going to do that, you've got to have the almaco with it, or maybe do it as a complex. I don't know if that makes it too complicated.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Any hands? Any hands? Go ahead, Bobby.

MR. FREEMAN: Where is the borderline for the goliath grouper? It certainly wouldn't be a North Carolina fish. I know I've made thousands of trips, and never seen one, and so where is the borderline?

MR. KIMREY: Apparently they have some north of Cape Canaveral, a lot of them, but, unfortunately, Bobby, they're way south of us. I have seen two, but I was diving on the eastern side when I seen them, and they weren't big. They were eighty to a hundred pounders. Go ahead, Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: The goliath grouper population off of northeast Florida, Ponce Inlet in particular, is doing very, very, very well.

MR. KIMREY: Jeff.

MR. MARINKO: Jeff Marinko here. I would say the Georgia-South Carolina border is about the end of where we see big numbers of goliath.

MR. KIMREY: Chip, have you got what you need off of that question? Do we need to elaborate?

DR. COLLIER: Well, I would appreciate a species list for south of Cape Canaveral.

MR. KIMREY: Does anybody else --

DR. COLLIER: Without getting one, we will create one.

MR. KIMREY: Sure. I mean, you know, David, or what about you, Vince, or Richie? I mean, come on. You guys are -- You've got to come up with something. Go ahead, David.

MR. MOSS: If you keep yellowtails out of it, then I would say mutttons, blacks, red grouper. Mutton snapper, black grouper, red grouper, and I guess you could put mangroves in there, and amberjacks. That's fine. How many is that? One, two, three, four. Again, I would reiterate making sure that yellowtails are kept out of that, because, I mean, there are people that just catch yellowtails, and to have just two yellowtails mixed in with something else would not be great for a lot of people.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Vince.

MR. BONURA: Vincent Bonura. I was just going to add, in catching American reds in the Keys, we catch a lot of yelloweye with the mutttons, black grouper, gag grouper, amberjack, almaco jack.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. Go ahead, Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, and I like the sound of that status quo, and so I was just going to keep my mouth shut, but, yes, and I would go with David. Mutton, red, black grouper, red grouper, amberjack, keeping yellowtail and gray out of that picture. You know, we don't -- When we're fishing for reds, we're usually in too deep for most of the other complex, besides the big black grouper occasionally, and, of course, amberjack, and some mutton, but usually we won't see yellowtail or gray snapper when we're going to target reds, which we don't even target that often.

MR. KIMREY: Is that better, Chip?

DR. COLLIER: Much better.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Good job. I knew you all could do it. We didn't want to, but go ahead, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Paul Rudershausen here. Chip, does the MSE, when you talk to the Blue Matter statisticians, does it struggle if you've got more than your recommended five or six species on the list, and, if those species only occur in certain sub-regions or not, because a couple for the north of Canaveral list are important, as I think Darrin and Haley brought up, but they don't occur region-wide north of Canaveral, and so I don't know if we're diluting the effectiveness of the MSE model run if we've got species that don't occur through the whole swath of each of the two regions on the slide.

DR. COLLIER: I'm trying to think through how it would work. I mean, it's generally going to -- It should be okay, unless they are highly-concentrated species. I mean, if you look at a highly-concentrated species, it is red snapper, and it's highly concentrated off northeast Florida.

There's pockets throughout the Atlantic coast, and so, when we're looking at that one species, it is going to be a challenge on how to set it up for the other states, but I think we have a pretty good list of species to consider. If there's other ones that you recommend to put in there, you know, we can put it in there as a potentially consider, especially if it's a species with a stock assessment, and that makes it a lot easier to put in. If it's a species without one, that does make it a bit more of a challenge.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chip. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. One of the things I will say too about the southern Florida list is, if you're going to go with that aggregate, whatever the lower end of that aggregate is, I would recommend doing.

You know, if you're looking at kind of a range of aggregate, from like five to ten or something like that, I would recommend for that list to be closer to five than ten, particularly if you're going to keep yellowtails and mangroves out of it, because all those species -- Number one, you can sometimes find them grouped together. When you're targeting one, you can find multiple, and they're all decently sized fish, usually. Like even the yelloweyes that you get when you're looking for reds are usually a little bit bigger, and so I would definitely recommend on the lower end.

To confirm, like it's not going to remove the individual limits from any of these species, right, and so it's still going to be one black, and five mutttons, and so on and so forth? Okay, and so, yes, I would just put it, again, on record that I would keep that at the lower end of whatever your aggregate number is going to be for south Florida, if you're going to go with that group, assuming that yellowtails and mangroves are kept out of it.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, David. Any more questions or comments? All right. So I think -- Are you done mostly, Chip?

DR. COLLIER: I'm done fully.

MR. KIMREY: Fully. Man, we're doing great. Go ahead, Andy, before I give my little spiel here.

MR. FISH: Being as we're on the MSE talk and all that stuff, I was wondering if the MSE did, or will they, do a study talking about the getting rid of the two-for-one snapper grouper one?

DR. COLLIER: I mean, that could definitely be explored as a potential option, but it -- We are not setting it up right now on this recreational side to investigate that, but that is something that could be done, really focusing in on the economics, and looking at the trip satisfaction, or the trip -- Not satisfaction, but the economics of the trip, and trying to investigate that.

That could be done in the future, but we're not ready to do that right now, and it could just be an economic analysis that's done on the two-for-one, a social and economic analysis to figure out what is going to work best. I think you all know exactly what you would like to see, and I think if you, you know, ask staff to look into it, when the council is developing that amendment, they could look into it to help you guide -- To gather that kind of information.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chip. We have Darrin asking a question.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Yes, sir. Can we go back a slide, if you don't mind? The bottom there, where it says seasons, if needed, and how should seasons be designed, and I assume we're trying to get back to the South Atlantic Council with that information as well. Do we have -- Can we take a few minutes and focus on some thoughts there? Again, I've already -- When I discussed with our offshore fishing club, they came up, over and over, to try to do a spring season and a fall season for red snapper. Thoughts?

MR. KIMREY: Thanks for taking us back to that slide, Darrin. I don't know how to approach -- Do we want to just go line-to-line? Is that -- I mean, we've kind of addressed a lot of them, but just sort of out of order, and so maybe we should just do a quick run-through. Do you think, Chip?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I can tell you what I heard. At least starting off with a range of aggregate bag limits, ranging from probably a number that nobody wants to see, but you have to get to a number that nobody wants to see to make sure that you're investigating the full range of possibilities. I think five up to twenty could be an aggregate limit to evaluate, looking at maybe every five.

For level of compliance, potentially start off with a low level of compliance for the private recreational fishery, with a higher level of compliance for the for-hire fishery, recognizing that most of them are going to be following the regulations, and so maybe look at a differential there. As far as spatial management, remove that one. That is not recommended to be considered, and then, like you had mentioned, you know, maybe a spring and a fall fishery could be recommended. We didn't hear much as far as a potential season for south Florida, and it did not -- I didn't hear much about starting after the grouper spawning season closure.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chip. So, I mean, I'm going to make a couple of comments. I actually made a few notes earlier. I just felt like we pretty much addressed a lot of it. You know, one of the very first comments I ever made when I got on the AP, about I guess it's been five or six years ago, was I didn't understand why they didn't have the abbreviated American red snapper season prior to shallow-water grouper, because we all know that, up until recently, we were held hostage by release mortality and dead discards, and so it made sense to me of, hey, open it up, and let's clean out some of the snappers before we open shallow-water grouper, and so that would be that spring season.

By doing that, it would also put the season outside of when they spawn in the middle of summer. When I made that comment, all those years ago, I got some kickback, from some of the other AP members, that it didn't align with their high season, and my comment, then and now, is, if you're selling red snapper trips, that will be a high part of your season. They're going to show up, especially if the weather is decent, and so I've never understood why we couldn't go back to that.

Another thing that was mentioned was enforcement. You know, we're a broken record, right? There's areas of enforcement that are hugely tough to enforce, and it's partially because, even if they know that there's people doing the wrong thing, it's hard to convict them, and so, you know, that's beating a dead horse. We know that's the case, and don't ask me how to correct that problem, but we know it's an issue.

You know, when it comes to spatial areas, that was why I had my question about, that Chip answered, of state-to-state, when we were talking about the MSE, and that's -- You know, there's a topic that's going to come up tomorrow that's very, very important to me, to do with sea bass, that I wished there were some way we could break part of the region off, because there's a part of our region that has a very high abundance of sea bass.

The last thing is poaching. This is a question I asked Chip a few years ago, because I didn't understand if poaching, on the commercial or recreational sector, was figured into any stock assessment, and he said it's not. It doesn't mean it doesn't happen. We all know it does happen.

There's certain places that there's a lot of poaching, and that's stealing from other stakeholders. You know, you've got one set of anglers, whatever sector they're from, stealing fish. It's not in there, and, you know, is there anything the MSE can do to maybe figure some of this poaching, and I'm not trying to make the number smaller, and you know what I mean, but I want it to be honest.

If stakeholders knew that their catch limits were reduced because of poaching, they might be more likely to self-enforce, and I've made that comment a few times, because I really believe it. I think a lot of people know poaching happens, and they don't worry about it, because they don't think it's affecting them, but, if they knew it was affecting them, there might be a way to self-police with that, but, more so, my question was is there a way to figure poaching in somehow with MSE, maybe in the future?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I would think that's actually one of the easier things to do. If you consider it maybe 5 or 10 percent over what the current catch is, you can look to see what that is. If there are time periods when you think it would increase, that could help us understand the overall impacts of it. One of the reasons for that is because what I'm worried about will happen with this model is it's just going to scale up the catch to the exact same level where we are now, and so it's just going to be 5 or 10 percent higher, whatever level of poaching we put on there, but, if you think it's -- Let's say, for red snapper, since 2010, when the regulations were in place, and 2014, when the population seemed to really take a big jump --

MR. KIMREY: If you have an element of poaching that you feel like you can validate somehow, not only could it potentially reduce your ACL, but it could also be used to increase. You could add that back in. You know what I mean? You could increase your biomass. It's a double-edged sword, and that's sort of my point, and why it's so concerning.

I know that -- I'm going to try not to be too specific, but I know there are times, prior to certain seasons, that lots of fish might be caught a little early, and I mean lots of fish, and sometimes at the tail-end of a season there might be, or certain fish, that have a daily trip limit that might be considered small, they might get five days' worth in one day, because the other four days the weather is terrible.

On paper, it works out, and so -- I'm not trying to take anything away, and I'm just saying those are the things that I see that really skew the numbers, that everybody knows are happening, but they overlook, and I'm hoping that there's some way the MSE can tighten some of that up, and I think some of it will work to our advantage. Maybe there are a few more fish than we think, and,

also, back to that whole self-policing thing, if people know that it could potentially affect them negatively, other than the fact that the fish are gone.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I think we can look into that.

MR. KIMREY: So, Chip, where are we at on our list? Did you make it all the way through? Sorry about that little monologue there.

DR. COLLIER: The good thing is we're down towards the bottom. How should the season be designed? You had mentioned maybe start the red snapper season prior to the spawning season closure for grouper. Given that this is going to be a multi-species, including species like greater amberjack, gag grouper, a variety of other species, does that change your mind on how the season should be structured. Thinking that we're trying to reduce the number of discards going on in the recreational fishery, how should we best do that?

MR. KIMREY: Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Just to start with the obvious -- Matt Matthews, from Georgia, and I think more days is going to help eliminate more poaching, and increase compliance, because, when we've got two days to get out there and catch a red snapper, and I'm a good example for this year. The day before the season opened this year, I blew a steering hose, and didn't get to go fishing, with my kids sitting at the beach house, mad as they could be, that we weren't going fishing, and so that, for some people, makes it really hard to let one go when you catch them the next time you're out there.

MR. KIMREY: The old mechanical failures, and we've all been there. Thanks, Matt. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley-Stephens. A couple of thoughts. Yes, and so there is so much hype surrounding red snapper, right, and we see that with the opening of shallow-water grouper season. The first three or four days of -- You know, May 1<sup>st</sup> through May 4<sup>th</sup>, we were sold out, days in advance, and then everyone kind of -- The hype dies down. I would, you know, anticipate something similar happening with red snapper. Just rip the Band-Aid off. Everyone cares about it right now, because it is important, but, eventually, it is going to level itself out.

Back to the spatial management, you know, I don't think that we should have any type of spatial closure for existing habitat, and it's kind of off of the MSE, but if we want to close parts of the ocean so bad, why don't we make new areas to close and keep that as, you know, a sanctuary? I know that science will say, well, more homes don't make more fish, but I think that it does, and maybe it's something worth trying, or noting, that, if we can make new artificial reefs, and keep them closed forever, and see what happens with that. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Haley. We need to go to an online question. I believe it's Darrin and Gettys. Okay, and we've got both our guys online. Darrin, I suppose.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Can you hear me okay?

MR. KIMREY: Gotcha, man. Go ahead.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Super, and so, just sneaking back up to that aggregate bag limit, when Chip was talking about that, we up in northeast Florida, especially recreationally, like the fifteen-fish bag limit, because, when we're going out there, it's not like we can go five miles offshore and be in deep water. We're going, you know, forty-five miles offshore to go out for some of these species, and so we like to make that a good trip, and so that means a lot to us, and that's just what I wanted to say there. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. Gettys, you're up.

MR. BRANNON: Yes, sir. Gettys Brannon here, and Matt and Haley actually hit on what I was wanting to talk about for a second is, you know, we've pigeonholed ourselves down to single-digit days, and largely one- and two-day seasons the last few years, and I think that that's actually doing the opposite of what the fisheries managers expected to do.

With the derby days, and the derby-style seasons that we have, we're actually seeing more pressure on those two days than you would if we had it spread out, and I think, you know, in return, we would actually see that some of those dead discards are actually harvested, taken home, and I think there's actually more compliance to be had with more days.

It doesn't have to be, you know, the same situation we see in the Gulf, but, when you start putting all this pressure on two days, and you have, you know, bad weather, or whatever that might be, I think we see reduced compliance, and so I think that we're actually over-regulating ourselves, to the extent where we're seeing non-compliance, but also folks that are targeting snapper or another bottom fish in other days that they wouldn't, and so that's my two-cents there, and I appreciate your time.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Gettys. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian, and so I guess I wanted maybe a little bit more clarification of the word "seasons", and what exactly, when we're talking about seasons, are we looking at here? Are we talking about when the clock starts for a catch limit to begin, or are we talking about they are going to be open only for that timeframe, or certain fish, and so just chop that down a little bit.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and season, in this sense, is referring to when you are snapper grouper fishing, and so when you would be targeting bottom fishing. Other times, it would be closed.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So we're talking about the whole species, the whole snapper grouper bottom fishing, and so, with that being said, absolutely for the -- Keeping the June through September is absolutely mandatory, or we're all going to be out of business, and you can pretty much forget it. You know, how you mince the rest of it -- You know, what they did with the grays seemed to do fairly decent, as far as people were still able to catch some fish. We cut it off at a certain timeframe, and our customers seem to be okay with it. With that being said, we're down 25 percent in that type of trip, but, you know, hopefully it rebuilds, and we can get back out there at a different date.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Cameron, and, the grays, you're referring to gags, right? Okay. Just making sure. All right. Go ahead, man. Stephen.

MR. RANNEY: Thank you, Chairman. As far as the closures, I thought that's what we were talking about, and it seems to me the trip, and correct me if I'm wrong, but you're closing the grouper because they're spawning in that time period, and, right now, we're arguing to have the season for snapper open when they're spawning. That just doesn't seem like we're following the science. It seems like we ought to have the seasons correlate with the spawning, and so it would be a spring season, and then it would be a fall season, and let them spawn in the summer. John brought that up, that he's seeing fish full of eggs in that time period. That's what I had to say.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Stephen. I mean, that point's been brought up many times. I was talking about it a few minutes ago, actually, but I agree with you. I agree with you, and so go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and just remembering that the grouper closure, the spawning season closure that's out there, is to protect the grouper spawning, which is different than the red snapper spawning, and so, if we're trying to protect multiple species during the spawning, that means that could be a big impact to the fishery, because there's several winter spawner fisheries, and there's several summer spawn fisheries, and that pretty much leaves you with a fall fishery, which I don't know if many people want to deal with that, because then you have hurricanes.

There's bad things that go around with all of these, and just trying to think of how the fishery would like it to be open for multiple species at one time, trying to make sure that the fishing season aligns for multiple species, so you're not going to be going out there, and, like Paul had said, somebody goes out there targeting tomtate, and we don't necessarily want them going out there targeting tomtate and throwing away a bunch of gag grouper and red snapper.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chip. I think we can all agree that red snappers are spawning pretty good now, right? All right, and so we've got to go back to Gettys online.

MR. BRANNON: My apologies. I didn't realize my hand was still up. All good on my end. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. Darrin.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Yes, sir. Darren Willingham, again, and so I just -- I want to clarify, for my own brain, and so what we're talking about now is management scenarios, and management strategy evaluation, that we want to report back to the South Atlantic Council what our thoughts are with regard to management strategy evaluation, and is that correct?

DR. COLLIER: So I'm not thinking of this necessarily as reporting back to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. This is a little bit different than the normal process when we're setting up things. The reason for that is we're trying to establish the management strategy evaluation around what the stakeholders input, and we're trying to address as many of the stakeholders concerns, recognizing that there are certain political situations that council members might be in.

What we're hearing right now is spatial management is off the table, even though that might be one of the things that the council considers. They don't want to, and I will say that, but we're removing things that you all will say won't work, and so we're trying to take as much advice from the stakeholders as we can to develop the management strategies to address your needs, needs or wants, whichever it might be, and there are going to be some situations where it's not going to work out that well.

You know, red snapper has been a challenge for the council to manage it. It is a very hard fish to manage, given that it has very high abundance right now. It loves to bite a hook, and, in some areas, they're really abundant, probably more abundant than several other species, and so, yes, we're struggling on how to get this to work out, and that's why we're trying to get your advice, and so please provide your advice as candid as you can. That way, we can put it in, and we can try to develop a management scenario that matches what you want.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you for that clarification, which is why -- I look up at the first part, where it says what is an appropriate range of aggregate bag limit, and so I would think, if we were submitting that to the South Atlantic Council, and we had a five, ten, fifteen, twenty, they would probably look at us and go, make a decision, and do we need to narrow that down, as an advisory panel, to help out for the management strategy evaluation, or is that reasonable, to have -- Well, there are people that said five, people that said ten, fifteen, twenty, et cetera. Thanks.

DR. COLLIER: I think we can look at all those different scenarios to see -- Especially if we're removing something like spatial management, as far as closed areas, and I think that makes things a lot easier, and I think this is something that the council really wants to investigate, is the aggregate bag limit, and so I think, putting as much resources and time to evaluate that thoroughly, I think would be much more beneficial than coming out with a single number and saying this is what we want to manage too. I just don't think that is -- That would be the best. I just want to make sure we're covering the range that this advisory panel thinks we should go forward with, as opposed to looking at a single value.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I just want to dumb the conversation down, Chip, and a question for you. The seasons, if needed, at the bottom of the slide, the MSE is still going to run as if there was a twelve-month season, right, and so we could still fish, for example, off the coast of Carolina, and we could still fish for beeliners when gags are closed, or that kind of thing, and is that correct? So there's going to be an MSE run with a twelve-month season, correct?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and there would be an MSE run for vermilion snapper with a twelve-month season. For gag grouper, it would only be an eight-month season, and so it's based on the current regulations would be the status quo.

MR. KIMREY: Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: I've been trying to stay out of this conversation, but here we are. A question first for Chip. Has it been established that yellow-tailed snapper can spawn year-round, and there's been proof that they do spawn year-round, and is that wrong, or is that right?

DR. COLLIER: I have not looked at reproductive biology of yellowtail snapper, and so I would phone a friend on this, if anybody knows the spawning season. We just had a stock assessment done on it, and so I'm sure it's in that stock assessment, if anybody wants to look that up. We'll get you an answer in a second, Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. Then, also, you know, we've learned to live with the grouper closure. We would have liked the opening to start a month earlier, but we've learned to live with that. Red snapper really shouldn't even be part of a conversation for the Lower Keys, as far as spawning, because we just don't target them enough.

Mutton snapper, you know, we like to fish for them during a spawn. We've changed the size limit more than once. We've changed the catch limit more than once, and mutton snapper are doing great. Gray snapper, also known as the mangrove snapper, we like to fish for them during a spawn, because they all come out to the reef, and you could literally walk on top of them every year, and so that whole spawning thing has always been a sore spot for us in the Lower Keys, for sure.

MR. KIMREY: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. I think I've been pretty adamant on our stance about bottom closures, but I'm wondering if the MSE could potentially identify areas for additional MPAs, like creating new ones, and not closing off areas that already exist.

DR. COLLIER: You mean putting out artificial reefs, and the potential benefits of that?

MS. STEPHENS: Yes.

DR. COLLIER: I would have to get back with the modelers on that, because you would have to be able to document, you know, the amount of area, the density of fish on those, and that's going to change by latitude and depth that you put it out there, and so there's so many different complexities that would come with estimating how effective putting more artificial reefs out there would be, but there's potential to at least look at one.

If you look at the deep artificial reef that South Carolina has put out there, as well as Area 51 and 53, those are all areas that have been established that were artificial reefs, and are closed, and then -- I won't go beyond that, but there are some regulations that come along with some of the sportfish restoration money on whether or not it would be best to have those areas closed, but that might be a case-by-case basis.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, Chip and Haley. Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: I was just trying to get an answer about those yellowtail.

MR. KIMREY: All right, and so here comes Allie.

MS. IBERLE: So, in the most recent assessment, they identified April through October, but then, in SEDAR 27, which is one of the ones previous, they mentioned that the Florida Keys -- They found ripe fish year-round, but that you had a bigger chance of that occurring April through October, and so that's what the assessments indicated.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. Yes, because I've been fishing for yellowtail most of my life, and I've found eggs year-round, any month.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody else? No hands online? So we're going to finish up with Ashley, right? Should we take a five or ten-minute break, and then we're going to get to see Ashley, which is actually supposed to be sometime tomorrow, but you guys are doing so good, and we're a few minutes ahead of schedule, and so we're going to squeeze another one in, real quick, after a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. KIMREY: All right, everybody, I think we've got most people. Vince is getting a drink. Chris Conklin is probably on the phone, but he'll be back soon, but let's get started, and so we're going to let Ashley give her presentation, or maybe wait thirty seconds for somebody else to show up.

MS. OLIVER: I'll go ahead and just get started, if that's all right.

MR. KIMREY: Let her rip.

MS. OLIVER: All right. Hi, everyone. My name is Ashley Oliver. I am the council's Best Fishing Practices Outreach Specialist. I know I've met most of you, but I always just want to throw that out there, and so it's been a while since I've talked to this group, and I just wanted to give you all a quick update, and really just a reminder of what our best fishing practices campaign is all about.

I also wanted to note that I recorded a presentation for the council's September meeting, and so that lives on YouTube, but that presentation goes in much more depth than what I'm going to go over today, but I am going to share the components of our campaign, and so I guess just a little bit of background on the campaign itself.

I think it's no secret that this group knows that there's a lot of, you know, discards in the snapper grouper fishery, and, unfortunately, a lot of those fish do not survive, and so the council created this best fishing practices campaign to really kind of immerse ourselves into the fishing community, to educate on best fishing practices, and ways that we can improve the survival rates of those fish, but also learn from the fishing community on how we can combat this problem.

Our campaign outreach really focuses on descending device usage, you know, how to use them, where to get them, how to make them, but also best handling, the signs of barotrauma, you know, and knowing your regulations.

Our best fishing practices team is small, but mighty, but we are very fortunate to have strong relationships with Sea Grant and the council's citizen science team. Each team kind of brings

different components to reach different audiences, and, with that, we're really able to leverage resources and expand our reach throughout the South Atlantic region.

Like I said, I go into a lot more detail in the online presentation, and I'll provide a link to you guys later, but, for an example on kind of how we do that, is Sea Grant is able to have these media charter trips, where they have media onboard, such as writers or videographers, that capture best fishing practices and citizen science in action, and then hopefully, in turn, they are going to share that on their own platforms. Again, we're very fortunate to have these partnerships, and we're able to really increase our outreach.

Okay, and so now I just want to kind of get into the components that make up our best fishing practices campaign, the first being our Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program, and so this is a new program, that started a year-and-a-half ago, and it was designed to connect with key members of the fishing community through informal in-person workshops, and so, when folks complete this program, they are deemed BFP MVPs.

The whole kind of idea of this program is for those BFP MVPs to take the information that we shared with them and then for them to share that within their own community themselves, and so all of our workshops contain information on best fishing practices, of course, but we also talk about fishery management 101, so kind of the who's who, and also the management process. There's a section on citizen science, and then management involvement opportunities.

Each participant has the opportunity to take home a binder that's filled with all kinds of information, and so the presentation we give, but also all of the council materials that we give out for outreach, and so all of our rack cards, our brochures, our stickers, things like that.

I did just want to kind of provide some success highlights from the first year-and-a-half of this program's life. We had fourteen workshops throughout the South Atlantic region, and we had 215 BFP MVPs, and so that included fishermen from all sectors, rec, commercial, and for-hire, state and federal agency staff, as well as port samplers and observers.

Like I mentioned, the kind of whole point of this program was for folks to kind of share this information on their own accord, and I am excited to announce that it is working, and we are seeing, you know, posts on social media about best fishing practices. We have folks seek us out at different events and share, you know, other events that we might want to attend. We've had increased participation in our citizen science efforts, and we have folks ask us for additional outreach materials.

We're very excited for the success of this program, and I just want to say a huge thank you to everybody that helped me out with this program. It definitely wouldn't have been successful, or as successful, without you, especially all council staff, state staff, and fishermen really getting people in this room, or in those rooms, I guess.

What we really focus in on our outreach is trying to meet fishermen where we are, or at least with most of our outreach we try to do that, and one of the best ways to do that is going into tackle shops and giving fishing seminars, and so, with our tackle shop outreach, we have been to over probably a hundred different tackle shops throughout the South Atlantic region, a lot of those a couple of times, and many of them more than three or four times.

What we try to do is, you know, we kind of cold call a tackle shop. We go in, and we talk to whoever is at the counter, or try to talk to a manager. We tell them a little bit about us, our projects, and we hope to leave some of our materials with them, and then, as for fishing seminars, we have been fortunate to partner with a lot of local fishermen in the South Atlantic, who will often give the majority of the seminar on kind of bottom fishing tactics, but then we'll come in and talk about descending devices and citizen science opportunities.

I'll say though that we've kind of noticed, in the last year or year-and-a-half, that we have been invited back to tackle shops and clubs, kind of just to be the sole presenter ourselves, which is really encouraging, because that kind of shows that, you know, folks are finding this information interesting and important.

The next project is pretty near and dear to my heart. It is called What It Means to Me, and this is a video project that highlights the stories of fishermen here in the South Atlantic. You might recognize a couple of familiar faces up there, but, really, so each episode features a South Atlantic fisherman, and they kind of get into their background. They share why they got involved in the management process, and they encourage others to do the same.

We created this project to, you know, try to help bridge that trust gap between managers and fishermen, and, again, encourage more fishermen to use best practices, and get involved in the process, but it also acts kind of like a historical archive, where we're able to document the stories and voices of these fishermen who have been so involved in these fisheries, and then, you know, the overarching theme really of this project is this fisherman-to fisherman-communication, and, you know, the hope is, really, you know, from hearing from trusted peers, people will see the value in getting involved.

Hopefully that makes, you know, getting involved in the process a little more approachable, and so please go show your fellow fishermen some love. There's a link on that slide there in your briefing book. All of these videos are out right now, except for Haley's. Haley's is just about done, and it should be released soon.

Then kind of the last main component of the campaign are booths at events, and so you'll often find us at fishing expos, industry shows, different state agency events, and so we always like to try to show support to our states, if we can, and our booths focus on best fishing practices and citizen science, and we really try to make them interactive and engaging.

One of the things I love to put up in the booth is an interactive tackle shop display, and so it looks like a tackle shop display, but it's got all kinds of educational materials on there, a big video showing a barotrauma descending device in use, and then the citizen science team is awesome, with all of their activities that they incorporate. I think one of the crowd pleasers is called this fish game, where there's a competition between anglers to try and log a fish in the SAFMC Release project, which you'll hear more about I think tomorrow, but see who can get that in there the fastest.

We really enjoy these types of events. It gives us a good opportunity to speak with, you know, all kinds of different folks from that area, and so that is just a very quick general overview. Like I said, there is a detailed presentation, and I really go into depth on kind of the progress and impact of each of those campaign components, and so I highly recommend checking that out, but, with

that, I guess I'll turn it over to you guys, if you have any questions, or I welcome any thoughts on any of that as well. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Ashley. Does anybody have any questions for Ashley? Has everybody -- Go ahead, Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: Did you get to Key West?

MS. OLIVER: That is the plan for next week, actually.

MR. GOMEZ: You know where you're going down there? Have you picked a place or --

MS. OLIVER: We are focusing our outreach on the tackle shops throughout the Keys and then also the citizen science project FISHstory, and so that's kind of our general plan.

MR. GOMEZ: Well, I was just at the MREP meeting in St. Pete, and I did give a lot of suggestions, and so they're already noted.

MS. OLIVER: Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: John, go ahead.

MR. POLSTON: I was just wondering -- John Polston, and do you guys show up to the like the big Orlando fishing thing they have, where all the people go to? Do you guys go to that?

MS. OLIVER: I'm guessing you're talking about ICAST?

MR. POLSTON: Yes.

MS. OLIVER: Yes, and so we've been to that for, oh gosh, Kim, what, like since 2016, but we've really ramped up our outreach there in the last four or five years, and our booth focuses on citizen science, best practices, and general management. We really enjoy that show.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. Darrin.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Hi, Ashley, and thank you for sharing. This is Darrin Willingham, northeast Florida, and so we've -- Our fishing club has been very involved in trying to teach best fishing practices. We've had your team there at least once, and then a couple of members of your Sea Grant folks around as well.

One of the questions, and I know that the Gulf, because of the BP oil spill and all that, was -- They got some huge federal grants or, well, huge grants, let's say, and I don't know if they were federal, but where they were able to give SeaQualizers out, and descending devices, and is there anything on the horizon for the east coast where, you know, you can get some federal funding for that, because that really increases the use of those things, when folks don't have to go buy them. Just a thought.

MS. OLIVER: Yes, and I think you're referring to Return 'Em Right, and you're right that that would be awesome if we could get something like that over here. I know there is something kind of in the works for an expansion of Return 'Em Right to potentially the South Atlantic, but they are not exactly sure what that all entails, and we don't either, but I will say the Sea Grant team that we work with now -- While not on that scale, we do have some descending devices that we, or Sea Grant, gives away whenever we do seminars or events.

MR. KIMREY: Paul,

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Thanks for the presentation, Ashley. I'm going to keep on beating the drum for the best fishing practices seminars, like you all have, to include venting. Venting, as Darrin I think was alluding to in his comment online a second ago, it's cheaper, and it's portable, and it's much more time effective, less deck time.

The only study I've done comparing venting and descending side-by-side in black sea bass, we found that there's no difference in survival rates, and so I do feel, with this nasty thing we're in, this ugly head, the disposition of the B2s, you know, whether those are living or dying, this is going to be something that plagues us, this Snapper Grouper AP, forever, and so, if there's some way we can find to incorporate venting into best fishing practices, I think that's the way forward. I think descending, just relatively speaking, it's less portable, it's less efficient, and it's more expensive.

MR. KIMREY: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Ashley, for not only the presentation, but the continued work and dedication that you and the entire best fishing practices team do. I know that you're probably the least funded out of anything, and so the fact that these boots-on-the-ground grassroots efforts that you guys do, with such minimum funding, is astronomical.

It brings me back to -- On that topic of funding, you know, you don't even necessarily have to buy a descending device. There's really cool things where you can make your own, find you a milk crate, you know, get creative, and so I think that's really, really cool, but it brings me back to something that Chairman Chris had mentioned earlier about self-policing.

We had such a large group attend the best fishing practices workshop in New Smyrna Beach, and, once they realized how important this was to our fishery, everyone began self-policing each other, and so it becomes -- You know, not only are we holding each other accountable, where we're doing venting tool audit checks, and, if you don't have it, you know that you're getting made fun of, but the other part of that too is from a law enforcement standpoint.

In our area, you do have to have these things rigged and ready, readily available, and it just took one person to not have it, and get hit with that fine, and you do see a huge rate of compliance out of our area, and so kudos to you, and kudos to those who continue to promote this, and it's working. It is. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Haley. Anybody online? Nobody?

MR. WILLINGHAM: This is Darren Willingham. Did you see my hand up?

MR. KIMREY: Darrin, go ahead.

MR. WILLINGHAM: I would like to respond back that we've -- I agree with Haley that we have to have those descending devices onboard and ready to go. If you've got it stored down below, and FWC comes by to say hello, that doesn't work if you're bottom fishing, and I think -- I can't speak for the majority of the folks in the northeast Florida region, but I think -- I think we're better at descending devices than we are at stabbing the fish through the side. I'm actually very good with a hypodermic needle, given a medical background, but some of our folks are -- Boy, they miss, but I think the descending devices would be a great thing to target in the future, you know, for your seminars, and thanks for all you do.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. It's my understanding that one of the reasons descending devices have been pushed a little more is because they are a little more user-friendly. There's less room for error, and, you know, it just baffles me, in my home area, how many people don't realize that they're a requirement. It just blows me away and, I mean, I try to tell everybody I can, but there's still a huge part of the, you know, the private recreational sector that don't realize it.

As far as the for-hire and the headboats and the commercial guys, I think most of them have figured it out at this point, but the -- There's lots of ways to get descending devices. I have a plethora of them, but it's because I volunteer for lots of stuff, and so that might be something, Darrin, that you would take to your fishing club. You know, there's citizen science projects where you can earn yourself a SeaQualizer, or a descending device, and, if you do a lot of reporting, you even get cool sash weights, and you might even win prizes.

I speak from experience, but I'm adamant about doing those things, and so some of that stuff, if you would reach out to the council staff here that's over there, it might be something that would be a way for you to get a SeaQualizer, or maybe multiple SeaQualizers, in your club, if you were lucky enough. Just something to think about.

MR. WILLINGHAM: No, and I agree with that. We've had the citizen science folks up to our clubhouse twice over the last couple of years, and that has been great, and we -- I think just the best fishing practice education has gone such a long way because, you know, some folks will say, well, I can use my fillet knife to vent this fish, and I'm pretty sure that's called a stab wound, versus venting, but we are very, very big in pushing that compliance with the descending devices, especially with FWC sitting there encouraging us.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. Actually, at ICAST, Return 'Em Right has an iPad with like a fish profile on it, and they ask people where do you think the proper place is to vent the fish, and it's pretty astounding the amount of like amazingly wrong locations they put on it, and one of the things, Ashley, and I don't know why I just thought of it, but an area that maybe look to focus on is a lot of schools, more and more, and like high schools especially, have fishing clubs, and it's great to hit the kids.

Number one, they love gadgets, and, number two, you know, they're going to be the future of the fishery, and so it's something to look at, maybe concentrating on doing some speaking

engagements there, and I would love to help you guys out, like down my neck of the woods. I'll see if I can locate a couple that have them and get you guys down there for that too.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody else? How we doing? Anybody? Wow. This is awesome. So a couple things, real quick. If nobody has any questions, or comments, a couple things to think about for the next day-and-a-half. At the end of this meeting on Wednesday, you guys are going to be tasked with voting for a new vice chair and chairman. As most of you all know, I was vice chair, and James stepped down, and so I ended up in this seat this meeting sort of, you know, because I was next in line, but, at the end of this meeting, you guys will have the opportunity to vote on the chair and vice chair, and so think about that.

Something I don't want to forget to mention is, after the meetings, you know, if you want to socialize, we'll be here, a lot of us. You know, feel free to stop by for a drink. If you're staying in the hotel, you won't even have to pay for it. You got a little card, and they give them to you. It's pretty cool. I like it. If you can't afford a drink, and you want one, come see me. Maybe I'll buy you a beer, if you don't have one of those little cards, or a non-alcoholic drink, Vince. Good job. Good job. Does anybody else have anything before we shut down for the day, and I think it's 9:00 a.m. in the morning, is our typical start time.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It's 8:30.

MR. KIMREY: 8:30. I like it. We're getting earlier. 8:30 in the morning, and I think that's it, unless you have something, Mike. We're good? All right, guys. Good job. We finished fifteen minutes ahead of schedule. That's a record.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on October 27, 2025.)

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OCTOBER 28, 2025

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Drury Plaza Hotel North Charleston in North Charleston, South Carolina, on Tuesday, October 28, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: Hi, guys, and let's get started here. Is everybody settled in? We had a good free breakfast, some of us, which is nice. I will hit my little gavel here, and we'll get this started, and so a couple of things. We're going to start out, and we're going to roll right into black sea bass. You all are going to hear me talk a little bit on this one. It's something I'm very passionate about, and I understand why it's going where it's going, but I don't like where it's going, and I'm going to talk about it.

In addition to that, Mike asked me to tell you all that we're going to switch two items, 10 and 9. We're going to do 10 this afternoon and 9 tomorrow instead, just as an FYI, if you want to make a note of that, and, with that, let's get started.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we'll get started on black sea bass. You have two items in your briefing book, two attachments, 5a and 5b. 5b is going to be the discussion document that we normally go through. Before I get into that, black sea bass has gone on a bit of a journey in between your last meeting and this one, and so I wanted to update you all on what has happened with it, and so I have a brief presentation that I'll go through. Then we'll get into the actual amendment itself, and the actions associated with it, and let me turn off -- I don't need presenter mode.

All right, and so, black sea bass, you remember, the last time we talked, it was called Snapper Grouper Amendment 56. It is now Regulatory Amendment 37, and kind of the purpose of the presentation is to let you know what happened to make that change.

Leading up to April of this year, leading up to your last meeting, SEDAR 76 and the SEDAR 76 update were developed as stock assessments of black sea bass. SEDAR 76 went up through a certain point in time, and, basically, the time lapse between then and when management would go into place was a bit long. In order to bring that assessment up into closer to the time period when management would go into place, additional years of data were added in, and the assessment was updated.

The SEDAR 76 has been reviewed and discussed by the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee multiple times. There have been several exchanges and iterations of this assessment between the SSC and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center in between 2023 and 2025, and the reason for these multiple exchanges had to do with a lot of the model assumptions that go into place.

Anytime you project -- Especially when you're projecting a model forward, and think about when you're looking at the weather, and you see a forecast, especially for hurricanes, and you see those spaghetti plots, where you have one line going one way and one line going another way and one line going another way. The reason why all those models are different is because they assume different conditions moving forward, and we don't know what's going to happen in the future.

There's a bit of uncertainty there, and so the modelers try to predict, this is the most likely set of conditions that we're probably going to see moving forward, and there can be some discussion of what the likely conditions are moving forward, and so that's why you have these different model iterations that have gone back and forth between the SSC and the Science Center, who was running the stock assessment.

They exchanged, several times over the course of about two years, and, within that time, the council was anticipating having to make some management changes. The council has, you know, seen the results of those assessments, and, even before the results of those assessments, they were getting reports about the fishery-independent indices that were showing black sea bass is going down. They were hearing from you all saying black sea bass is going down, and so all of those indicators kind of supported what the assessment came out with of black sea bass is not in a very good spot right now.

Amendment 56 was initiated kind of anticipating some of the results of those discussions. We conducted scoping for that amendment in January through February. Some of you participated in that scoping process, and so, in April, around the time we had an SSC meeting, along with an AP meeting earlier this year, the SSC reviewed, and they recommended ABC levels based on the SEDAR 76 update.

Those recommendations were brought to the council in June of 2025. With their recommendation, the SSC did note several concerns about assumptions that affect the projections of future catch and potential rebuilding. There was a very large difference in what current catch levels are and what the SSC was recommending future catch levels would be.

Relative to the current ACLs, the current annual catch limits that are in place, the SSC recommendation would be about a 90 percent reduction in the total annual catch. The council felt that the concerns raised by the SSC, as they were discussing this recommendation and the very large decrease in the future catch projections, were significant and they required further review before that assessment was put to use in management.

The council, in June, also expressed some concern about developing a long-term rebuilding plan for black sea bass, because most likely this is going to take some time to get this stock back into a healthy spot, and we are anticipating updates to the recreational catch data from the Marine Recreational Information Program or MRIP.

They've done a review of their Fishing Effort Survey, and they are planning to update the recreational catch estimates sometime in 2026, and so the council did not feel comfortable setting a plan forward that would put in, you know, potentially a ten-year or so, or longer, rebuilding plan, depending on what that would look like, but putting in a ten-year rebuilding plan with data that is likely to change next year, and so they wanted to take some time to get those updated MRIP-FES catch estimates into place, worked into the stock assessment, before they develop a long-term plan.

However -- So they weren't comfortable with moving forward with Amendment 56 and developing a rebuilding plan in that document, but they do recognize that there have been significant declines in black sea bass, and this has been reflected in multiple ways. It's been reflected, like I said, by the fishery-independent index, and you can see that here on the left side, after what, and the index shows -- Probably about 2012 or so, you see a pretty consistent and strong drop all the way through the present.

Looking at the landings data, you see the -- This is actually catch, and we have landings in blue, and we have dead discards in red, and, similarly, you see, after 2012, this trend of decline that's going really for both forms, for dead discards and for landings, and so that means overall catch of black sea bass is going down within the region.

In June of 2025, they recognized this, and the decision that the council made was to pause work on Amendment 56, pending the further review and incorporation of -- The further review of the SEDAR 76 update stock assessment and incorporation of the updated recreational data. The council also initiated Regulatory Amendment 37. This is intended to be a short-term action that would reduce fishing-related mortality and improve recruitment while longer-term actions are being developed through Amendment 56.

The council stated that they intended this action to be implemented in 2026, and so they want this to go into place next year. As such, the timeline reflects that the council is planning to have their final decisions made on Reg Amendment 37 in December, and so this will be kind of the time for the AP to give you all's thoughts on the actions that are being considered there.

In September of 2025, the council reviewed a draft amendment and approved the amendment to be released for public hearings. We are in the public comment time period right now. There is a webpage on the council's website for the Regulatory Amendment 37 public hearings. They are scheduled for November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, and so we'll be hosting webinars on those two evenings. In addition, email comments, and mailed comments, are all able to be sent in, and we have information on the website talking about how comments can be made from the public in those ways.

In December, the council is scheduled to go final with Reg Amendment 37, and so this is your opportunity to provide comment on this, and so we are looking for some discussion, and some feedback, from the AP on which direction you all think that this amendment should go.

The schedule for this amendment is that, in 2026, it would be implemented, and, also in 2026, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and SSC would be working together to conduct additional review of that stock assessment and bring in that recreational data, once that becomes available, and, once that information is available, then work on Amendment 56 will resume, and that's going to be looking at longer-term changes.

Some of the things that have been brought up are black sea bass are very likely to need a rebuilding plan, once that assessment is completed. Other items that have been kind of put forward in the process, that the council has said that is more of a long-term change than a short-term change, would be items like any changes to sector allocations. This is an assessment that would be bringing in that MRIP-FES for the first time.

Right now, the black sea bass recreational sector is still monitored under the telephone survey, and that will continue for that short-term time period, but, in the long-term, the council is going to need to switch that data over, switch that data monitoring over, to the updated MRIP-FES, and so any allocation changes that would need to be discussed would happen in 56, in kind of that long-term plan, and then there's also been discussion about changes to like the nearshore pot closure. That was also something that needs quite a bit of evaluation before any areas get changed in their status, and so those items are kind of being put into Amendment 56 at this point.

We will get into the actions that are included in Reg Amendment 37 momentarily, but I wanted to pause within here, just to give opportunity for any questions of what has gone on with this timeline, what has happened in between April and now, so we can clarify anything before we go into the actions themselves, and so I'll turn it back to you, Mr. Chair, to see if there are any questions.

MR. KIMREY: Anyone have questions, before I ask one? That picture looks familiar. That was probably me holding that fish, and so, real quick, Mike, if you could go back to the graphs. I remember, last time they clamped down on bass, wasn't it around 2012? There was a year or two that they shut us down. I mean, I'm guessing that spike would have been right after they opened it back up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I would have to -- I would have to double-check kind of the history timeline, but that sounds familiar.

MR. KIMREY: I'm pretty sure that's where that huge spike comes from. If you look at that, I mean, that's the highest catch level all the way back to 1990, which would make sense after a closure, I would assume. I think it was around 2012 or 2013. I can't remember exactly, and I was just curious about that. Does anybody else have a question, before we move forward, about the timeline stuff here, as we move ahead to the good stuff? Go ahead, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and this is just looking at that left graph, and this just feels like a cautionary note to the council members. That trap survey on the left graph, we see this decline starting in 2016. It's below the long-term average, and then it keeps on dropping and dropping and dropping, and so you might consider just angler satisfaction.

At some point, the council relaxed the daily limit, from I think five to seven fish recreational per day, and so this is just a cautionary note. This seems like this has been a long-term trend for a long time, and maybe, with some other actions earlier in the time series, some of the things we're talking about today could have been averted, and so that's my thought there.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul. Darrin online.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Darrin Willingham, northeast Florida. Can you hear me okay?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, we can.

MR. WILLINGHAM: All right, perfect, and so good morning, first of all. Looking at those graphs, that caught my eye, and, I mean, we're going from 1990 to present day, and I have a hard time, with those graphs, comparing apples to apples.

You had it where -- Let's look at the recreational angler, and we could keep them when they were ten inches. Then, sorry, and you can't keep them until they're eleven inches, and now we're up to thirteen inches, and we also know that the commercial guys can keep them, and I think it was at eleven inches, or ten inches, something like that, and you go from you can keep twenty, or you can keep, you know, seven, and then you guys tried five, and then back to seven, and how is that showing the same to same, because I always worry about graphs.

You can do anything with statistical data, and, looking at those graphs, I don't know that they actually represent what's really truly going on, and, the right-side graph, with the total dead discards, how do you know about those total dead discards, because black sea bass is -- For its size, it's an incredibly hardy fish, and, even that fish that you show with its air bladder pushing its stomach out, you know, if you set that thing over the side, it's going to swim straight back to the bottom, and so I just -- It's tough to trust that data. That's what I've got to say. Thanks.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Darrin. As far as trying to hit some of the questions that were inserted there, so, as far as the timeline of information, and the decline that's being showed, we'll talk a bit further as we get into the actions, with some of the analysis that was completed, but kind of a preview of that is that, the scientists from the Southeast Regional Office, they took a look at

the actual catch rates for angler trips, and they were looking at the information, and I think this was from the APAIS and the regional headboat survey. The APAIS is the access intercept survey that's done, and so this is the survey that people would encounter when they actually get back to the dock and when they're interviewing folks.

From that information that's come through, at least on the recreational side, over the last five years, the average per person -- On trips when they caught any black sea bass at all, the average per person is, for most trips, less than one black sea bass per person, and so there does seem to be some -- Even though there's a seven-fish-per-person bag limit, there does not seem to be a large proportion of people that are catching their full bag limit in the recent time period, and, yes, there can be changes with the bag limit, and how that affects the catch rate, but the annual numbers that are allowed, and the length of the season -- The season hasn't been limited for black sea bass at all.

It's been a full calendar year season, a year-round fishery, for quite some time, over a decade now, and so the decline that we see in that time period seems to have some support of being reflective of what's there on the water. It also aligns with reports that we've heard from fishermen, a lot of them even within this AP, of having declines of black sea bass within their localized populations.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike. Richie, for a question or comment?

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, and a question to you, Chris. Do you feel that they're that hardy also, because, the strongest of fish, where we come from, if they have a belly out like that, they're not going to be swimming down to the bottom.

MR. KIMREY: So, to answer your question, I mean, and you can ask some of the council staff here, and I'm a huge advocate in proper releases, and so that picture was taken on my boat, the one they showed, and, you know, we descended that fish, and I feel like it had a really good chance of making it, but, to answer your question more specifically, you know, barotrauma has a lot to do with depth.

There's a lot of times I can release a bass, and I don't think I need to descend it, if I'm in shallower water, and there's sometimes I release one, and he doesn't do as well as I think, and I see him back there floating, and, you know, I fish a center console, and it's easy for me to make a move, even when I'm bottom fishing, and, a lot of times, I'll go back and get them and descend them. I do that in an effort to help the fishery and to show good stewardship to my clients. You know what I mean?

It's a two-for-one. I take the effort to do that. A lot of people don't. A lot of people assume those fish are going to do well, and so, you know, I think, in general, fish are probably more hardy than we think, but there's also lots of times they need some help, and, no matter what you do, they're not going to survive, you know, especially with the bass. The deeper you are, you know, the worse it is, of course. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, in relation to -- I didn't hit on the dead discards there, but, in relation to that, just kind of conveying the information from the stock assessment, what they're using, the mortality rates for black sea bass. would reflect that they are a hardy fish. The discard mortality rate that was used in the stock assessment is about 15 percent for the recreational fishery.

That means 85 percent of caught and released black sea bass would be estimated to survive, okay, and that's over eight out of ten are estimated to survive, and Paul is a bit more of the expert on the discard mortality rates, and how those are calculated, the research behind those, but I just wanted to note that, in the assessment, like that's the rate that's being used, and so, this high number of dead discards, this is what you're seeing here, and largely they're recreational, and you're seeing that approximate 15 percent.

That's percent of -- That's got to be quite a large number of fish that are being caught and released, and remember that black sea bass are not just an offshore fish, and they're an inshore fish too, and there are a lot of people who fish in the inshore, in the state waters, that catch tiny black sea bass, under the size limit, and those people aren't necessarily using, and probably not using, circle hooks.

They're not going to be using some of the devices, because they're inshore, and that's just a different way that they fish, but, if you catch a very small black sea bass on a sizable J-hook, then that can potentially do some damage to that fish, and that's all factored into developing this discard mortality estimate.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike, and a quick comment before we go to our next online question. You know, for us, and we've talked about this at the AP before, and, for my area, you know, we have a state port that has fifty-plus foot of water that goes all the way in inside the inlet, and it's a very popular spot for just general purpose fishing with two-hook rigs, tiny J-hooks.

You know, this time of year, they're spot fishing, and they're catching some gray trout, or weakfish, you know, certain things that they use small J-hooks, and little pieces of bait, and it's a plethora for a bunch of incidental catches of small sea bass, because of that deep water, and because there's so much structure and bottom there.

We see -- We're kind of -- We're probably kind of special for that way, because we have that area so close to the inlet. There's a bunch of juvenile sea bass in there, but, even the time I spend twenty miles from the ocean, up in the Neuse River, and in the Pamlico Sound, an, those of you that aren't familiar with that, the Neuse River is a fairly large river, but it runs into the Pamlico Sound, which is a huge -- It's the largest landlocked estuary on the Atlantic coast.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: It's the largest wind-driven estuary in the world. I don't know about that Atlantic coast.

MR. KIMREY: So it's full. We were catching twenty and thirty juvenile gags all the way up there, and that's where brackish waters are meeting saltwater. I mean, there's sea bass up there. It's a real thing, that discard mortality. With that being said, there's also a whole bunch of them there, you know what I mean, and so I don't have a hard time believing that discard mortality in the scheme of things. In the ocean, where we target sea bass, I don't think the discard mortality is 15 percent, and Paul might disagree, but I think, if you look at the whole stock, including the internal waters, it may be, and now we have, online, K.P. Scott.

MR. SCOTT: Hi guys. I own a party boat up in Hatteras. I'm on the far northern end of the range for the council, and, right now, I can report that, the boats out of Oregon Inlet, it's a no-brainer. They can go out and catch their limit of sea bass on just about every trip targeting them. There is an abundance of sea bass on this northern end that we haven't seen in years.

The other thing I wanted to address, and I've paid very special attention to it since our last meeting in April, is, on my half days -- I'm a fifteen-knot boat. I can carry up to fifty-six passengers. On my half days, I have a very limited area that I can fish in the amount of time that we have available. I'm fishing an area one mile by two, roughly three days a week, on my half days, and we catch sea bass every single day. If the release mortality was what is being claimed that it is, and I really do disagree with it, I wouldn't catch anything.

The other thing is those sea bass overnight, when we get to the fall, turn to giants. Those fish are moving. I have a lot of concern that the basis that you're using for the scientific data is off, and I just want to be on record for that, because I see the same thing happening with this that I see with red snapper. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, K.P., and I would like to ask you -- You typically fish south of the shoals of Hatteras, and so that puts you in the southeast region, and not the imaginary line above Hatteras, and is that correct?

MR. SCOTT: I typically do fish south of Hatteras, because the current on the rocks, as I get above the shoals, gets pretty serious, and so I stay to the south, but it's not unusual to see me north of the shoals.

MR. KIMREY: Right, and that was my assumption, and, yes, I agree with you. We're at the northern tip of the southeast region, and we have really good bass fishing, and that's one of the things with this topic that -- I understand why it's going where it's going, but it's one of the huge flaws with this regional management, and, you know, I've been talking about this off and on, and asking questions, for a couple of years, because I've seen it coming.

You know, when that line was drawn at Hatteras twenty years ago, it was because they had that definitive DNA study that showed the two different biomasses of sea bass, I'm assuming. That's right, Mike? So that's twenty-year old data, and there's so much talk about ocean temps warming and being part of the reason that Florida is not seeing the bass they are, and you cannot manage your way out of that situation, and that's what's trying to happen here, and it's detrimental to stakeholders like me and K.P. that depend on these fish.

Now, I'm all for protecting the stock. That's the whole reason I volunteered to be on this AP, and I'm lucky enough that I'm still here, and I'm passionate about it, and I try to do my best to understand, but I'll never understand why the council, and the SSC, and everybody else involved, is trying to manage their way out of something that a lot of them believe is caused by this other thing, which would be these warming temps.

Everybody knows sea bass like cold water. If you go north of Hatteras, and I don't know much about mid Atlantic, but I know what I hear. They say the sea bass fishing is epic up there, which also would tend to make you believe that these two biomasses of fish are merging, and I think there's a little bit of evidence of that so far, isn't there, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So there's been a more recent genetic study that has been conducted kind of looking at potential mixing of that northern and that southern population, and I would need to lean a bit more on Chip, or actually Wally, who just stepped out, or Judd, because the SSC just got a

presentation on that last week, and so Judd may have more information on those results, and could probably talk about them a little better than I can.

DR. CURTIS: Thanks Mike, and so he's referencing a study that was just completed by SC DNR recently that looked at a new genetic study using what we call microsatellite markers, or a different type of genetic markers than was done last time, and, overall, the conclusions were similar, that there are still two genetically-distinct populations between the north region, the Mid-Atlantic and New England, and then the South, where there's a delineation around the Cape Hatteras line, but there is this transition that they see in those genetic markers across that boundary.

It's maybe not as strong pronounced of a delineation as there was with the previous markers, but it's still just a working paper. The SSC looked at it, and what the next step will be, in order to make that true decision on like whether to treat them as two stocks, would be going through a stock identification process, where you're taking not only genetic information, but like age and growth data, tagging studies, movement data, and that would happen at the next assessment level, but there is, so I say, like I said, a --

MR. KIMREY: What's the timeframe? What's the timeframe for that? We're talking years, right?

DR. CURTIS: Correct. Yes, and the next assessment that Mike was talking about, this revised 76, would not incorporate any of that stock identification process into the next benchmark assessment, which has yet to go on the SEDAR schedule.

MR. KIMREY: So a very long time. Yes, and we all know how this works. You have a comment, K.P.? Was that you I heard? Did I hear somebody.

MR. SCOTT: I'm clean. That was an oops.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian, charter-headboat, North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. When I look at the graph, one thing that stands out to me is, just eyeballing it, it looks like a 500 percent drop in catch from 2012 to the latest lines on the graph, and am I reading that correctly of roughly 500 percent? If it's 500 now, and it's 2,500, a 500 percent drop, and is that correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I wouldn't say it's a 500 percent.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I mean, if you double 500, it's a thousand, and that's 100 percent, and so I'm just saying it might be.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, if you're coming from --

MR. SEBASTIAN: An 80 percent drop.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: 80 percent, yes.

MR. SEBASTIAN: An 80 percent drop, and then I just texted nine captains who fish out of there every single day, every single day, and what have you guys seen in the last eight years, and has

there been a significant change, and I got eight answers of no. No significant change in our area, and so I have a big problem with reading what's getting ready to happen to the sea bass, and along what Chris says.

You know, geographically, in our area, the population does not seem to be encountering this drop. Maybe I'm wrong. I believe SC DNR, and the feds, have all of our headboat data, for years and years and years, and I would buy into it if our data, which has been gathered for the last fifteen years, mirrors this, and then maybe I could see it.

If I don't see that data, knowing that my guys are out there, and if it mirrors that data or not, and I really -- Just like the other gentleman with the headboat, I really have a hard time buying into, in our area, and I'm not saying it's changed in south Georgia and Florida, but, in our area, that things have changed that much, and that's what my guys, who are out there literally seven days a week, just responded and answered.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Cameron. John, and I'm sorry I missed you earlier, man.

MR. POLSTON: John Polston, Kings Seafood. I just -- We talked about this at the last meeting or whatever, and I just want to bring it back up again. They had it on a graph before. You know, we started protecting the red snapper in 2010, and the largest amount of red snapper is basically caught from Cape Canaveral to north Florida, okay, in numbers, and so it can't just be coincidence that -- We do have a problem with black sea bass in Florida. There's no question about it.

We don't produce them anymore, but we also have all those red snapper, and so let's not forget the fish eat fish, and until -- I mean, as Chris said, there's no way to manage your way out of that, because we have the problem with the red snapper, and there's -- God knows when something is going to be done about it, and that's what we're trying to do, but it just can't be coincidence that the black sea bass have all gone away, because we used to have plenty of them. Paul caught 60,000 pounds one year, sea bass potting. I mean, just in one year, and so those fish weren't all caught up, and we know it's not being overfished, because nobody is catching any, and so I'm just saying that that cannot be just coincidence, in my opinion.

MR. KIMREY: Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: This is Matt Matthews, a recreational fishermen from Georgia, and I'll just echo what's already been said. We're seeing -- I'm hearing similar things with the black sea bass in our area, that they're still there, and they're abundant. Nobody is having trouble catching their limit, but that -- I had a question that kind of dovetails off what John was saying, and that is we talked about finding two genetically-distinct populations, with a Northern boundary, and has anybody looked into the southern end of that, or is it the same genetic population south of Cape Hatteras to the Southern end of their range?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would have to bring Judd back in to see if they looked into within the South Atlantic portion.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and so, based on the resolution of those markers, and they're not super-fine-scale markers. That would cost a lot more, to run a different type of marker, but, within the south

region that the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction manages, that indicated as all one distinct population.

There was some differences in the genetic composition, but very modest compared to the differentiation between like the north of Cape Hatteras and south, if that makes sense, and did that answer your question, sort of? It's real hard, with the markers that they're using, to get that real fine-scale resolution to see what the difference would be between like South Carolina and Florida stocks, or something like that. You really need a larger spatial scope, and so the comparison between like the south and the north is more of a valid comparison and then just look at those intra-regional comparisons.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thanks, guys. Scott.

MR. BUFF: Scott Buff, commercial, Holden Beach. I just want to reiterate what Chris was saying about the climate change, and I don't know how you factor all this into what we're doing, but, just like he said, we're all here because we care about our fishery, and that's why we volunteer and do this, but, when you talk to these fishermen that's been in this business their whole life, there's cycles that these fish take.

Our grouper fishing hasn't been that great, but, this year, we've had the best grouper season we've ever had, as far as that fish is concerned, but, just like the beeliners and the triggerfish, which is our bread-and-butter fish, it's been terrible this year, and they're just now starting to catch them, but, as far as the sea bass are concerned, there's not that much pressure put on those fish where we're at.

I don't -- You know, other than the recreational people, there's not a whole lot of people that fish for them, and a lot of these fish are moving northward with this climate change, and that's just my opinion. If you look in some of these magazines, you're going to see that, and some of the stuff online, some of these fish they've never caught before, they're catching them northern, northern, northern, from Virginia up, and you see this more and more and more.

The temperature, and the climate change, and, just like John said, down here about -- Like the red snapper, have we overprotected them, to where they're eating everything else, you know, and so I don't know how all that is factored into what we're doing, and I don't even know if it has anything to do with what we're doing, but, at the end of the day, some of this stuff with the climate is changing everything that these fish -- Their habits, and so, anyway, that's my two -- I see it all the time, because we deal with it on a daily basis.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Scott. We're going to go to K.P. online.

MR. SCOTT: I do want to reiterate one more point that I neglected to mention. The changes in the size limit is from fifteen years ago, when we were looking at an eleven-inch fish, to thirteen inches now, and it matters on landings, on how many fish you're going to bring to the dock, based on that two inches, especially on a sea bass. I'm also very skeptical of any information from weekend warriors that are just interviewed on the dock. I find that information -- It's soft, and so I think it was the APAIS survey, and I do have a problem counting on that as scientific. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, K.P. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Randy McKinley, and I agree with everything Scott said, and with what Chris said, and I would even agree with the genetic makeup, but that doesn't mean those fish don't travel. When those bass really come off our coast in January and February, commercially, we used to kill them and catch them, but now the price is so bad, because of the Mid-Atlantic, and nobody even targets them anymore, but, even though there may be a different genetic stock, they could travel, and, I mean, it would be neat to see a graph that incorporated the sea temperature during those time periods, because, those fish that materialized, they weren't there.

They're coming from somewhere. They're coming from up north, and they push down when the water gets cold, and so I know we're going to get hammered, and, all the charter boat inshore guys, you know, it's going to kill them, but then just even lowering it down to eleven inches for the recreational would help the discards, because those boats that are four-hour trips in the mornings that go out there, they have to go through a lot of bass. If they could hurry up and catch what was legal, then they would go on to sharks, or not much else, but white grunts and ringtails. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Randy. Paul.

MR. NELSON: Paul Nelson, Ponce Island. I was pot fishing in 2010, and it was the best year, but red snapper was open also, and, as you notice, when the red snapper closed, the drop started, and we also had a spike of warm water coming that pushed most of the fish out of there, and I totally believe in that. I believe the little difference in temperature really moved most of the fish north, and they kept going, because 2010, and 2009, were very good years on both snapper and sea bass, but I do believe that has a lot to do with the temperature and the predation of this red snapper.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley Stepehns. A quick comment, and I do want to kind of piggyback off of what Paul and John were saying. You know, in 2010 and 2011, black sea bass were our bread and butter on the charter-headboat. Fast-forward to today, and what we're seeing, in terms of abundance, is certainly not what it used to be back in those days. However, the places where we used to catch sea bass religiously are now just overrun with red snapper.

I know that's already been said before, but, in terms of what we're seeing on the water, you know, certainly the temperature changes -- I think that, you know, maybe there is consideration for fighting for habitat, and fighting for food on the reef, you know, and are the red snapper eating the sea bass, and that's for a scientist to decide, but a big ten-pound red snapper is going to take precedent over a small sea bass, when it comes to habitat on the reef. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks Haley. All right. David, go ahead.

MR. MOSS: Sorry, and, at the risk of kind of being the bad guy here, and to bring this back, and, obviously, I don't have a dog in the fight, because we don't see bass fish down where I'm at, but one of the things to remember is we can not like what the data shows, and we can maybe disagree with what the data shows, and we can, you know, all agree that there's probably a shifting stock,

because of climate, because of temperature, or whatever, but, at the end of the day, we still have to manage it according to whatever data it is that we have.

Just because we don't like it, or we don't agree with it, we still have to make decisions based on what it is that we have, and, when I say "we", I mean the council and, obviously, the AP, to a lesser extent, but we have to advise based on the data that we have. If we don't like it, okay, and we can do something about maybe changing it, but this is what we have, and this is the decisions that we're forced to make with what we have.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, David, and I agree with you. You know, people are going to have to make decisions. Moving forward, it is my opinion that we need to make better decisions, and we need to get away from the rut we're in that only follows the exact trail that's been established for X number of years.

An example, and so it sounds like, to me, and I'm not a fish manager, nor am I a fish scientist, but I am a fisherman, and I've been fishing for sea bass commercially and recreationally for my entire life, and so I know a little bit about them. You know, it sounds like, to me, that the problem with sea bass, if you go all the way down to Matt, which is in Georgia, and you've got nine captains over here with Cameron, and you've got myself, and you've got K.P. in Hatteras, and, you know, nobody can validate our science, but what we see is more valid, many times, than the science. You know what I'm saying?

It sounds like, to me, the problem is in Florida, and I don't see why three other states have to continuously take the hit because of something that's happening in Florida, and I don't even know if it's possible, but, to get out of that rut, I would propose -- Because Florida has really good state management, and they have the reef fish permits, and they have all that reporting, and they have all that stuff.

If the problem is in Florida, close sea bass in Florida. Let the state manage it. Close state waters, and let them manage it, and let us keep fishing. Sure, drop the size limit to eleven, and drop the creel limit to three, or four, but to have a two to four-month closure for us in North Carolina, and not only is that, for most of us, the only primary nearshore target, and that's the only thing we have left, and they've taken everything else away from us, but it's also the absolute best time of the year to fish for them.

In addition to that, there's less pressure on sea bass now than ever. Randy said it, and the fishing is so good in the Mid-Atlantic that the trawl boats up there shut the commercial guys down. It doesn't matter if they go catch their 325 or seventy-five or whatever pounds of bass it is, because they're trawling so many fish north that they're lucky if they can get a dollar a pound for something that, thirty or forty years ago, I used to get \$4.00 a pound for jumbo bass, fishing with my father, and now they can't get but a dollar a pound for them, forty years later, because of that trawl fishery.

It's one thing for us to take a hit because we know something's in trouble. We all get that. I'm all for that. For a charter guy, I'm hugely conservative, and I teach my clients, and, if you don't believe me, you can ask most of them. Call them on the phone, and they'll tell you that I believe in conserving what we have left, and one of my newfound mottos is too many people and not enough fish.

With that being said, we've got a fishery in North Carolina, and it sounds like South Carolina and Georgia, for these bass that is viable. Maybe we need to make some adjustments, but to shut it down because of something that's happening in one state -- I'm just -- I'm not going to go down easy, and I feel like -- I'm ashamed of our council members in North Carolina for voting the last way they did. No one.

You know, sure, we have to make decisions, and we have to manage, but it doesn't mean you just have to keep drinking the dang Kool-Aid, man. We need to do something different. You know what I'm saying and I can't get over it, and I'm sorry, and I feel like anybody that it affects, like Cameron and Randy, could feel the exact same way, as should our council members from North Carolina that are like, okay, sounds good, and we'll close it down for two, three, four months, and we'll drop the size limit down to ten or eleven inches, hoping that's going to reduce discard mortality, and, for some anglers, it will.

For the responsible stewards like myself, it will reduce discard mortality, but, for another percentage, especially in the private rec sector, dropping that number from seven bass to two bass, and dropping that minimum size to eleven inches, is not going to help, because, when they can only have two, they're going to fish through a hundred fish to get the two biggest ones they can, just like they do during the abbreviated snapper season.

They shouldn't, but they do, and that's what's going to happen, and, when you do that, what are you doing? You're increasing the dead discards and the release mortality, and so, you know, most of us know it, and we still just stay in that same rut, and I just -- There has to be some way to manage differently, and, in this instance, I can't help but think, if the problem is in Florida, then Florida -- They've got great people.

We deal with them all here, and everywhere else, and they could figure out a way to manage bass, and figure out where in that assessment is it viable to have a different season in Florida, and figure out some way to do that. That's where I'm at. I just can't change the way I think. Let's go to Darrin, real quick.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Yes, and so, to echo several of the things, and this is Darrin Willingham in northeast Florida, you know, trying to go with making decisions off of this data that, quote, we may not like, when the data is very possibly bad data, and especially when we're talking about, well, they haven't made any changes to the recreational -- Excuse me, and I'm saying don't make any changes until that recreational data is accounted for in this, and so we're still dealing with old data, and, you know, we've got quotes here of a 90 percent reduction in the total annual catch.

Then you say, well, there's concerns about the assumptions, when you're looking at this data, and all that stuff puts all this vague stuff out there, that is concerning, and, I mean, I'm hoping and praying that we actually do go to the state management, because Florida certainly is pushing hard for state management for this, and then we can -- Then we can adjust what we need to do, versus what you're saying, is these regional changes that would have a huge negative impact for North Carolina, South Carolina, et cetera.

To give you an idea, if there was a -- If you shut down the season, or several months that is a thought, that's right in the middle of when Florida can catch these guys, and so you shut us down

pretty much year-round if you're going to take out that three-month portion of when we actually target them in the winter months.

As you were talking about some, you know, thermal changes and stuff, we just, up in northeast Florida, from about May 2025, and so May up until August, we had a crazy thermocline come through. It pushed all of our pelagics away. We had kingfish tournaments, one of them with 702 boats, and forty-three kingfish were weighed at that tournament, and that was back in August, but the local captains were saying, oh my gosh, what are these black sea bass doing here, and they're going out and catching, you know, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen-inch black sea bass, and they were loving it.

I do agree that -- We joke around that our black sea bass know what size are supposed to bite the hook, and so we can catch twelve, twelve-and-a-half, twelve-and-three-quarter, but, those thirteen-inch ones, man, they just know not to bite the hook, and it is -- There's a lot of release of those eleven to twelve-inch fish. If we could keep those, that would really reduce that dead discard. That's my ideas.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin, and so I want to apologize for getting -- For being partially at least responsible for getting off on this tangent. I know I had a few show of hands. I had Scott, and let me make a quick list. We've got Scott, and, John, did you have a question, or a quick comment, and was there anybody else? So let's take these two, and then we really need to move on, guys. We're going to get into this a little more in depth. Shame on me. Sorry. Go ahead Scott.

MR. BUFF: Scott Buff, Holden Buff, commercial. Randy, how many boats do you all have that runs out of there to trap fish now?

MR. MCKINLEY: Absolutely zero.

MR. BUFF: Okay, and I was just curious, but when did they change the ninety-foot rule, to where you couldn't trap in the wintertime unless you were over ninety feet? Wasn't that about ten years ago?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That sounds right. I need a moment in a break so I can pull up my management history.

MR. BUFF: It would be interesting to have that, but my point is that, like Chris said just a while ago, and it kind of struck a nerve, and we don't even get our guys to target the fish anymore, because, when those trawls are open up north, you can't even get nothing for them, and they killed this fishery.

The point is, is that -- I don't know about Randy, but I got into this in 1998, in 1998, and, in November -- In October, November, December, January, there's probably ten boats in our area that geared up, and all they done was sea bass fished all winter long. Them boats are not there no more, you know, and so I don't understand. It's kind of like the shrimp boats. There's hardly any of them left, but we're still at this same point, you know, kicking this can down the street.

You know, I agree with Chris. I mean, Florida has a lot of other options than what we have to be able to manage. Theirs is a little bit different, and why we can't, at some point, get some of these fish to where they're managed by the state, or in that area, and so I don't know.

It's just -- I was just curious about the time changes, because that's going to affect your data. When you take all that pressure -- All of those sea bass that were being caught in those traps in the wintertime, like what we used to do, and you take all that out, and that ninety-foot rule, and they put that in place because all the sea bass was inshore in the wintertime, in the forty and fifty foot of water, and so it was no use going, because you're basically just catching a handful of fish.

Even our guys, and they used to come in, you know, inshore and catch 300 pounds when it was closed for the -- You know, you had a 300-pound trip limit, and we don't even -- We tell them not even to do it, because we can't even sell them. Unless we cut them and put them in a market, they're just sort of thrown away, you know, and so it's just all of that stuff factored in. When all that stuff changed and turned, it's going to affect that number, because all the data was gone on our side. Just my two-cents.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just grabbing the year, I believe the first year that the nearshore seasonal closure on pots -- That changed a couple of times over time, but the first time it was put into place would have been 2013, and so, yes, about ten years ago, or a little bit over.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike. Thanks, Scott. I'm not going off on a tangent, but one thing I'm curious about with this data -- I mean, in our area, and I certainly cannot speak for anywhere else, there's less -- I think there's less effort for sea bass recreationally, because of the way the private sector fishing has changed. Now this is -- I'm just referring to my area. There's other things that they do in the spring, when the bass fishing is really good, and there's other things they do -- I mean, does the private sector recreational effort and the lack of commercial fishing -- Does that affect these graphs, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So these are -- The two things that are being shown here, the one on the left is the fishery-independent index, and so that is the Southeast Reef Fish Survey that goes out, and it measures relative abundance of a whole mass of species that are here in the Southeast. They have several different types of, I guess, fishing that's done on those surveys.

The main one for black sea bass is the chevron trap. That's the index that's used to kind of monitor the up-and-down status of black sea bass, and so that's going to be conducted, and it's conducted on, you know, kind of a region-wide scale, and so, yes, some of those finer regional differences that you talk about, and like this is on a broader scale than necessarily those, but that's not going to be affected by effort of the fishery. That is a fishery-independent survey that is done, you know, kind of -- They have their sampling frame, and they have, you know, their way that this study is conducted, and so that's going to be independent of any effort fluctuations within the fishery.

On the right side, you have the landings. Now, that is going to be affected by your effort, because that's what's being caught. This isn't -- These are not, I guess, like numbers produced by a stock assessment that are projecting something forward. Like this is -- These are landings that are brought in. This is reported information from the commercial fishery. This is information that is gathered through the MRIP recreational estimates and the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey.

That is how this information -- This is landings information, and catch information, that's being put on that right side, and those -- The reason why I'm not putting forward right now necessarily the SEDAR 76 information -- While it is showing a very similar trend, and, I mean, that trend in the assessment is going to be driven by what is the fishery-independent index seeing, and what is the catch seeing, and all those things are going in the same direction, but that SEDAR 76 stock assessment is undergoing further review.

That was kind of the point brought up earlier in this assessment, that the council saw the drastic decline that was being talked about, and recommended by the SSC, and they said, hold on, this needs to go -- If this is going to be the effect, this needs to go through a bit of a further review, and we need to address some of these concerns that have been brought up at the SSC level before we put in any long-term management.

Regulatory amendment 37, which, if I could make a small recommendation, and I think I've heard a lot of things within the comments of it could be, you know, this action taken, or it could be this action taken, and I would recommend that we kind of transition towards looking at the actual actions that are being discussed at this point, so you all can respond directly to what the council is proposing.

What Regulatory Amendment 37 is meant to be is meant to be a stop-gap. What's happening there is, when you see a decline in that fishery-independent index, you see that decline, along with that decline in the catch numbers, because of the effort that you all have talked about, the effort declines that have happened throughout the region, the declines in the number of black sea bass being seen in Florida, and, when you pair those two things together, then that indicates right now we have a trend that is going down throughout the region for black sea bass, both in terms of the catch and in terms of the abundance, and what can turn that abundance in a different direction.

That is what the council is aiming to do, just some type of stop-gap to stop that decline that is being shown in that fishery-independent information, which, again, that's going to be -- That is not going to be affected by the effort of the fishery, because that is a study that is done the same way each year, over and over again, to see whether it's going up or going down.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike. I asked the right question, and, to paraphrase, did everybody get that? There's two graphs up here. They have very similar trends. It does not mean it's for the same reason. Did everybody get that? That's what I was -- He gave a way better explanation than I was hoping for. Good job, Mike. We do need to move on and talk about 37, but, real quick, let's --

DR. CURTIS: Thanks, and I think I just wanted to pile on with what Mike said. He gave a great overview of what that fishery-independent index is supposed to represent, right, and I think some additional details on the sampling frame for that will help reconcile some of the comments you all are seeing, and the discussions of regional abundance, and so keep in mind, right, as Mike already said, this is a coast-wide survey.

It goes from Canaveral all the way up to Cape Hatteras, and so you're seeing that whole entire coastline represented. There's also a depth component to it as well, and so they typically fish between fifteen meters and 200 meters, and so like fifty foot is kind of the minimum depth that they would be sampling at with the trap and video surveys, and this is done coast-wide, but so, in

some cases, they're not going to be capturing necessarily all those smaller fish you might be seeing more inshore.

Just keep in mind that there are sampling frame limitations with that fishery-independent index, and it's done so it can capture more species across the entire coastline, but that could help maybe reconcile some of the concerns that you all had that you're seeing a lot of smaller fish inshore. They may not be surveyed by that independent index, and they're not going to be represented on that figure.

MR. KIMREY: Let's take a real quick break. I'll define real quick as not ten minutes longer than it's supposed to be, like yesterday, just because we got to keep moving. We don't want to end up behind schedule, which we have a really bad habit of doing. Ten minutes maybe, and what do you think?

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. KIMREY: All right, everybody. If we could migrate back to our seats and keep this party rolling.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so we're transitioning over to the next attachment that you have related to black sea bass. It is the discussion document, Attachment 5b, in your briefing book. We've kind of gone through the background. The presentation really covered the background information, and so I'll move us down.

The purpose and need is noted there. That's just kind of the overall statement of what the council intends for this amendment to do, and we've had some discussion about that related to the presentation as well.

The timing that this amendment is moving on, like I noted, we have our -- We're right now in the October AP meeting, and public hearings will be happening, the first one next week and the next one later on in November, and then December is when the council will review the public comment and consider the amendment for approval. If the council recommends it for approval, then the regulations would become effective at some point in 2026. That's the kind of the intended timeline for this amendment.

The objectives for the AP, during this meeting, is to kind of get the update on the amendment development process so far, and you will see the actions and alternatives that the council has developed, and they've selected some alternatives as preferred at this point, and what the council is looking for you all to do is provide feedback on those preferred alternatives. Do you like them? Do you not like them? Why do you like them? Why do you not like them, and if you have recommendations for any other alternatives that should be preferred to address these actions.

That's what we are going to get into at this point. To assist in the decision-making process, and try to compile several pieces of data altogether, there have been decision tools developed, and these decision tools -- One is for the commercial, and one is for the recreational sector, and what these really look at are catch trends, monthly catch trends over time, and then they incorporate information on what the fishery could potentially look like under different scenarios, under things

that are being considered like a spawning closure or under a different recreational size limit or under a different recreational bag limit.

The way that you can access those tools, and I did include a link to the September briefing book in your document, but an easier way to get to them, now that we have the public hearing webpage up, is, if you go on the South Atlantic Council website, and you navigate underneath meetings to public hearings and scoping, and scroll down to the Regulatory Amendment 37 webpage, and that's the public hearing webpage, and we have those decision tools posted here on the side on that public hearing webpage, and so, any of the public that are listening in as well, they can go on, and they can access those tools.

You click them, and they are Excel files, and so, if you click it, it will download an Excel file. Instructions for how to use those tools are included here. Those also give information on the data that are fed into those tools, what years are being included, and that can give a little bit of information on how these data can be interpreted. When you download those, and we can pull them up as you need them today, and some of these results are included in your discussion document, but, if we want to toggle any different options, we can.

This is what the commercial one looks like, and so you just have dropdowns, and you can select different time periods of what would be closed, and so, like a January closure, you would just select the number of closed days, thirty-one in January, and then you would see changes to what the estimated landings would be.

To get a little bit of an idea of different recent timeframes, you can look at the recent three-year average or the recent five-year average. The point of these, I do want to emphasize that these dates, these projected closure dates, or the number of fishing days, these are not prescriptive. These are not set. These are not what would be automatically put into the amendment, or what would be automatically put into regulations, and this is what is estimated to occur based on the recent trends of the fishery, and so how the fishery has recently behaved.

If the commercial fishery behaves in the first year of implementation, say 2026 -- If the commercial fishery behaves the same in 2026 like it did in 2023 and 2022, then this is what the result could be, okay, but there will still be the active monitoring process for the commercial fishery. That's not changing. There will be catch monitoring, and, when it gets to the point that landings are getting close to the ACL, then there would be, you know, the notice of a closure that would be talked about within those things, and so the actual process wouldn't change.

Similarly, for the recreational fishery, there would still be the process that is currently in place of NOAA Fisheries sets the season before the season begins, and the recreational decision tool is there, and available, and so if you need us to go -- If you need me, as we're going through these discussions, to go back and show you something that's not already included in your discussion document, then I can do that.

We can pull it up on the screen, and you can see results of toggling these different options, but I wanted to make sure it was highlighted, that all this information is available to you, and show you where to access it, and so I'm going to minimize these for now, and, if folks want me to pull them back up as we go through the discussions, then I can do that.

Coming back to your discussion document, we're going to get into the actions that the council is considering at this time, and so Action 1 would be to establish annual catch targets and revise the accountability measures for South Atlantic black sea bass. There are three sub actions underneath this action one. The first sub action would be establish annual catch targets, and what does that mean?

So annual -- We have several different types of catch levels that can be used in a fishery. Acceptable biological catch, you hear that term ABC, and that is what is recommended from the stock assessment analysts and recommended from the Scientific and Statistical Committee. That number comes out of -- Ideally, out of stock assessments, and, for black sea bass, it would have come out of the last completed stock assessment, which would have been SEDAR 56, because the council is pausing before they do anything with the more recent SEDAR 76.

Underneath acceptable biological catch limits underneath that ABC, the council can set an ACL. They can set their annual catch limit as high as the ABC. They cannot set it above the ABC, but they can go as high as the ABC.

Underneath ACLs annual catch limits are annual catch targets. These are not used everywhere. Annual catch targets are not used in all circumstances. Annual catch targets are kind of the next step down, where they can be set up to the ACL, but not higher than the ACL, and they're intended to -- Basically, if there was a fishery where there's a difficulty kind of containing that fishery to its ACL, then annual catch targets are used in that context.

In this context, if the council were to change the annual catch limit here, we have this situation where landings, especially for the recreational fishery, are no longer being monitored in the telephone survey type of unit, and so the council would need to update to the most recent, the best scientific information available, the most recent information for the recreational fishery, and what it's currently monitored in is that Fishing Effort Survey, that mail-based Fishing Effort Survey.

If the council were to go through changing the annual catch limit, then they would have to have discussions about how does changing the recreational unit now affect sector allocations, and that would be a much longer prolonged amendment, and so, in order to keep the current monitoring in this short-term action, in the current units that it's being monitored in, and so still in those recreational units that are calibrated back to the telephone survey, they are establishing an annual catch target.

The catch target that is being put forward was set by the council as 50 percent of the recent average catch, and so they looked at the five-year average for the commercial fishery of 2019 through 2023. This is the most recent years of completed data after a fishing season is done. It takes some time to validate quality control of the data, and so 2024 data, at the time of amendment development, was not finalized yet, and so these are the most recent years of completed, validated data that are available, and so, for the commercial fishery, that would be 2019 through 2023. For the recreational fishery, that would be the fishing years that begin in 2019 through 2023.

The difference between those is because we have a calendar fishing year for the commercial sector, and we have a non-calendar fishing year for the recreational sector. The fishing year is when does the annual catch monitoring start over, and so, for the commercial fishery, that starts over January 1. For the recreational fishery, it starts over on April 1, and so that's the beginning of the fishing

year for that sector. We have here, from the 50 percent of the recent average, the commercial landings for the annual catch target would be 48,557 pounds whole weight. For the recreational sector, it would be 63,143 pounds whole weight.

Now, the next two sub-actions would be revising the accountability measures for each of the sectors. 1b addresses the commercial sector, and 1c addresses the recreational sector. That would change the accountability measures so that now the fishery would be managed to that annual catch target. As they're written right now, the fishery is managed to the annual catch limit, which is not being changed in this. This would change so that these numbers would go into place, and the fishery would be managed such that these numbers would be the harvest that is trying to be achieved in this fishery.

The council has selected Alternative 2 for each of these sub actions as its preferred, and so, in summary, what that does is, first, it establishes the annual catch targets at those levels that I just discussed. It changes the commercial accountability measures so that, when the commercial landings are approaching the commercial annual catch target, that 48,000 number that you saw before, that's when NOAA would begin considering when they need to close commercial harvest of black sea bass for the remainder of the fishing year.

Then, for Sub-Action 1c, this action addresses the recreational sector. NOAA Fisheries sets the season every year for the recreational sector. For the last several years, it's been set as the entire year, because the recreational catch hasn't come close to the annual catch limit.

With a reduction, and now management to the annual catch target, there would probably be a more likely scenario where they would set a year that doesn't go for the entire year, and that really depends on some of the other options that are considered in this amendment, the bag limit, the size limit changes, that would all go into affecting how long that season would end up being, but they announce a set -- The start date is April 1, and they announced a set end date for the end of the fishing year at the beginning of the year, and, because of that, there's not, you know, that in-season closure, that you don't know when it's happening. It's announced at the beginning of the fishing year. That would then change -- That announcement would be made based on the annual catch target, rather than the annual catch limit.

There are some of the effects that are summarized. These are described more in-depth in the draft amendment document, and that's available on the public hearing page, but just kind of noting that the change over to the annual catch targets, and the management to these levels, they would affect, obviously, the season length, and they would affect the number of fish that would be caught for the entire year, and that would be a direct effect.

Economic effects, there are expected to result in negative economic effects for each sector as less annual harvest would occur. From the social standpoint, short-term effects, these are really strongly impacted on whether the season length and any unexpected closures occur, and so that kind of gets affected by further actions that are considered under this amendment, but, if this action contributes as it's intended to increase the black sea bass stock, and eventually result in higher levels of sustainable harvest, then long-term benefits could be expected.

The council has kind of had some discussions in developing their preferred alternatives. Some of the rationale that they have in selecting the preferreds that they did, they noted that there have been

declines in black sea bass abundance. These have been persistent, and, even under all-time low levels of fishing, of fishing removals, for the last six years of the most recent assessment, we've seen those declines kind of continue moving forward. These declines are supported both by the fishery-independent information as well as the fishery-dependent information.

Then significantly lowering the number of removals from the level seen in recent years, and the council has discussed as necessary to change the trajectory of the black sea bass stock from its decline to these all-time low abundances to try to change that direction to getting moving back toward a positive direction, and so, at this point, I can pause and see if there are any questions related to Action 1.

Just kind of giving a preview of the further actions that are being discussed, Action 2 is going to go into a spawning closure that's being proposed. Action 3 is going to talk about a change to the recreational bag limit. I won't scroll all the way down there, and I'll just let you know verbally. Then Action 4 is going to be a change to the minimum size limit that's being considered, and so we will hit each of those actions as we move through.

You can -- If you have your own device, and you're taking a look at the amendment, you can kind of peek forward, but we will hit each of those moving through this document, and so I'll pause here to see if there's any direct feedback or questions related to this action that would establish the ACTs.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley Stephens. A quick question, Mike. Have there been other species within the snapper grouper unit that have experienced the target? Have there been similar scenarios for other species for the annual catch target?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So the council -- It would have been one of my first amendments that I worked on with the council a few years ago, when they did the amberjack amendment, actually took away the annual catch targets, because they weren't being actively used in management. They took them away kind of across-the-board, and, at that time, they said they can still be reintroduced, and it would just be on a situation-by-situation basis.

This is the first instance since -- I guess that amendment would have finalized in maybe 2021, and this is the first instance where the council is discussing, okay, this is a scenario, and this is a specific place, where an annual catch target may be a useful management tool to put into place, and so, no, right now, we don't have annual catch targets for other snapper grouper species. They are used in other South Atlantic fisheries, because I'm pretty sure they're in the mackerel fishery.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Haley. Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Randy McKinley, and I don't know if this is the right time to present this, but, as a retailer, it's so aggravating because, I mean, I'm looking at these numbers, and what's going to happen is that this -- Commercially, these things are going to close pretty early in the year, and, for our inshore dayboat commercial guys, which they don't have much, but I would hate to see us lose that like during the fall, and so I don't see anywhere in here that trip limits need to be addressed, probably, and maybe even a step-down.

I mean, my whole goal is not to sell imported fish, and bass I do, and we sell quite a bit, and our little food truck sells a lot of it, and so, somehow, the main thing is to keep this open and not having spawning closures, and not having, you know -- It really, for commercially, it's not even a fishery anymore, and so it's really going to be a bycatch fishery, but I would love to see something to where they could bring them in year-round, whether it's by trip limits, you know, or a step-down, and so I don't see that anywhere in this whole presentation, but I would highly encourage that. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Randy. I think, as we move forward, we'll talk a little bit more about that. Does anybody else have a question, or a comment? Go ahead, Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Matt Matthews, and I was just wondering how -- What the method is for determining when the recreational catch limit is going to be met. How do we project that, make that decision?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so that's done based on the previous year's catch rates, and it's done similar -- It's kind of similar to the process for red snapper where they look at, you know, the catch rates, how many fish are caught, you know, on a per-time basis, and then they project out, okay, if we have this many fish to catch, and last year they were caught this quickly, then this is how long we think it would take to catch that amount of fish in the next year.

That is one thing, when we get to more of the recreational actions, and kind of the effects on the season, yes, there will be numbers shown on the decision tool of, you know, this date, this number of fishing days, and the numbers that are shown here are to give an idea, a context, based on how the fishery has behaved in recent years, but the actual decision, the actual season length, is still going to be determined using that process of looking at what is the last year's catch rates and what would that be projected forward for the next year.

This is more the decision tool, and the numbers that you're seeing from the decision tool are more to give context. I would not invest heavily on, you know, a difference between 160 days versus 165 days coming out of that tool, but it may indicate, you know, if you have 100 days, versus 250 days, then that would kind of give you an indication of, okay, there could be some significant difference going on there.

MR. KIMREY: Darrin, online.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Yes, sir. Darrin Willingham, northeast Florida, and so why -- I guess this Action 1 is basically looking to try to chop that annual catch limit 50 percent, and why such a drastic change, and I don't agree with that amount of change, and so, if we're looking to try to give recommendations from this advisory panel to the South Atlantic Council, I don't like a 50 percent cut.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Darren, and I'll get your comment up there in a second. Just addressing the question, so the cut that was talked about, as far as a 50 percent change in harvest, kind of looking at the initial information that came out of that SEDAR 76 information, that was where the council was -- A lot of the discussion coming out of that had to do with the projections forward. It had to do with the assumptions of forecasting forward.

There wasn't a whole lot of disagreement among folks about where black sea bass are in the present of black sea bass have experienced quite a bit of decline, and there's been several sources that are supporting that idea, and so, recognizing where they are, what was estimated in the where they are relative to the production that this stock has had in the past, the fishing mortality rate was -- I believe it was at four-times higher than what the fishing mortality rate would be at the maximum sustainable yield.

That has to do not as much with the fishery catching a whole lot of fish, and it has to do with there are fewer fish available in the stock relative to what the fishery has been catching. There's been that decline in abundance, and so, because of that four-times number -- Roughly half of those were dead discard estimates, and the council is kind of considering some actions that would potentially affect the number of dead discards here, but that's also one of those numbers that's really hard to control.

In addressing specifically the harvest portion, you kind of take half of that four, and then, the other two-times the fishing mortality rate, you consider the harvest portion. That's kind of how they got to the point of 50 percent, but, really, the goal here is, like you kind of alluded to, and it's kind of a to stop the bleeding of this. Harvest has been going down, and, while harvest has been going down, fishery-independently-measured abundance has been going down as well, and so that's the intent of this.

You know, as we kind of talked about earlier, the intent of this action is not to be in place in the long-term. Once the assessment is updated and incorporated all the more recent recreational information, then the long-term plan would be developed and put in place. This is meant to be a short-term action, that is likely in place for a few years, that would stop the bleeding, more or less, of what's been happening over the course of the last ten or so years.

MR. WILLINGHAM: I appreciate that, because, obviously, Amendment 37 is just to try to, quote, stop the bleeding, and I think it's Amendment 56, if I get these numbers correct, which is supposed to be the granddaddy, eventually. However, we're still playing with this stuff, making assumptions and decisions on data that is just not great data, and am I wrong in thinking that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess I'm not going to necessarily evaluate the quality of -- I mean, I'm not going to evaluate the quality of the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, because that's one of the, you know, really primary indicators that the council has at its disposal beyond a stock assessment, beyond the landings data.

I would say that there are a large number of assessments, and there is a large amount of management action, that has developed using that Southeast Reef Fish Survey, and that hasn't typically come under the heavy questioning that something like the MRIP data has come under in recent time, because it is a fishery-independent survey, because it's kind of conducted in, you know, a standardized method for sampling fish, and those standardized methods of sampling in that fishery-independent way -- I mean, a lot of fisheries science, and fisheries management, you know, around the world is based on these types of methods of being able to monitor populations.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Okay, and I appreciate that. I just -- My brain always goes back to, and I think Haley alluded to it, and one of our colleagues that is more of a fisheries sales buyer type of

thing alluded to it, and it's like, you know, we still have this underlying, and I'll say red snapper, and are red snapper are the ones causing this decline in this black sea bass population.

I mean, we kind of think so, because it just makes common sense, but, when you push the commonsense idea to the side, and then you look at the data, I mean, data can drive things in very bad ways, and it can -- Unfortunately, it can lock you in, you know, even though we make this decision now, and this is just, you know, a recommendation for this decision now, but, if they implement something, it's always tougher to get it back off the record than it is to think about it and then, and put it back on.

I just remember, earlier in the presentation, where they were talking about not all the data is in there, that recreational data is not in there, and to make a premature decision, pushing forward, especially in the black sea bass, where we don't have an overfished situation, or at least that's what I'm understanding, and it's not because of overfishing, and it's just that they're not there to overfish, and so it's a bit of a slippery slope, and it concerns me, but that's still for the Action 1. I'm not for the 50 percent cut. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. He kind of put you on the spot, didn't he, Mike? Does anybody else have any questions? Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Matt Matthews, and thank you. I just have a comment, and I may be getting ahead of things here, but I do want to go back, and, looking at the literature talking about the social impacts, and it says that the long-term social benefits would be expected, and I think, having heard from Chris, and several other people, I don't know that that's as conclusive of -- I don't know that that statement should be so conclusive.

A couple of years of shutting down this fishery for some may end up losing their ability to continue doing it, some of the headboats and charter captains, for one, and, you know, I texted a buddy of mine a picture of one of the charts we put up the other day, earlier, and not the other day, but he said, so, basically, that means I just need to sell my offshore boat, right, and so, if we shut black sea bass down, there's a lot of folks who depend on black sea bass as something to target during certain portions of the year, and so that long-term social impact may be that we see a fishery, a recreational fishery, just die.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Matt. You know, there's definitely some people that won't be able to fish if they do that spawning closure. You know, like I said earlier, for me, it's my only nearshore target. Fortunately enough, for me, I'll find something else to target. Not everybody has that option, like the headboats and stuff. They don't have that option, and so, K.P., you're up. K.P., are you muted?

MR. SCOTT: I got muted. Do you hear me?

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and we got you.

MR. SCOTT: When was the last South Atlantic Reef Fish Survey done, and at what time of year? I think I know the answer, but I would like to hear it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It's conducted every year. I would need to -- May through October is the timing when they run that survey.

MR. SCOTT: I'm fairly certain I saw the NOAA ship on the AIS in my area sometime around August. You would find a different biomass of fish, if this was done in the North Carolina area, earlier or later in the year. You're not getting complete data doing it middle of the summer. You're going to find different answers to different questions at different times of the year, and I'm adamant about that, and I understand funding is a problem, but it's one more issue with the data that I have.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, K.P. Mike, you going --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, and I'm going to use my limited knowledge of this, because I do not work on that survey, but the things that I do know is that it is used for relative abundance, and not absolute abundance, and so relative abundance tells you is it going up, or is it going down, or is it going up by 10 percent, or 25 percent, or is it going down by 10 percent or 25 percent, and it's not giving you an exact number of the population.

It's more important for these types of surveys to happen in a standardized manner at the same time of year each year, more so than it is to measure every single fish in the population or measure the fish at the optimal time of year when they are available, because what you're looking for is you're looking for the changes, the up and down changes, from one year to the next. You're not looking for what is the absolute number.

That absolute number is scaled from other factors, the catch or other information, but what that survey is used for is to get those percent increase, or percent decrease, each year as it moves -- As you go through time, and so I just wanted to note the intent of that survey, and probably why they do it in the summer is because it's more predictable from a weather standpoint.

You're more likely to get your trips out, and get the number of trips that you need to have go to get the number of samples that you need to have collected to get the precision you need for that type of survey. You're more likely to get that in the summer months, when the weather is better, if you're running it every year, as opposed to the winter months, when the weather can be more unpredictable, and you have a greater chance of not getting all your trips to go.

MR. SCOTT: That's well and good, but I've been out there a long time, and I've seen the NOAA ship doing the survey in different months. They're not always off the coast at the same time, and so what you're saying there doesn't really jibe.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So they sample within May through October, but areas can be randomly selected from year to year at different times, and so, yes, you may see them within that May to October timeframe at a different point, because that month and that location has been randomly selected that year, and you need that random selection, so you're not just hitting the same point, so you're getting coverage of that entire area, and you're getting coverage representative of that timeframe. That's why you may see them in your area at different times in different years.

MR. SCOTT: But that goes back to the point of you're getting different readings at different times.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, I mean, that's a necessary thing, in order to be able to sample that large of an area. It's a necessary thing. You need to hit multiple different areas, multiple different times of the season within that, and, if you do that over the course of years, then you're able to see what those large-scale changes are on an annual basis.

I think, at this point, related to the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, I can follow up with you, K.P., and, if you want me to put you in touch with some of the scientists that are in charge of how that is sampled, and, you know, kind of communicate with them a bit more directly, then I can do that, in follow-up to the meeting. Shoot me a quick email, and I can make sure to make that connection.

MR. SCOTT: Okay. That would be great. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and I just want to follow up on what Mike was saying, and what K.P. and Mike were discussing a second ago. I think there's two parts to the veracity of the data. One is this fishery-independent SERFS survey that seems pretty precise, and has seen a long-term decline in black sea bass, and the other is on the right-hand side of that slide we saw before the break, our misgivings about the MRIP data and some persistent and ongoing concerns about that, and so there's two separate layers, I feel, to this, to the veracity of the data.

The other thing to remember, for K.P.'s point, and just dovetailing on what Mike said about that SERFS survey with the chevron trap, and the annual chevron trap survey that occurs from May to September each year, is you're looking at the region-wide trend, annual region-wide trend, in relative abundance from that fishery-independent index every year.

What K.P. and we're seeing up in Onslow Bay and Raleigh Bay and Long Bay down south of us, we could be seeing a lot of black sea bass, but, if that's a region-wide index, then that might not be picking up these sub-regional differences that we might be seeing up to the north end of the range.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul, and I definitely agree with that. Back to K.P. for just a second. For the chevron trap survey, I would just like to emphasize, and please somebody correct me if I'm wrong, that that data, that's long-term, years, years, years on end, and so, you know, there's going to be discrepancies. I mean, that's part of fisheries management.

There's going to be times that the surveys -- Even if you did it on the exact same date of the exact same year, there's going to be differences that don't fit, but that's the reason they do the long-term, right, Mike? It's years and years and years on end to create that trend. It's not -- They're not trying to move forward with an action because of what happened two months ago on one region-wide survey.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and that's correct. That survey -- I mean, I showed that figure, and the survey goes back to 1990, and so it's been over thirty years of information, and, yes, looking at the long-term trends, the council would not be probably -- I guess I can't speak on what they would or wouldn't do, but it's not likely that the council would be responding in this way to, you know, a one or a two-year decline, but, when you have a situation where there's been a ten-ish-year decline, and it's all been going in the same direction, and that's coupled with the decline in the harvest level,

along with the stock assessment information there, that's kind of where the council had their cause for concern.

MR. KIMREY: John, I'm trying to circle back to you, buddy.

MR. POLSTON: Yes, and I was just curious on the -- John Polston. On the spawning closure on the black sea bass, and the council thinks that that could help, possibly, if they were to have that on the spawning closure, but how could it be important for the black sea bass, but it's not important they don't seem to think for the red snapper?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, and I was having a side conversation. Can you please repeat that, John?

MR. POLSTON: Yes, sir. I was saying they're talking about the spawning closure could possibly help the black sea bass, by closing during the spawning season, agree or disagree, but how come they don't think the same thing about red snapper?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That would have to be a separate question posed to the council. I can't answer for them with that regard. I know, as far as red snapper discussions, and the timing of when it was set, I know that there were discussions about the high season for the fishery playing into the part of why that season occurs there, but, as far as moving forward, what the council would want to do with red snapper, that would be kind of a separate conversation of what's being handled in this amendment, but it's a question that, you know, could be posed to them in that context.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike, and John. Scott, are you good? You good? Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. Chris Conklin. I think a lot of the rationale for that, John, was to be able to harvest the fish, and get the gonads and stuff out to measure the fecundity, and keep track of that for sampling purposes, and also to align with, you know, obviously, good weather, which never happens, for the recreational, to try and satisfy some of their wants, but, if I can remember correctly, it was a lot of to be able to harvest the fish when they actually were in their highest reproductive state, for sampling purpose.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you, Chris, and I'm sorry to change the subject back to my earlier comment, but I did want to clarify one thing. The long-term impact goes beyond just business closure. I think it's a potential for a broader socioeconomic impact on the recreational sector as a whole, because the guy that I mentioned earlier, who told me he was going to have to sell his recreational boat, his offshore boat, if we close black sea bass, is just a recreational private fisherman, and that's just, you know, if we can only fish a couple months out of the year, it's harder to justify the expense of owning and maintaining a boat.

MR. KIMREY: Yes. Thanks, Matt. Darrin.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, and, Matt, I'm just confirming -- Does that language -- Does that reflect what you're saying, or if you could help me just craft language that would capture what you're trying to note.

MR. MATTHEWS: I think that gets at it. I would just say, more generally, it's just a broader social impact on the recreational sector.

MR. WILLINGHAM: This is Darrin. Can I sneak in?

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Sorry. I got muted somehow. Anyway, so I'm just trying to follow along here. Action 1, I think we've talked about some, because that was the reduction in annual catch limit. Are you asking for now comment for each one of the action steps, or are we going to do that sequentially, because I've got some comments for Action 2, but I don't know if this is the time to start talking about it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm planning to do it sequentially. If you all, as an AP, are in a place where you kind of -- I saw we had, you know, a comment from Darrin, within his comments, against this action, and so that would be, you know, kind of selecting Alternative 1, the no action, as your preferred under each of the sub-actions, but, if you all have collectively a recommendation to give as an entire AP, then that would be good, just for clarification, so the council can hear, you know, this is what you all recommend.

You know, depending on what it is, you all could be recommending all the same thing, or, if there are some that recommend this, and some that recommend that, then we can capture that as well, if there's a diversity of opinion, but just kind of coming to some final statement that the AP would have, and that would be very helpful to convey this information to the council.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody? I guess we maybe we should move along, Mike. Matt, real quick.

MR. MATTHEWS: So is now the time for us to say whether we agree or disagree? Okay. I think, in my opinion, 50 percent is a significant reduction. It's a big change, and I would like to see the projected impacts on the season length. It sounds like you all have those numbers of when we would expect the recreational season to close. I would like to see that before we comment on that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. In that case, what we can do -- Because one of the natures of, you know, these decision tools is you have multiple decisions being made, and each one affects the other, and so what we can do is I can pull up the decision tool and kind of show you this is all the preferreds that the council has put forward at this point, and then you all can kind of say whether you want to pick one versus the other.

Would it be helpful for me to then just introduce each of the actions, and then you kind of construct it from the decision tool, after I've kind of introduced each of the actions? Would that be a way to go through it? I'm seeing nodding heads. All right, and so I will introduce each of the four actions, and then what we can do is we can go into the decision tool. We'll start with kind of where the preferred alternatives are right now, and then, if you all want to see options switched up, then we can switch those up, and you can use that in developing your recommendation.

Action 2 would be to establish a spawning season closure for South Atlantic black sea bass. The no action, there currently is not a spawning closure in place. The way that this action is

constructed, Alternative 2 addresses the commercial sector, and Alternative 3 addresses the recreational sector, and the sub-alternatives under each of those address the different months that are being considered of January, February, March, and April.

These months were originally put forward because there is some overlap between these and the black sea bass spawning season, which is estimated to be from I believe February through May. Yes, and peak spawning from February through May, but there also is kind of a regulatory consistency with the shallow-water grouper closure that is in place from January through April, and so that's kind of why these were considered in a month-wise fashion for this range of months.

The way that this is built is you kind of select multiple alternatives to develop what the closure would look like. The council, at this point, has selected February through March for both sectors, and so, for the inclusion of both sectors, the council reiterated, in September, that this is intended to be a spawning closure, and, consistent with other spawning closures, that would mean that both sectors would need to be closed at the same time, in order for the stock to experience the benefit of having that protection during their spawning season, and so that was the reasoning of why they want both sectors at the same time.

They selected February and March, because of kind of specific dynamics within the black sea bass fishery for the commercial sector. January is the highest month for commercial landings, and so they wanted to leave that still available for the commercial fishery to be able to access at that point, and January is also not strongly in that peak spawning period that's been estimated for black sea bass.

The recreational fishery tends to have higher landings as you get into the late spring and early summertime period, and so not extending it further into April was another part of the discussion that the council had, and that was more from a recreational motivated perspective, and so that's kind of how they arrived at that mid-range of February through March to be their preferred alternatives.

It doesn't cover the entire period, but it does cover the initial period, and so there would be that initial period of growth and spawning, and black sea bass spawn multiple times, ideally, throughout that season. They're a multi-batch spawner, and so there is the likelihood that they would have protection for those first few batches of fish to be able to be released within those two months of the initial spawning season.

There's information included in the discussion document about other species that are closed at a similar time. I know that's a concern that's been brought up, of the availability of other species to harvest during that time of year, and so that's noted within that information available for the discussion.

Looking at effects, there's a summary here of kind of biological, economic, and social effects, as discussed here. The spawning season would not -- It would happen within that certain time of year, but the annual landings are expected to be -- As they are, they would be prosecuted in other times of the year. They would be more affected by the annual catch target establishment than necessarily by the spawning season. That's as far as landings on an annual scale.

Looking at the average landing, and so, if the Action 1 preferred alternative were to be in place, that annual catch target for the commercial sector, and this spawning closure of February 1 through March 31 were in place, then the projections, based on the monthly landings from the most recent three-year time period, would estimate no in-season closure for the commercial sector. That would be reflective 306 fishing days, and that is the year length minus those two months when the spawning closure would be in place for the commercial sector.

The recreational sector is analyzed in some tables later on, because it's affected by the bag limit and the size limit, and so we'll get to the recreational sector a little bit later, but this is kind of what's projected for the commercial, and one of the reasons why no in-season closure would be projected is because, after January, February is the next highest month, and so there would be probably some significant impacts of closing in February.

That would be to the -- You know, for the stock, they would be getting additional projection during that time period, but that is a month where the commercial fishery has historically had a high amount of their landings. That's their second highest landings month, and then it kind of declines as you get further and further into the year, and so that is the information that we have concerning the commercial.

The next two actions are dealing more with recreational, and you can take a look at the council's rationale at this point. I've kind of hit some of these points, but I want to make sure that they're put out in front of the AP, so you all can respond to those that you need to, and so kind of the preferred alternative is put forward of February and March. The council discussed this as being a balance between the needs of the fishery sectors, as well as the stock, kind of talking about those effects on the commercial at the front end and the recreational on the back end of the spawning closure.

We discussed the application to both sectors, as the motivation and intent here is for this to be a spawning closure. I talked a bit about January already for the commercial, and recreational having harvest peaks in May and June, and so, in conclusion, the council kind of discussed that their spawning closure at this time of February and March would overlap with the peak spawning, provide significant biological benefits, by closing during above-average harvest months for both sectors, maintain fishing opportunities during critical times for the commercial and recreational sectors, and that would be kind of the balance that they found in considering this information.

Next, looking at the recreational bag limit, the bag limit right now is seven fish per person per day. The council considered alternatives going down to as low as one fish per person per day. The preferred that they settled on at this point is two fish per person per day, and the reasoning for that had to do with how that bag limit affects the recreational season, and I'll show you one piece of results, but we can definitely dive into more variations in the decision tool.

Just considering from the recreational annual catch target from Action 1, if that were to be put into place, as well as the preferred spawning season of February and March, and this would be maintaining the current minimum size limit, because, when we get to Action 4, you'll see that the council has a preferred to maintain the thirteen-inch minimum size limit, and so, incorporating all those factors, the preferred alternative of two fish per person per day would estimate a potential closure date in mid-January, and that would estimate fishing days at 283.

That's taking into account that two months would be closed for the spawning closure, and the council did discuss, and this is one of the things to, you know, reiterate, that these dates are not set. The council kind of looked at that 283 and saw that, depending on year-to-year catch rate variations, there could likely be some years where the season is set for everything, except for those two in the spawning closure, and there would, obviously, be variation. It depends on how the fish are caught from one year to the next, but 283 being close enough to that 306, which is the maximum number that could be realized in that scenario.

There were much more significant drops of moving up to three fish or four fish per person per day, in which you increase that probability that the season would not be the entire possible length, and so that was what was discussed related to the bag limit.

Then, finally, the minimum size limit, and three alternatives were considered. The thirteen-inch is the current level. Eleven inches is the commercial minimum size limit, and so thirteen, twelve, and eleven were all considered within this range of alternatives. The council ultimately preferred thirteen inches at this time, and that was heavily impacted by the projections of how fish would be caught within that time.

This is one of the discussions that's been brought up quite a bit, been brought up within this meeting even, of a lot of fish being caught in that eleven-inch or twelve-inch size area, and so, if there were to be an opening, or a lowering, of the minimum size limit down to those levels, then it's expected that more fish would be caught, more anglers would be able to catch at a higher rate, and that annual amount of fish that would be set would be caught faster than what it would be under a higher minimum size limit.

This is considering information from at-sea headboat observers, and that's probably one of the strongest parts of -- One of the strongest pieces of information for trying to get an idea of what fish are caught on the water, that you don't see returning back to the dock, and what is the size of those fish. That would be one of the main places where we would get that type of information, would be any type of observer program.

The at-sea headboat observers kind of have -- That's the source of the information on what could potentially be caught in that eleven-inch or that twelve-inch size frame, and the effects that it would have on the season would be a pretty strong drop.

Right now, with the preferred alternatives, we talked about how there's that closure date potential of mid-January, two-hundred-and-eighty-something fishing days. That drops if you open up to twelve-inch minimum size limit, and that drops down to eighty-eight fishing days, and a potential closure by the end of June. Even further if there is a drop in the minimum size limit to eleven inches, and that is coming from the kind of the projection that there's a lot of fish in that eleven and twelve-inch size, and so that would lead to a faster catching of the annual catch target.

Those are the initial kind of projections, based on the current preferred alternatives, and, with that large drop, the council discussed that dropping from thirteen to twelve, or lower, the potential benefits of being able to catch a twelve-inch fish are not worth the negative effect of shortening the season by that amount of time, and so that's why they stated, at this point, their preferred alternative is to maintain the thirteen-inch minimum size limit, so the recreational season could be maximized as much as possible under the current set of preferred alternatives from other actions.

That's kind of the big, broad overview. It may be good to address this on a sector-by-sector basis, hit commercial in one frame, and hit recreational in another, and then you all can have kind of collective decisions on what you would like to see as preferred alternatives, as well as develop some of the reasoning associated with those, and so I guess, Mr. Chair, what would you like us to hit first?

MR. KIMREY: Well, thanks, Mike, for breaking that down for us, and I would just like to start out with saying that viewing these potential actions as a regional-wide thing, like we're tasked with doing here, the preferred actions, to me, make a lot of sense. They do, based on science and all that. I mean, I think the council, from a regional standpoint, has nailed this to the board with their preferred actions.

Of course, you know, I'm just one person, but it looks really good to me. I just want to clarify that my problem with what's happening with sea bass, and I just want everybody to understand, is this is one of the few stocks that there's already an imaginary line drawn in a region to separate it. I want everybody to understand that. It's already there, and there's lots of indicators that that line could be moving, and even though, as a regionally, everything, the preferred actions, in my opinion, look really good. The council has done an excellent job.

This is the one stock that maybe we need to look at a little differently, moving forward. I know we can't do that today, and I just want everybody to think about that, and so, with that being said, let's move into -- I guess we'll do just like Mike said, and let's start with, you know, the recreational sector, and go through these actions, and take comments and questions, and figure out what we're going to do here. Go ahead, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and I'm just throwing this out for conversation's sake, and this is, you know, something for the recreational stakeholders to consider, if we're starting with that sector first in this discussion, and this almost seems like a version of the MSE without a statistical framework.

We're looking at this range of alternatives between spawning closures and bag limits and that kind of thing, and did the council consider -- Did the council staff consider running a fourteen-inch bag limit, so you got a prettier fish?

Would that enable the season to stay open that much longer, and that's just something maybe for the recreational stakeholders on the AP to consider, because, if that would result in a longer season yet, compared to a thirteen-inch, then that might be -- You know, I'm hearing, from the recreational folks like Matt and Chris, that, if you've got a seasonal closure, that's really, really going to hurt the recreational, the charter boats and the recreational folks, and so that's just something to throw out there, if we want to see that alternative alongside the other alternatives, and that might present a further range of options to consider.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So the council did not request a fourteen-inch minimum size limit alternative. The council moved into this process kind of out of Amendment 56 and wanting to do something in the more immediate fashion, noting that, okay, black sea bass -- When SEDAR 76 finished initially, and that finished up in, I think, 2023, and that was the first time that the SSC had a conversation, and, you know, took a look at that assessment, but, since that point, there have been

several years where black sea bass has been in this decline, and condition, and the council has seen that going on, and the council has had this back-and-forth with the SSC, and the Science Center, and all these groups have been, you know, moving the information back and forth of, okay, what should be done here.

While that has happened, there's been several more years where the exact same trend that was noticed in 2022 has just continued, and gone even further down, and so the council -- Their discussion is they wanted to move this action quickly.

In June, when they got to the point of they're not ready to move on information from the update assessment, but they need to put something in place, they took the information that was kind of scoped through 56, which you all had some discussion on, and that was one of your previous AP meeting discussions, was kind of what should be the range of alternatives that could be considered for the minimum size limit, and a lot of that discussion centered around lowering the minimum size limit to allow people to keep more of those recreational twelve and eleven-inch fish.

None of that discussion, at that point, indicated an interest in looking at a higher recreational minimum size limit, and so that's kind of how that conversation progressed. At this point, if the council is going to achieve their end of putting in an action that will go into place sometime in 2026, adding one of those options wouldn't be something they could do while maintaining their current timeframe, and so that would be something that would delay, push things back a little bit.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul and Mike. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian, charter-headboat, North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and so I would like to applaud the council of listening to what I think we've been saying from the charter-headboat side of the table.

One of the most critical things is how do we continue to fish, and how do we make it the longest fishing season we can, because, at the end of the day, we have to be able to offer our customers on the water, or else we're all out of business. The general framework, from what we're looking at, and I do want a clarification, and so Amendment 37 is a stock-gap for three to five years, and is that what the sort of -- I mean, just generally, and I'm not going to put you to it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, the discussion so far has been, ideally, shorter than that. Ideally, the stock assessment would be updated within 2026, once we have the new -- You know, we get -- The estimated date for getting that new recreational data is I think April, like spring of 2026, and so then the scientists would work on putting that into the stock assessment, and ideally finish it by 2026, and then the council would be back developing Amendment 56, hopefully, for implementation. They would probably finish it sometime in 2027, and implement by 2028. That would be my guess. Ideally, it wouldn't be down into the five-year range, but, you know, maybe closer to the two to three-year time period.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Okay, and so, with that being said, and that clarification, based on what we're looking at now, and for me and my companies that we have, and definitely I've got more skin in the game than anybody else, for sure, and, you know, just so the council knows just my input on all the recommendations, I think that, the seasonal closure from February to March, if we could

take maybe a little bit of look at that, because the one thing that -- When I look at my calendar, Easter falls in that timeframe.

Easter can be early or late, and so even seven days can be a big difference in our business model, because, between now and then, we're going to lay out about half-a-million dollars of cash to make repairs, and things like that, and so that influx of cash at the start of the season is literally a lifeline to get us going for the next season, because we're spending a lot during that timeframe, and so just something to look at.

I know it's easy to make blocks of time, thirty days here and thirty days there. If there's, I mean, even a February through March 23<sup>rd</sup> every year, you know, or whatever, you know, but, for our sector, and our economic impact, that is absolutely critical that we don't miss a lick in that timeframe, because that cash influx is huge.

The thirteen-inch deal, I think we don't mess with it. It's been thirteen inches. Everybody is used to thirteen inches, and we've got enough changes coming our way. Excellent decision is to stay with that.

The two versus three fish, when I look at the calendar, and I only see thirty days difference in those, and there are other species open during November and December that we can catch, I would recommend the council maybe look at taking a harder look at the three-fish-per limit, if we're going to get into that late October or November, and possibly closing, or possibly not closing, just because grouper is open, and, you know, triggers are in pretty close, and beeliners are in.

There's other stuff that we can do, recreational and charter-headboat, and I think our customers -- I feel three fish is okay. Two fish, which is a 70, or 80, or 60 percent drop in what they currently have, that might be hard for some of them to wrap their head around and still want to pay the money to go out and go fishing, if they're only at two fish. Just some of my input.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Cameron. I'm sorry that I missed part of that. I had to step out for just a second, but let me remind everybody, and this is not just for the for-hire sector. It's hugely important to the for-hire sector, but it's important to everybody, is access. We need access to fish, and, when it comes to sea bass in North and South Carolina, and probably Georgia, you know, during that timeframe, when they're talking about that spawning closure, and I'll say it again, and it is literally our only nearshore target.

You know, you're not going to go out there on a half-day trip on a -- You know, even on a headboat, or center console like mine, that's much faster, and make it far enough off the beach to catch anything else other than that sea bass in those two months, and, even though there's some years that we don't have a lot of trips, because the weather is not great, unfortunately, ever anymore, it seems like, but, on the years, and this year being one of them, that the weather is decent, we need access to something, and sea bass is it.

I mean, I would tend to agree with Cameron on that. There's other times of the year that they're talking about, you know, leaving availability to that bass when we have access to lots of other fish, and so if we had to -- You know, I know that, you know, they're batch spawners, according to Mr. Mike over here, and so, if they're going to spawn other times, why couldn't we increase that limit

and give us access during those months when the fishing is good, and it's a higher quality of fishing, and it's a cleaner fishery?

During those months, for me, and I can speak for myself, and I can't really speak for everybody, but, during those months, that fishery, for us, is a hugely clean fishery. We don't even use bait. On my boat, we use artificials. We have very few undersized fish. We have -- You know, we're using two-ounce bucktails, with worms and plastics and gulp baits and things like that, and you have almost no bycatch, and, because of the artificials you're using, you have almost all keeper fish.

I mean, you know, I did some trips this past year, in February and March, where -- It depends on the quality of angler I have. You know, if I have some hotshot anglers, we'll catch limits, no problem. If I have, you know, entry-level anglers, it's much harder, but -- I'll make up numbers that are going to be fairly close, and, if we caught forty bass, you know, thirty of them are keepers, and I feel like our release mortality was probably zero, because we're catching them on artificials.

Even though it's a J-hook, you almost always hook them in the corner of the mouth, or the jaw, and, if you do decide to release that fish, you're fishing shallow enough, in cold enough water, that there's almost zero release mortality, and almost no bycatch. I mean, that's textbook for what you should achieve, seek to achieve, in a fishery, and they're going to shut it down, the one time of the year we can do it. You know, I would rather go with Cameron and say, you know, make the bag limit a little higher, the season a little shorter, and leave it open when the fishing is good. You know, that's my two-cents. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to reiterate what Cameron said, and, when we talk about -- I guess, particularly in Action 2, and the social and economic impacts, it's really easy to look at an EIS on paper and say, oh, well, the weather is bad in the wintertime, January and February and March, and not that much fishing effort, not that many trips are occurring, but what I really need these folks who are making these decisions to understand is that, even though you're not taking a lot of trips, the winter has been long, you know, and you're coming out of the boatyard.

All of your money is coming out, and so, those two or three trips that you can get here in January, February, and March, you have to have that, and not to make a profit, but to hopefully get to the break-even mark. So even though, you know, numbers on paper might be on the lower side, that's not reflective of the importance of this access and of this fishery, particularly for the folks up in the Carolinas, and so, you know, hopefully make a note of that, and look at other potential options, but please lean on your AP members here at the table who are telling you how important the access is, particularly in these times.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Haley, and, you know, as an operator in the for-hire sector for many years, it's exactly what she said. You know, and I made this comment earlier, and, if I'm fortunate enough to book some charters in February and March, and there's a spawning season closure on sea bass, and the weather is good, I have the availability of some inshore fish, but not nearshore, and, if I lost those trips altogether, fortunately enough for me, I'm going to survive, but, just like Haley said, you know, it's a seasonal business.

For all of us that are in it, even if it's only a couple of trips, at the end of the year, and it's not going to change your bottom line a whole lot, but you spend part of your season coasting, and you spend

the other part of your season actually making money, and those two months are months that those couple of trips make that coasting a little smoother. You know what I mean? It does make a difference, and, if there's a way around it, I would recommend using it. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I'll just go back to, you know, for us, and the scale that we do business on, which is relatively large, you know, the council is going to have to make a decision. They're going to have to take actions to do something, and so, you know, my statement was, hey, we are okay with the closure, and just, you know, if you can look at that closure, you know, not going all the way up into the very end of March, it would be beneficial for us.

You know, this is a tough deal for us in the Carolinas, because it's such a large part of what we do, and have been doing for generations, and the council knows that, in the Carolinas, it's a different geographical region, and we catch stuff consistently. I mean, my captains have told me that, and the statistics show that. You know, it's going to take some time to mince out how it works long-term for the Carolinas to, you know, maybe change the way things are being done in that area, because it is very, very different.

Just, once again, you know, so, for me and my company, and the guys who work for me, and I mean, we hire like sixty people, I think we have in our operation, and, you know, it's important that we are able to keep fishing, but we realize that, hey, if we've got to be closed for a spawning section that February into March, and, I mean, I don't care. We'll go do fishing rodeos where it's all catch-and-release and have, you know, bet on the biggest sea bass that gets thrown back and survives.

You know, we will adapt and overcome to make our business work, and that's what we sort of have to do, and so I think the council realizes this, and they're working with us. These are just my ideas on, hey, from what we have in front of us, the three fish would be better. I think our customers are going to respond to that better. If we can look at tweaking the months, that's good, and I think they really did the best job they could with the information they have to give us the biggest season we can get.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Cameron. Mike, and then we don't want to miss Darrin.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Cameron, I've heard, you know, you kind of discussing tweaking the end of that spawning closure. There's going to be a limitation to the kind of like the season projection analysis, and I'll show it up, to give the example of that. This is going to be a place where, if the council is going to justify that, then they're going to need to have some discussion related to how things might actually play out, and so what happens is, if you plug in -- You know, simply plugging in the numbers of two fish per person per day, and I can shorten that, you know, that March end, you know, and say it's fifteen days, and so you go through March 15.

What it does is it doesn't really change anything, as far as the season length, because the -- You know, what's being projected here is the season is already closed before then, and so it's already closed, even before the spawning closure has gone into place. Now, on the one hand, that says, well, those days wouldn't be available for fishing anyway. On the other hand, it says it wouldn't, you know, make a difference one way or the other if those fifteen days were open.

It's going to be difficult to try to isolate those last fifteen days, because, also, the recreational fishing year starts over on April 1, and so trying to get that last, you know, week, or a couple of weeks, in March is going to be difficult to do, because that means there needs to be a certain amount of harvest available that's held out for that entire fishing year, the spawning -- You know, go through the spawning closure, and then there's a little bit available for that end time period, and so that's going to be a bit difficult with the way the current fishing year is set up because it resets on April 1.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Mike, thanks for that clarification. In that case, it wouldn't really make a difference, because the season would have already ended, whether it's November or January before the March timeframe anyway, and so we'll just gamble on the fish, and I'm good with that.

MR. KIMREY: Darrin, you still standing by?

MR. WILLINGHAM: I am, and so just wanting to -- For my brain, I have to make sure I segment things out, and so, just talking about Action 2, in Action 2, I suggest Alternative 1, do not close that bottom, and do not close for the spawning season. We're talking about a species that is still not deemed overfished, yet the council's preferred thoughts are to still stop bottom fishing, you know, so they can deal with their spawning, and try to improve it that way, again in a species that's not overfished, and so I would recommend Alternative 1 for Action 2. I do have ideas for the other actions, but I would assume you would prefer to wait till we get to those actions, and is that correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think you can -- Because I've kind of already gone through the overview of them, if you want to throw out recommendations for the other actions, then that may be something to get conversation going, and folks can respond to it.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Gotcha, and I was just trying to do it, you know, segmentally so we could go -- So, as for the support for the thirteen-inch recommended minimum size, I don't agree with that. We get out there, and it was unfair, many years ago, when we got, in the recreational sector, pushed up to thirteen inches. Everybody was supposed to be thirteen inches, and then the commercial guys, from my limited understanding on this, and please correct me if I'm wrong, was that, well, wait a minute, this is going to be some huge economic impact, because they have these traps that are already set at an eleven-inch size, and so that would be a multi-million dollar hit to their industry to redo their traps to go up to the thirteen-inch size.

The recreational fishermen have taken that hit, and the commercial fishermen still have that eleven-inch, and so I would recommend, on -- What was it? Action 3, and is that the one for -- Action 3 for the -- Let's see here. Come on, and I'm trying to get there. Reduce the recreational bag limit, and so let's go to Action 4, and I apologize.

So I would -- In Action 4, I would recommend Alternative 3, to drop it down to eleven inches, because you're worried about all this dead loss, that's potentially not occurring, but there's some worry that it's occurring, and, if these folks can catch eleven-inch sea bass, they're still going to get a nice meal off the side of that little guy. Twelve inches, we would be, you know, tickled pink to get a twelve-inch, and so Alternative 2 or Alternative 3 would work out very well for our northeast Florida fishermen.

Then, sneaking back to all Action 3, if you would, for reducing the recreational bag limit, I would suggest Alternative 1 there. Don't hurt us anymore. It's already been, you know, dropped, dropped, dropped, dropped, and now you're talking about taking, you know, a seven-per-day limit and dropping it to two, and that's just -- That's killing us, and so I would strongly recommend not doing that, and I just think let's try to make it fair across the board, and we also are -- I keep hearing this, you know, about, well, we need to wait for that 2026 stock assessment. I know that Amendment 37 is just trying to stop, quote, the bleeding, but I really think we don't want to make a premature decision. I think that got it all out. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. I think Mike has recorded most of your comments. Did you get them all, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I got down the recommendations, and, actually, I'll go ahead and pull down -- Darrin previously recommended Alternative 1 for all actions, all sub-actions, under Action 1, and so I'll put that up there. That way, it's up visually, and people can provide comments on, you know, support, or which way to go. If you all get to a point where you feel strongly, and want to put something forward as a motion, then that can be a clear way for the AP to have, you know, some type of vote, or pass what you all think is in the best interest for an overall recommendation coming out of this.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you. Sounds great.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin and Mike. I said comments, and I meant recommendations. Anybody else have any recommendations?

MR. SEBASTIAN: I would be willing to just put forth a motion based on what I had said earlier.

MR. KIMREY: Okay.

MR. SEBASTIAN: A two- month closure, February and March, thirteen inches, three fish per person, and I think that covers most of the --

MR. KIMREY: That sounds like it mirrors the preferred action, with the exception of the three fish per person.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Right.

MR. KIMREY: So I guess that would be under the assumption that the season would close --

MR. SEBASTIAN: A little bit earlier.

MR. KIMREY: Off of the target.

MR. SEBASTIAN: If you want to put that up, yes, and so what does the three-fish limit do? I think I saw it would be November, instead of January. Just, Mike, while you're doing this, I would like to step back to a comment Haley made of bass being pushed off areas. I mean, listen, and I'm not a scientist. I'm just a rum-dumb fisherman diver guy who does stuff, but, from what I see -- I

mean, I dropped on an area that I've never dove before, like very close to the beach the other day, super close to the beach.

What was on the site were American reds, gray grouper, scamp grouper, in super, super close, and triggerfish, and one or two bass, and so, you know, there might be some -- You know, if those bigger fish, more powerful fish, are moving onto some of these reefs, the bass might be there, and they're just moving on to the flatter areas that -- You know, they're just changing their areas. I'm just throwing that out there, as from eyes on the ground and what I saw like four days ago.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Cameron, we have up here -- This is the difference, and so a three-fish bag limit, and this is what the projection would look like, the end of November, roughly 240 fishing days, versus a two-fish bag limit would be mid-January, roughly 280 fishing days, and so that's the difference between those two options.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody else? My two-cents' worth, and I can't vote on the motion, but, with what we've got to work with, I mean, I'm kind of rolling with Cameron here. We've got to make a decision to push something back to the council, and so does anybody have anything outside of what Cameron is saying? K.P.

MR. SCOTT: Can you hear me?

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and we got you.

MR. SCOTT: With the headboat in my area, I'm going to push Alternative 4. I agree with Cameron, and leave the size limits alone, Alternative 4, and go with that. That's -- We can stomach that.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, K.P. Haley, did you have a comment? No. Anybody else? I thought I saw another hand. All right, and so we'll let Mike -- Darrin has a comment, while Mike is working on this motion. Go ahead, Darrin.

MR. WILLINGHAM: If we're looking at making a motion, it would be nice to have a consensus from our group, and I know you're trying to get that with this vote, but so the motion being put out there for the closures and stuff like that, I mean, that's -- So far, my understanding is it's one person's opinion, and so I will say that the --

MR. KIMREY: Darrin, I'm going to interrupt you, real quick. Once we get the motion, we will vote on it, and so I think you are headed in the direction that we're already going, and I didn't mean to overstep you. I just wanted to, you know, let you know. Once Mike gets it done, we'll read it back to you, and then we will actually vote on that motion, okay?

MR. WILLINGHAM: Okay.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thanks, man.

MR. WILLINGHAM: I just think there's a lot of stuff in that motion, you know, and so it's -- It's difficult, but, you know, if you're trying to put in -- If you had a motion for each one of the actions, it might be a little cleaner, but that's my opinion.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Good morning, Mr. Chair. I've been sitting here listening for quite a while, and, if I'm understanding correctly, if we don't make some sort of motion like this today, then we could open ourselves up to the talk of closures again outside of February and March, but it seems like, to me, and this has nothing to do with the motion, period, but, going back to some of the comments you made, and it really resonated with me, as someone who has fished for a lot of largemouth bass in freshwater and cold water, shallow and deep, is the barotrauma on these fish is not the same as it is when you're catching them out in the summer, and so why are we managing the fish as if they're red snapper out a hundred-plus feet, if these are essentially inshore fish that are being kept there?

It seems, to me, that the dead discards are being counted as if, you know, this is still peak summertime in July, and so where is it that there's a management disconnect between the way that the actual fish is being caught, and is it just falling into the same box of fishery management as it pertains to red snapper and other deepwater fish, because it seems like, to me, the way, that Chris just laid -- Or excuse me, and the way that the chair just laid out the way in which he catches the fish, that there's hardly any dead discards, and so why is it still being counted?

It just seems like we always get back to these dead discards, on every single thing that we talk about, and it's like we can't have anything nice, because of these dead discard numbers, and he's telling you that his real-life experience is showing him that there are no dead discards, because he's catching them in shallower water, and he's catching them, you know, in the corner of the mouth, and so I'm just confused as to why we're still trying to manage fish as if it's -- As if they're being caught in, you know, a hundred or 200 feet, and, you know, there being a significant issue with barotrauma, and their swim bladders, and needing to be vented, et cetera. I guess just general discussion, and do we not need to sort of think about how we're managing black sea bass compared to other species, or is it just easier to put a square peg in a circle hole?

MR. KIMREY: So, Gettys, I'll make a comment. So, for my comments, I do want to clarify that I was referring to the February and March timeframe, of how me and my clients catch those fish, and how I see our release mortality unfold, or the lack thereof, for my little piece of the world, and on my boat, you know.

We have to remind ourselves, and this is one of the things, and I'm sure everybody that's listening in, and sitting in this room, can feel my frustration, but I still understand that we're trying to manage this regionally, and we've got to make decisions that we don't always agree with. You know, I speak of that rut. We're in that rut, but we're not going to get out of it today, and we're not going to get out of it before that December meeting, and, as bad as that sounds, that's the reality we live in.

That was my little world that I was speaking of. Outside of that, I know, in my area, there's a ton of dead discards on sea bass, and a lot of them happens in inland waters, and it's not recorded in any fashion. They have to completely estimate it, because it's by anglers that don't have anything to do with federal fisheries. They don't have any kind of federal permit. They're not even fishing in the ocean, and there's a lot of dead discards, and so you have to remember that they're trying to

lump four states' worth of stuff in, and I think there is a lot of release mortality on sea bass, unfortunately, and I think Mike had some comments as well.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and just addressing -- We've talked about it a little bit earlier in the meeting, but I just wanted to reiterate, related to that point, that the estimates used in stock assessments related to dead discards of black sea bass -- The discard mortality rate for the recreational sector is 15 percent. That means that 85 percent of black sea bass that are caught and released by the recreational sector are estimated to survive.

Now, that is a number that, you know, there can absolutely be fluctuations of different areas. There are some anglers that are better at handling the fish, that would be individually higher, and there are some anglers that are poor at handling the fish, that would be individually lower, and so that is a collective rounded, you know, average number that is trying to encapsulate the variety, and there's a whole lot of variety that we see within the recreational sector.

There's a whole lot of variety that we see with black sea bass specifically, because they cover, at different seasons of their life, different parts of a depth range, and they go through these movements of following different water temperatures, and so there's a lot of variability in there, and, even with all that variability, the estimate is still that 85 percent, over eight out of ten black sea bass that are caught and released by the recreational fishermen, are surviving.

What that's saying is that the effect of the dead discards is not as much on saying that all these fish are dying whenever they're getting thrown back. It's saying that there are a whole lot of these fish that are being caught and released, and many of them being released due to, you know, not meeting the minimum size limit, but that's -- The magnitude of the number of releases, how many fish are being released, is the bigger impact than the number of fish that are dying, the rate of fish, or the percentage of fish, that die after they are released, when it comes to black sea bass, because of the factors that have been brought up of, you know, the preference for colder water, and they're found and caught a bit more inshore at times, and so all those factors are coming into play, and that plays into why black sea bass are a hardy fish. There's just a lot of them that end up getting released.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike, and, to summarize, compared to red snapper, the council, and the staff, recognize that sea bass are about twice as successful being released, at 15 percent, versus nearly 30 on ARS, right? In general, isn't it high twenties?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: ARS is like about twenty.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and so they still recognize that they release better than snappers, to go back to Getty's original concern. K.P., go ahead.

MR. SCOTT: I don't have anything further. I'm sorry for that.

MR. KIMREY: No worries. Thank you, man. Anybody else? Okay, and so, if nobody has anything, since Mike typed it, I'll get Mike to read the motion, and then we'll take a vote, and I'll do the yeas or nays on that, but, Mike, could you read the motion?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think, just as my role as staff, it would be more appropriate either for the chair or for the motion maker to read it into the record.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and let's do that.

MR. KIMREY: I can read it, maybe. Can I see that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We also need a second before it can be -- We should have had a second before.

MR. KIMREY: We should have had a second. **Let's do that, and so Cameron's motion here is recommend alternatives for the following measures: February through March closure, three fish bag limit, and thirteen-inch recreational size limit.** Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I'll second the motion. Chris Conklin.

MR. KIMREY: There's our second. All right. A show of hands in favor of this motion from the AP members. You can abstain.

MR. BRANNON: A question. Am I allowed to vote, even though I could not come to the meeting?

MR. KIMREY: Yes, you are.

MR. BRANNON: I am in favor.

MR. KIMREY: If you are in favor, and you're participating online, just raise your hand like you were going to make a comment, or have a question, and leave it there until we total. I think it's --

MR. WILLINGHAM: How do I vote nay?

MR. KIMREY: Leave your hand down.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Okay, because I really -- In discussion on this motion, I really think we should split it off into the four actions and have motions for each action.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Darrin, give us just a minute here, and let us count the yeas, and we will circle back to the nay vote. Okay, all the yeas, you can put your hands down. So, on the yea votes, we have sixteen. Let's ask everybody that prefers to vote nay. If you're online, raise your hand, and leave it raised. Anybody that's in the room, raise your hand if you vote nay. I think we've got those counted. Okay. Are there any -- We have one abstain.

I'm going to read the motion, and then I'll read the tally on the votes. This motion, and if you're not me, I'm going to ask you to mute your mic for a minute. **This motion is recommend alternatives for the following measures: February through March closure, three-fish bag limit, thirteen-inch recreational minimum size limit.** This is a motion to send to the council on our opinion of their actions, and it's very similar to what they had as their recommendations. **We have sixteen yeas, one nay, and one abstain, which means it's approved by the AP.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, with that recommendation, we have some comments captured from the discussion that has been had. I think that covers it. Notably, I just want to point out that, within that motion, there was no recommendation on Action 1. There was nothing there, and does the AP want to submit a formal recommendation concerning that action or not?

MR. KIMREY: Does anybody have any feedback on Action 1? Should we browse back up there, real quick, and just take a quick peek before we move on. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Was that November closure date based on reaching that 50 percent?

MR. KIMREY: The target. Yes, and it's based on the target.

MR. MATTHEWS: So that -- I mean, that gives us an answer to the 1 too, doesn't it, sort of?

MR. KIMREY: I would say so.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, just clarifying, and it may need to be -- You know, if we need a separate motion, then we may need to have that, but is that a recommendation from the AP? We had one from Darrin earlier recommending Alternative 1, which would be no action. Is there any recommendation that would recommend Alternative 2, that is already worked into the projections there?

MR. KIMREY: So I think Matt's question was, with the motion that the AP just voted on, isn't it relying on a catch target to close?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The projections are, yes, but that also -- Like if you all want to, you know, have some type of statement where you're not supportive of annual catch targets going into place, but, you know, if they have to go into place, then those are the regulations that you would like to see, then that's fine. You can leave it as-is, and not provide a recommendation on Action 1. I just want to make sure we're capturing what you all want to say to the council, what type of information you want to convey to them.

MR. KIMREY: So we can come up with another motion, or we can leave this to let nature take its course, because of the previous motion. I can't do that, and it's up to you guys. Does anybody want to actually move forward with a motion on Alternative 1, which would, you know, be something other than letting the council handle it for us, in a nutshell? Anybody? Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley Stephens. I think, at this point, it only makes sense to move forward with Preferred Alternative 2 and establish the annual catch target.

MR. KIMREY: Do you want to do that via motion?

MS. STEPHENS: I would like to make the motion to select Preferred Alternative 2 under Action 1, establish the annual catch target for black sea bass.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. While Mike is working on that, Darrin.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Yes, and this is where it gets a little frustrating to me, because, if we could have gone one by one by one by one, then we would have -- It's tough to vote on something with so many different variables in there, and so I know it's too late now, I would assume, but this is where it would have been, all right, let's vote on Action 1, and then we get the AP's decision on that, but it's frustrating how that happened. That's my comment.

MR. KIMREY: Darrin, just out of curiosity, what do you mean one by one by one? I want to understand that. I want to make sure I understand what you mean by that.

MR. WILLINGHAM: No worries, and so go to Action 1, where you have all the various alternatives, and so make a motion that, you know, we say Action 1, Alternative 1, and get a second on that, and say does everybody agree with that, and perfect, and now we can send that for Action 1. Then we go to Action 2, again, with all of its alternatives, and pick an alternative. I know it's tedious, but at least, you know, when you get the motion that says, okay, close the bottom, keep it at thirteen, and a bag limit of three, it's kind of like there's so many variables in there.

MR. KIMREY: So not to interrupt again, but --

MR. WILLINGHAM: No, and you're good.

MR. KIMREY: I do understand what you're saying, but the motion we moved forward was kind of a conglomeration. We kind of picked out what we wanted and turned it into our recommendation, instead of going line to line with yeas or nays. Isn't that what we did?

MR. WILLINGHAM: Well, it's just different ways of dealing with it. That just seemed a bit frustrating, to shove all that in there.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. All right. Well, we're working on another motion now, and I think I'll read that. Are we ready? Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Would you like me to read the motion?

MR. KIMREY: Yes.

MS. STEPHENS: **Motion to recommend Alternative 2 (annual catch target) under Action 1 sub-actions as the preferred.**

MR. KIMREY: All right. Does anybody want to second that motion?

MR. SEBASTIAN: I'll second. Cameron Sebastian.

MR. KIMREY: All right. We have it seconded from Cameron. A show of hands and online for yeas on this motion to recommended Alternative 2 (ACT) under Action 1 sub actions as preferred. It looks like everybody in attendance, except for we have one abstaining. I'm not sure about online. Okay. Everybody that's yea, lower your hand. Everybody that's nay, raise your hand, online and in the room. We have one abstention. **All right, and so we have fifteen in favor, one opposition, one abstain. So that motion passed the AP. Approved.**

Okay, that rounds up black sea bass. Not as bad as I thought it was going to be. How is everybody feeling? Everybody feeling good? Do we need to take a quick break, or just push on?

MR. MCKINLEY: We didn't do commercial.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and you're exactly right. I was trying to slide that through, man. You could have just not had any changes recommended, Randy, and you just messed that up. We almost got it. Yes, and let's hit that. That will take us into lunch, probably.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, well, I mean, the commercial -- The only commercial action, so you all passed -- You know, I guess I want to check. That noted Preferred Alternative 2, this action addressed both commercial and recreational annual catch targets, and so that was kind of a package deal. Is that understood that the commercial was in with that? Okay, and I see nodding heads. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Did we talk about the impact that that's going to have on the commercial fishery? Is that -- As far as their season is concerned, what changes it's going to create?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I can go ahead and bring up that. We went through some that were in the discussion document, but I can bring up that decision tool, to kind of show what the current preferreds breakdown would be, and we can toggle options. Okay, and so what has been discussed to this point would be February and March, and we've been looking at the three-year average.

What was discussed, and now it's coming back in my head, and I remember the discussion, and so, because February would be closed, and February is a very high landings month, let's say, you know, and remove this, just so you can see what the monthly landings breakdown looks like, because that's captured here on the screen. These are the average landings, this row right here, and you can see February is a high landings month for the commercial.

Removing that, plus March, really ends up with the rest of the season is estimated to probably be open for the commercial sector. It would just be those two months, and there wouldn't be a projected in-season closure under that scenario, and this does -- Of course, just always caveating these projections, because this assumes similar fishing behavior from the commercial fishery as before, and so that means they would be fishing about the same in April and May and June, as opposed to February and March. Like the only effect that's being captured here is that there will be a closure in February and March.

The reality is recognizing that there may be some change in commercial behavior. There may be more of an emphasis on black sea bass, maybe in that January timeframe, or, you know, commercial fishermen are going to adjust, but this gives a rough look at this is what it could look like in that -- You know, with those assumptions of recent behavior in that closure.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I just -- I mean, I just had a couple of things I wanted to say. I mean, one is that, you know, given that it is going to go down to that 47,000 pounds or whatever, I hate to give up the only thing that, with bad weather, that we can actually commercially fish for in February and March. You know, you can catch those bass in twenty to twenty-five miles, but, with that

being said, the Mid-Atlantic has already destroyed our prices, and so we're not even doing it anyway.

I mean, if we've got to do it, I could go along with that, with the council's preferred, and that's what I was going to recommend, is that we go along with the council's preferred. The main thing is I just don't want it closed all year, and so, if I had to give up those two months, that would be it, given that the price is terrible, and it's not going to get any better.

I guess the only thing I did want to say, also though, is it seems like this, with the red porgy, if it's, you know, predation down in Florida, or whatever, and the population is shifting, and what if these things that we do don't really help anything, and is -- You know, then we get into even a longer-term measure.

I don't know, but, I mean, we have to think about that, but then, also, I guess the fact that trapping is really not -- It's just not economically feasible anymore, and I don't even know how many boats are still trapping, but I know it's not much, and so I could see even moving the size limit up to twelve or thirteen inches, possibly, on that bass. Something for the future, but that's my comments on that.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Randy, and that's one of the things that worries me. You know, this is supposedly to stop the bleeding. I'm skeptical it's going to change much. I'm just saying, you know, and I'm just one guy. Mike, where we at here?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess so sounds like the recommendation commercially, and this kind of -- We clarified this, that the recommendation from the AP would be for that same timeframe of spawning closure as what was passed for the recreational, that February through March timeframe, both sectors would be closed in the same timeframe, and is that correct?

MR. KIMREY: That's how I understood it, the spawning closure. Just like with shallow-water grouper, I mean, everything is --

MR. MCKINLEY: I mean, that would be it. I mean, our prices are so bad that it doesn't really matter anyway. Scott, what do you think? Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Before we move on, your comment just made me think, and we've got two alternatives that are kind of getting blurred in that recreational motion that we went over, and that is the 50 percent reduction in catch and a seasonal spawning season closure, and I want to make sure that we're not talking about both of those in what we did for the recreational side of things. What I mean by that is we're not talking about something where we could potentially lose fishing days because of a seasonal closure in addition to days we lose because we met that catch limit.

MR. KIMREY: So, to do three fish, according to the projections, and correct me if I'm wrong, Mike, to keep three fish retention-wise, versus two, we kind of had to sign up for that target, which is going to end the season prior to the time it would close for shallow-water, for the spawning, correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so this table shows kind of the comparison of the two-fish bag limit versus the three-fish bag limit, and so you all recommended the three-fish. The projected closure

date is end of November, as opposed to mid-January, and so that's what was recommended within that motion, and, yes, this projection does take into account February and March being closed for spawning and the ACT reduction already in place.

MR. MATTHEWS: Gotcha. I just wanted to make sure.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Matt. Scott.

MR. BUFF: We have completely obliterated this fishery, down to nothing, and, when you said what you said about you had little hope of it fixing anything, I just -- I know where we're at, and we've got to do something, and I understand all that, and it's talking on deaf ears, I guess, but, at the end of the day, something is not right here.

We've took all this pressure out of this fishery, and we've cut it down to where -- I don't know how Randy and them are, but I remember, in the wintertime, when we lived on it. You know, that's what we -- That's all we had to do from November until probably February, until, you know, grouper opened back up in May, but we have completely just took this fishery to nothing, and I understand where we're at, but I don't know how we're ever going to get anywhere, and I don't think that what we're doing, or how we're going about it, is changing the issue or fixing the problem.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Scott. Anybody else? All right, and so here's what is going to happen, hopefully. It is 11:49. We're going to break for lunch until 1:00, maybe, since you all run late, and no later than a 1:15 return.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. KIMREY: All right, everybody. We're getting started here. One thing that I failed to do was go through our council members at the start of this meeting, which they've switched up a little bit today. Should I just introduce them, or should I get them to do it themselves? Maybe we'll just start on this end, and work our way down, just a quick introduction.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We can just say that they're here.

MR. KIMREY: I think everybody saw they were here.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, but the people online know.

MR. KIMREY: So we won't go through the names then, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I can just, real quick.

MR. KIMREY: We'll let Mike do it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to make sure we acknowledge that we've got four council members in the room, and there may be others listening online for the AP meeting, but, that way, AP members, both here and online, can know and recognize that the council members are listening to this, and they're hearing the discussion that's surrounding a lot of these events, and so, in the

room, we've got Jessica McCawley, Kerry Marhefka, Amy Dukes, and Judy Helmey, and I'm not sure who else would be popping off and on online, but those folks are in the room, and so they're hearing all the discussion as you guys are having it.

MR. KIMREY: Perfect. Good job, Mike. Here we go. It's all yours.

MS. IBERLE: All right. For you guys online, my name is Allie Iberle, and I'm going to get us started with Amendment 44 for yellowtail and mutton snapper. All right, and so I brought you guys Amendment 44, and it feels like eons ago. We went through this amendment, and looked at the actions, and kind of asked for your feedback, and, at that time, it only included actions to modify catch levels and the jurisdictional allocation for yellowtail snapper.

As the council was reviewing that, I believe a couple of Septembers ago, there were concerns with the data that was feeding the assessments, and so the council requested that another assessment be run and that the reef fish landings recreational estimates be incorporated, and so we're at a point now where we've received the updated assessment for yellowtail, and, coincidentally, an updated assessment for mutton snapper has come out too, and so that species has been lumped into this, as both are considered a single stock in between the Gulf and the South Atlantic.

So this is a joint amendment. The Gulf is the administrative lead, and so they are going to be seeing this meeting ahead of the South Atlantic, and so this will go to their council table in November, and then our council will see it in December, and they'll see the action lineup, and then the feedback from the Gulf, and so that's kind of a little bit of where we are and how did we get to where we are now.

Then I'm not going to read all of this, but I wanted to give you a snapshot of where these two species are currently. Some things to note is the jurisdictional -- I'm going to call it apportionment, and so the way I think of it is, if you're making a pizza, and you have a giant ball of dough, what we're used to doing is that giant ball of dough is kind of like our ABC, and we, you know, take from that ball, and include the buffers that we need to set an ACL, and we don't have to do anything with the Gulf, usually. With these two species, what we have to do is first take that ball of dough and separate it in between regions, and then each council can essentially make their pizza, is the analogy I think of in my head.

Currently, for mutton snapper, 82 percent of that stock ABC is allocated to the South Atlantic, and then 18 percent to the Gulf. Yellowtail is 75 percent South Atlantic and 25 percent to the Gulf. Currently, both species -- Their ACLs are based off of MRFSS, and so the recreational estimates that feed that catch level are pretty outdated as of this point.

The new assessments, those catch levels that will be put in place through this amendment will update that to include both MRIP-FES and SRFS, and then you have your sector allocations. Obviously, that's just for the South Atlantic. The Gulf doesn't have those, and then your current management measures are listed there.

To kind of review what's going on with those assessments that I mentioned, and so we'll start with mutton. That SEDAR was SEDAR 79. The assessment noted that the stock is not overfished or experiencing overfishing, and so that's a good news, and then, like I mentioned, the assessment included recreational estimates from both MRIP-FES and the Florida State Reef Fish Survey, and

then there was a joint SSC meeting that came together to talk and recommend catch levels, and those catch levels are listed there.

I'm not going to show a bunch of numbers throughout the rest of this presentation, because the purpose is just to kind of acclimate you guys on what the council is considering. The council is still pretty early on in this amendment process, and so we'll come back to you in the fall with some, you know, more numbers and some more fleshed-out actions, and so, at this point, it's a little introductory.

Then, thinking about that assessment for yellowtail, that was SEDAR 96, and same thing. The stock is not overfished, or experiencing overfishing, and we're incorporating those updated recreational estimates, and then you have your OFL and ABC listed there.

All right, and so I'm going to get into the actions, and, again, this is early on in the process, and so both councils are still kind of developing this set of actions and alternatives. Action 1 deals with mutton snapper exclusively. This action is going to do a lot of things. It's first going to put in place that OFL and stock ABC that came out of the assessment. Then it's going to take that stock ABC and split it between the councils. That's that jurisdictional apportionment, and then it's going to set the regional annual catch limits, or ACLs.

The council has discussed the ACL, and has indicated that they are not wanting to put a buffer in between the ABC and ACL, and so you're not going to have a reduction from the South Atlantic ABC to that ACL. They discussed that the stock is in good shape, and so this action will just automatically set the ABC equal to the ACL.

The first alternative for this is a non-viable true no action. It would just retain everything status quo, the outdated catch levels, the jurisdictional percentage apportionment, and everything is status quo. Alternative 2, what that would do is, again, we're thinking of that big stock ABC. It would take those percentages, and so how the stock is currently split between the regions, that 82 percent and 18 percent, and it would apply those to that updated ABC.

Then Alternative 3 has two sub-alternatives, and so this alternative says, okay, recalculate those percentages based on the formula that's currently in place, but update the ranges of time that you put into those formulas, and so this looks a little complicated, and there's a lot of words on this slide, but, essentially, you're either basing that formula on the most recent nineteen years or the most recent nine years, and the way that those percentages shake out is, if you use the most recent nineteen years, you get a 9 percent and 91 percent split, and, if you use the most recent nine years, it's an 8 percent and 92 percent split, and, again, a reminder that the ACL will just be set equal to the ABC in this action.

Action 2 is the same exact thing, only for yellowtail, and so Alternative 1, that true no action, non-viable, but just noting that the percentage split is that 75/25. Alternative 2, just like mutton, would take that 75/25 split and apply it to that updated ABC, and then here is where we deviate a little bit in the structure of the alternatives, and it can get a little confusing, but I'm going to walk through it, and I tried to label it, so it's less confusing.

In alternative 2, you see, at the very end there, the South Atlantic ACL is equal to the South Atlantic ABC, and so we currently don't have a buffer for this stock, and the council has indicated that they

don't want to include a buffer. However, the Gulf currently has an 11 percent buffer. They have indicated they don't want to retain that buffer, from what we have heard, and so they need sub-alternatives to say we don't want the buffer.

These sub-alternatives don't really apply to the South Atlantic. Both councils need to agree on preferred alternatives, but I don't feel as though our council will have much of an opinion on where they set their ACL, and so these two just say that the Gulf can either retain the buffer or not.

Continuing on with the same action, Alternative 3, just like with mutton, would say, okay, our last option is to recalculate that percentage jurisdictional apportionment, and it's the same year ranges. However, again, for each sub-alternative, or each alternative, the Gulf has to say, okay, we either want that buffer or not, and so Alternative 3a and b are not really something we have to be concerned about.

Alternatives 3c and 3d are where we're running that formula with the nineteen years or nine years, again for yellowtail, and so the way that shakes out is, in 3c, you get 16 percent to the Gulf and 84 percent to the South Atlantic, and then 3d is 15/85.

Actions 3 and 4 are going to be South Atlantic specific, because they will modify the sector allocation, and so Action 3 pertains to mutton. Currently it has a 17.0 percent allocation to the commercial sector and 82.98 percent to the recreational sector. You see, we've got a lot of question marks here. The council will be discussing how they want to flesh out these alternatives at their December meeting.

One of the things that they're going to use to help determine where to go with these allocations, including your feedback, will be the allocation decision tool, and then the other thing I wanted to note is that the allocations are currently determined using that formula that's on the bottom of the slide, and so consider those date ranges, and the council will consider those date ranges as, you know, thinking about what's appropriate, if we're going to recalculate these percentages.

Then, again, we have the same thing for yellowtail, and so that's pretty much what we've got going on for Amendment 44. Some things, some questions to ponder, when we're thinking about this amendment moving forward that I think would be helpful for the council, and to inform that allocation decision tool, would be to think if there's been any major changes in the fishery that the council should know about when you're thinking about fishing in your region, and then what you've been noticing maybe outside of your region, or shifting between the two regions, like thinking about going around the back of the Keys.

Are there any concerns from the AP about setting the South Atlantic ACL equals to that ABC, and so, again, the council doesn't have alternatives that would give them options to say put in a 5 percent buffer, or a 10 percent buffer, and they've indicated that they think both stocks are healthy, and they don't need that buffer, and do you agree with that decision, and then, finally, has there been any changes to the South Atlantic commercial fishery for either species, the recreational fishery, and then, if so, can you please describe any changes that you see, and so I'll pause here, and answer any questions, or gather any feedback.

MR. KIMREY: David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. David Moss. So my first question, if I understand it right, going back a few slides, is the current allocation split between the South Atlantic and the Gulf is eighty -- Whatever it was, 85/15, or something like that, or 82/18, something like that.

MS. IBERLE: For which species?

MR. MOSS: Sorry. Yellowtail, or I guess it was muttons.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and it's 82/18.

MR. MOSS: So the proposal is going to switch it to either -- So Alternative 3 is going to switch it to 91 and 9 and 92 and 8?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so, depending on that year range, it would kind of shift that formula slightly, and, yes, that's the percentages you would end up with when you use that formula in those date ranges.

MR. MOSS: So, I mean, I guess my follow-up question is the Gulf is okay with that? I mean, I don't think either region is hitting their ACLs anyway, and so I don't know how much it matters, but -- I'm assuming this comes from the joint meeting you were talking about, and so I guess that they're okay with it.

MS. IBERLE: There was some additional -- The IPT, and so like the plan team that works behind the scenes on this, included some options that just -- They didn't use this formula, and just looked at a distribution of landings, and that actually tended to skew the percentages even further to the South Atlantic, and, when the Gulf saw this for the first time, they did opt to remove those alternatives, and the council, in September, agreed with that.

As far as the season closures, we have not gotten projections for this yet. We're still kind of early on, and we'll most likely be bringing you those projections after the council sees them. I know, for the South Atlantic side, there were some closures for yellowtail. There were some commercial closures around 2015, but, other than that, we haven't been getting up to that ACL, and, again, I think that the discussion with the Gulf will continue. They'll see these in November, and then provide our council with feedback after they do that.

MR. KIMREY: Anyone else? Thanks, David and Allie. Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: It's good to see that that fishery is strong, and, you know, what we notice is that the yellowtail fishery is staying excellent, and the mutton snapper fishery is improving. I mean, the charter boat association down in the Keys -- I would think that they would be okay with Alternative 1 on everything, just no change. Everything is working well, and why try and fix something that is working well.

MR. KIMREY: David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. Yes, and, for the most part, I agree with Richie. I mean, yellowtails and muttons are both pretty healthy. To go through these three questions that you had, the only changes -- Obviously, I don't see this, fishing down south, but I've heard that more and

more of these fish are being caught north, or further north I should say. I heard something about a fairly sizable mutton caught off of Rhode Island not too long ago, which is crazy to think about, but, as far as I know, the few commercial people that I know, it's been fine, and, as Richie said, this is kind of one of those instances that, if it ain't broke, let's not try and fix it.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, David. Anybody else before we move on? Allie's got a little bit more she wants to share with us.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so, to wrap up this one, I just wanted to go over the timing, really quickly. So, again, like I mentioned, in November, and actually next week, the Gulf Council will discuss this, and then, obviously, the South Atlantic will discuss in December. A public hearing draft early next year, and then you guys will see this, hopefully, again at your spring meeting, and then we're shooting for summer 2026 for the submission, and so I just kind of wanted to note where you guys will see this again, and, at that point, we should have preferred alternatives, some more numbers, and some more feedback from the Gulf, and so more information to come, but that is all I had for Amendment 44.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thank you. We spoke earlier about switching 9 and 10, and so here comes John Hadley with I guess it's Number 10, Item Number 10. Sorry, and we switched 9 and 10.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and so what we'll be discussing is the potential revision to the snapper grouper fishery management unit, and so this Amendment 61, and I will work on pulling those documents up quickly here.

What we'll be going over today, there's an attachment, and there's a discussion document. It's Attachment 10 in your briefing materials. Also, I put together -- I kind of pulled some salient points from this into a presentation. This presentation is available on the webpage for this meeting as well, and so I'll start off, go through a few slides to orient everyone, and we can toggle back and forth. If here's some information in the discussion document that you want to go over, I'm happy to kind of toggle back and forth between those two documents.

I just wanted to say, for those of you that I haven't met, my name is John Hadley. I'm a South Atlantic Council staff member, and then I'm a co-lead on this amendment with Allie, who you just heard from, and so we're going to be going over -- I'll be going over Amendment, as I said, 61, which is looking at potential changes to the species composition of the fishery management unit for the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

Currently, there's fifty-five species in the fishery management unit, and so the council is looking at potentially removing some of those, and reducing that number of species in the unit, to sort of streamline things, so to speak, and so, for this meeting, to kind of give you an overview and objectives for the meeting, we'll provide information, sort of some background information, for your discussion, go over what the council is considering, what happens when species are removed from federal management, and then what are ecosystem component species, and sort of what that entails.

When I'm done with that, I'll hand it over to the AP to provide some feedback to the council, at least in their initial discussion, of these seventeen species. I have some discussion questions there at the end to gather your feedback, but, generally speaking, what is the council considering?

The council is considering potentially changing, as I mentioned, the fishery management unit, and so potentially removing seventeen species from the snapper grouper fishery management unit, or considering designating them as ecosystem component species, and this is -- The council is really early in the amendment process right now and so, right now, this amendment was approved for scoping, and so we're kind of at that information-gathering stage, and so very early in the process.

The council has reviewed some initial information on these species at their previous meetings, and had some discussion on this, and, generally, the discussion so far, several council members have noted that they're interested in potentially removing the species from federal management, but there's some hold-up on that in relation that to the -- Many council members don't want the species to be completely unregulated.

Looking at the species that are being considered, I'll go ahead and read down this list, just very quickly, and we'll come back to this list several times, but the species that have been identified thus far by the council include Atlantic spadefish, bar jack, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, blackfin snapper, banded rudderfish, cubera snapper, white grunt, tomtate, sailor's choice, margate, jolthead porgy, saucereye porgy, knobbed porgy, scup, and whitebone porgy, and so that's kind of the full list, and I have that list sort of in this presentation several times, and so need to try to memorize it, or anything along those lines, and we'll come back to that list kind of in its entirety.

Overall, many of these species make up either all or part of a complex, as far as how the species are managed, how the annual catch limits are put together and monitored, but, overall, there are two species that are an exception to that, and so the two species that are not in a complex include Atlantic spadefish and bar jack, and so those species are kind of off on their own. They have their own separate annual catch limits that are monitored separately.

The rest of the species fall within a species complex, and so the different annual catch limits, if you will, are pooled together to monitor the species as a complex, and so four species that are considered -- That the council is currently considering whether federal management is needed include misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, and blackfin snapper, and you can see those four species over the left there.

Over to the right is the entire deepwater complex, and so that's sort of a visualization of how these species play into the deepwater complex, and so I'll walk you through this pie chart really quick, because there's a few others in the presentation, but the species that are shaded in gray, silk snapper and yellowedge grouper, will remain in the complex, and so those species are not being considered for removal from federal management. They're, at least for the time being going, to remain under federal management.

The little different-colored slivers, sort of the blue, green, yellow, orange colors, those are the different portions of the ACL that are made up by misty grouper, sand tilefish, queen snapper, and blackfin snapper, and so, if those are removed from federal management, those would come out of

the deepwater complex, and then the complex would still have silk snapper and yellowedge grouper within it.

Moving on, banded rudderfish are part of the jacks complex, and so you can see there that they make up let's say roughly a little over a third or so of the jacks complex, and so, if those are removed, almaco jack and lesser amberjack would remain under federal management within the jacks complex revised, I guess, ACL. Cubera snapper are part of the snappers complex, and, as you can see below there, lane snapper and gray snapper would remain within the snappers complex ACL. Cubera snapper, that little blue sliver, would be what would be removed from that complex ACL.

Then, switching gears, the grunts complex and the porgies complex, those species would -- If all species are removed from federal management, that entire complex would be removed, and so, in the top-right there, you see the grunts, and so white grunt, sailor's choice, margate, and tomtate, and how that complex ACL is composed in relation to each species.

Then the bottom is the porgies complex, and so jolthead porgy, saucereye porgy, knobbed porgy, scup, and whitebone porch, and you can see, to the right of that, how those various annual catch limits are pooled together, so to speak, to come up with the porgies complex, and so both of those complexes -- Again, all species within them are being considered for potential removal from federal management.

What would potentially happen to these seven species, and so what does it mean to remove them from federal management? If the council determines that federal management is no longer needed for the seventeen species, they could consider either removing the species from the fishery management unit altogether, and so you can kind of think of this as just totally removing them from the fishery management plan, or they also have the option to designate them as ecosystem component species.

In this case, they would stay in the management plan, in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, but, being ecosystem component species, many of the regulations would be removed from those species, and so, when the council intends to either add a species or remove a species, there are specific considerations that are available, and encouraged, for them to go through to determine whether or not a species is in need of federal, quote, unquote, conservation and management, and so the list is up there.

It's fairly comprehensive, but you can see some of the measures that the council is considering, or any council considers, and so this is sort of broad-level management, council-wide, nationwide, but the councils consider whether a stock is an important component of the marine environment, the stock is caught in a fishery, whether or not a fishery management plan could improve or maintain the condition of the stock, and is the stock a target of a fishery? Is the stock important to commercial, recreational, or subsistence users? Is the fishery important to the nation or a regional economy? Could a fishery management plan resolve conflict? Could it increase efficiency? Are there needs of a developing fishery that need to be addressed, and are there adequate measures in place, perhaps by states or other programs, to provide management, and so that list is up there.

This is something that the council would work through in further determining whether or not a species -- Whether or not these seventeen species are in need of federal management, and the

council has begun that process, but it's not really a one management item. It's something that's built over several different meetings, and so the council has started that process, but has not necessarily thoroughly had the chance to complete it, and, again, being early in the amendment development process.

If a species is removed from the fishery management unit, again, removing the species totally from the FMP, all existing federal regulations would no longer apply to that species, and so any possession limit, any permit requirement, reporting requirement, annual catch limit, that would no longer exist, at least on the federal level.

If the species is removed from federal management, states would be able, and could, implement regulations for the species, if they chose to do so, and, since there would be no federal management of the species, the states could extend those regulations into federal waters if they -- Again, if they have the desire to do so.

Moving over to the other option, as I mentioned earlier, the ecosystem component species designation, looking at kind of what is an ecosystem component species, and so ecosystem component species are stocks that a council has determined do not require conservation and management, and so, again, coming back to the council is saying these fish don't necessarily need management, at least on the federal side, but a desire to list in the FMP to achieve ecosystem management objectives.

If the species are designated as ecosystem component species, most federal regulations and management measures are removed from that stock, or that species, and so, for example, there would be no ACL related to that species. There would not be restrictive trip or bag limits. There wouldn't be size limits related to that species, at least in federal waters, and so, while those very specific measures would be removed, there could be some non-restrictive measures that remain in place on the ecosystem component species. That can include a permitting and reporting requirement, and so that could still remain in place, and there could potentially be an aggregate possession limit, but this would be a fairly high-level, non-restrictive aggregate limit.

Really quickly, I wanted to go over some of the council's previous actions in relation to removing snapper grouper species from the FMP or designating them as ecosystem components. The council has done this over three different amendments in the recent past.

In Amendment 25, which was the comprehensive annual catch limit amendment, the council removed thirteen species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and so it's fifty-five species now, and it used to be more. The council selected criteria that included most of the landings were coming from state waters, if the species was covered under the Florida Marine Life Species Rule, or a species had no landing, and so those are the species that were removed from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

The council also designated six species as ecosystem components. They were considering removing these from the FMP altogether, but changed course after receiving public input. There are no regulations related to these ecosystem component species. However, listing them did prioritize the species for continued data collection, and it may help with future ecosystem-related efforts.

In Amendment 27, the council removed blue runner from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, noting that the majority of those landings were occurring off of Florida, and the State of Florida had adequate management in place, and then, finally, in Amendment 35, the council removed black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper and schoolmaster from the fishery management plan. They noted -- In doing so, the council noted that harvest of the species was very low from federal waters, and in state waters other than off the State of Florida, and the State of Florida had adequate management in place for those species, or was prepared to do so.

With that, that was sort of the background portion. I'm really quickly going to go into the potential actions that the council is considering, and so there's four general measures that the council is considering. There's certainly always the no action option, no action alternative, for each one of these species, where the species could remain within the snapper grouper fishery management unit, and so, in that case, it's status quo, and so the species would continue to have annual catch limits, monitoring of those annual catch limits, and any other associated measures that are currently in place.

The other option that the council has is to remove the species from the fishery management unit, and so, again, this is sort of removing them from the FMP altogether, and any federal management measures would no longer apply. Again, states would have the option to implement management measures that extend into federal waters, if they decided to do so.

The council could designate the species as ecosystem components, which, again, may elevate the importance for data collection purposes, and, within this, there are kind of some potential sub-options that the council could consider. If they did designate some species as ecosystem components, they could not implement or retain any management measures for those species, or they could look at retaining a reporting requirement for those species, at least where one is in place. They can retain a permit requirement for landing these species.

In this case, they would probably have to add an option for a commercial permit that is not limited entry, or limited access, and so we would have to add an option for an open access commercial permit, if they did want a permit requirement for the ecosystem components species, and they could implement an aggregate trip limit, and so, again, thinking of this aggregate limit, it would be a fairly high-level, non-restrictive measure, or non-restrictive limit, and kind of a catch-all is are there other measures that the council should be considering in this amendment. With that, I'm happy to answer any questions. I'm going to -- I'll kind of maybe start off with questions, and then we can jump into the council discussion questions afterwards.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John. Surely somebody has a question. All right. There we go. We'll start with Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: Not sure if this is a stupid question or not, and so let's check. Do the grunts fall under the snapper aggregate when we're looking at our daily limit?

MR. HADLEY: They fall under the twenty-fish. On the recreational side, they fall in the twenty-fish aggregate larger snapper, snapper grouper, limit.

MR. GOMEZ: If they were removed, then we wouldn't have a limit on them, and they wouldn't go into that aggregate, correct?

MR. HADLEY: That's correct, and so, if they were removed from federal management, they would no longer be part of that twenty-fish aggregate.

MR. KIMREY: Chris, you want to go?

MR. CONKLIN: I want to go, and so is the reason why the council is wanting to remove these is because they're going to require a stock assessment, and there's just mainly like not enough room and time to do that, and not to prioritize these species, and is that kind of what I'm understanding?

MR. HADLEY: That's one of the reasons that's been mentioned, is that, you know, a lot of these species, there's no at least immediate ability to assess them, and, additionally, the council is looking to streamline the fishery management plan in general. There are other ancillary actions, for example the consideration of a permit, and kind of narrowing down that list of species within the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan plays into that decision as well, but, to your question, yes, that was one of the reasons that's been mentioned, that there's not going to be a stock -- Or not likely to be a stock assessment on those species in the near future.

MR. CONKLIN: Chris Conklin. But is there a requirement, like down the road, that -- I thought that I remember there was a requirement, in maybe like the reauthorization or something, that all unassessed stocks that were federally managed had to have a stock assessment at some point, and there just was not enough rounds in the ammo clip to do that. No? Okay.

MR. HADLEY: I'm not aware of a requirement for that. I mean, it's certainly encouraged, where resources are available, but I don't believe there's a requirement for each species.

MR. KIMREY: Finish up, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. The only other thing is like I would probably maybe caution about removing some of the longer-lived species, which I would assume would be like cubera snapper, and maybe misty grouper, but I don't know the life history of all these fish, but, just off the top of my head, I know that we've had some monster cubera landed over the course of the years, and not in any great numbers though, and so maybe that would be a reason to not manage them, or do something in the middle with them.

MR. KIMREY: Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: I probably could get ahold of some of the headboats later. There's only two or three in Key West, or three, but I would say they would love to have the grunts taken off of their aggregate, because there's a lot of grunts out there, and that certainly would benefit them when they're shooting for the nicer fish, like the snapper and things like that.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Richie. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. I'm not a hundred percent sure if this is the time, but I kind of agree with some of what Chris was saying but just for different reasons. Down in like the Middle Keys and out west, queen snapper is a targeted species, and so are cubera, to a lesser extent, but people go out there and target queens, and I understand that they don't show up well in

assessments, but it's a very concentrated area where they're at, kind of Miami to the Middle Keys, and then out west, but there are guys who target them, for sure, and the same thing with cubera. A little bit of a different fishery, and then blackfin, to a lesser extent.

MR. KIMREY: John.

MR. POLSTON: John Polston. I'm not sure if this is a question for you, or if it would be for Jessica, but, if they did remove them or whatnot, you said all restrictions and stuff would be removed for them, and would -- As far as a buyer is concerned, would they be a restricted species? Of course, I'm talking about the State of Florida. That's probably not the same everywhere, but would they be a restricted species, or just nothing, just like anything else?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So, if they're removed from federal management, then the State of Florida -- We could make them a restricted species, and we could extend regulations into federal waters. We could also put additional regulations in place, and so you're kind of trading federal management for state management. It would be different permits, kind of like what you're saying, and you might not need a federal permit anymore, but you would need state permits, and we could add things like restricted species endorsement on there. That would be the type of information that we would want from you if we're, you know, going to take them out of the fishery management unit, and you're wanting states like Florida to extend the regulations into federal waters.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, Jessica. Randy, did you want to speak?

MR. MCKINLEY: Yes, and, I mean, I was just kind of -- With Chris, I mean, if it frees up more time -- You know, if we streamline this, it frees up more time for the council to focus time and resources on the critical species, it would be good. I mean, I would think, like the white grunts for us in North Carolina, I mean, that would -- I don't know that they're going to take that away. That's a pretty critical species, but, I mean, I think we could -- And the long-lived ones, and so, I mean, there's ones that may or may not need to come off, but if it helps overall, I'm with it.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody else? Thanks, Randy. John, do you have anything?

MR. HADLEY: I was going to switch over to questions.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. Go right ahead. Vince.

MR. BONURA: As far as the commercial end of things here, I would not remove, in the deepwater complex, the porgies or the banded rudderfish, in my opinion, because I believe, if it's not on the federal permits, you're going to have other commercial fishermen targeting these species, and they will have discards and bycatch of federally-permitted fish that are within this FMP, and so I would leave those in there, in my opinion.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thanks. Anybody else? I'm going to give it back to John.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and so I'll go over the questions. We had three major discussion questions for the AP, and so, again, you know, this is early in the process. The council has identified these seventeen species as, you know, needing further evaluation, essentially, whether or not they need to stay under federal management.

You know, a lot of these questions are gathered at your regional perspective, your on-the-water perspective, you know, what's not going to show up in the high-level regional data that they have available, and so the Question Number 1 covers -- It looks at having a discussion of are there species on that list that are of importance to your fishing business, or your region? Are there species -- We've kind of gone that direction a little bit with the discussion so far, but are there species that you think need to likely remain under federal management?

Question Number 2 looks at sort of the opposite. Are there species on that list that you think, you know, really don't need federal management, and it would streamline the process, streamline the FMP, and they don't necessarily need federal management, and they can either be removed from the FMU altogether, the fishery management unit altogether, or designated as ecosystem component species.

Then 3 gets at, if the council does look at designating some of these species as ecosystem components, what are your thoughts on maintaining a permit requirement, maintaining a reporting requirement for those species, or potentially implementing a relatively non-restrictive aggregate trip limit?

So, you know, just, again, to summarize, Question 1 is are there species on there that are important? Question 2 is are there species that really aren't important, and you think don't really need to be under federal management, and Question 3 gets at, you know, if the council goes the ecosystem component species route, what are your thoughts on the permit reporting or aggregate trip limit?

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John, and so, I guess, moving forward, we'll start with Question 1. You all have already voiced a little bit of an opinion on that. I know there's going to be a little response here, but, I mean, I made a few notes, and, off the top of my head, I can't remember which ones were in the deepwater complex, but Vincent had mentioned all the porgies. Vincent, you wanted to put down -- I heard some discussion about the queen snappers, and was that on the deepwater complex, and so we don't have to worry about that one, and that's one of the ones that's there to --

Who was it that was talking about queen snappers? Was it David? Okay. Queens. What else was there, in addition to that and the porgies? Cubera and white grunt. The list is getting small, and everything stays on FMU, and let's go home. Go ahead.

MR. MOSS: So, again, not my fishery, but is -- I'll defer to the people especially in northern North Carolina, and scup is an important one up that way too, isn't it, or no, or is it more of a Virginia thing? Is it further north?

MR. KIMREY: Paul, do you have some input on scup?

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I mean, I don't know what Haley thinks as a headboat operator down in Ponce, but, I mean, scup, to the headboat operators up at Onslow Bay, North Carolina, are super important. I mean, that's a targeted species at certain times of the year, and so I would be reluctant to remove that from the FMU.

While I've got the microphone, I would say, as far as tomtate, to leave that as an ecosystem component. I would think it would be essential, from an ecosystem perspective, because I'm sure

that's forage for some of the other species that we more highly covet, like the gags and stuff like that, and the American reds, and I'm sure that tomtate are consumed by some of the more slowing-growing, long-lived species, and so I would be really reluctant to remove tomtate from the FMU.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thanks, Paul. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley Stephens. Thank you, Paul, and so just I've got, John, the seventeen species list pulled up here. I also have pulled up the 2023 Southeast Regional Headboat Survey Annual Report. Number two is white grunt, as far as landings, and so, you know, whether or not that goes to the ecosystem-based or stays on, I think that's an important species, because the numbers are speaking for themselves.

As far as the other ones that are on the list, banded rudderfish are number fifteen, as far as landings. As our other more prominent snapper grouper species continue to be restricted, in terms of, you know, red snapper, gag grouper, things like that, we really do rely on some of these less-desirable species, and so I guess when you ask, you know, what is important, that's really going to vary between user groups, but, just from the perspective of the headboat, you know, I don't think that they should be removed, and certainly the ecosystem, or potentially the state management, and, you know, similar. I think we should keep an eye on it.

MR. KIMREY: Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yeah, just to dovetail with what Haley said, if I'm not mistaken, and I recognize the logistical boots-on-the-ground reality of assessing these species, and keeping track of the ACLs and that kind of thing, especially in light of the fact that we've got this moratorium on federal government hires, and we just lost a prominent stock assessment biologist the other day at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and he passed away, unfortunately, and so the manpower is just not there to assess all these species, and keep track of all these species.

I recognize that, but, at the same time, just following what Haley said, if I'm not mistaken, white grunts, as a testament to their importance, they were on the SEDAR list a few years ago, if I'm not mistaken, and so it does feel like a little bit of a U-turn for the council to consider removing those from the FMU.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul. One thing, that I think I'm right about, and please, anybody, feel free to step in, is, just because they're removed from the federal FMU, it doesn't mean there won't be potential for management at the state level, correct, and so, you know, let's not forget that, just because they're taking them off there, it's not like, oh, well, they're on their own forever. I mean, you know, I don't think that's what's happening here.

I think they're trying to streamline the management on the stuff that we know is feeling the pinch, and is hard to speed up management on, and so I think that's the goal here, and so let's not lose sight of that as we're making these recommendations to not remove them. You know, that's my two-cents. Go ahead, Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley-Stephens, and, to that point, out of the scope of Ponce Islet, we don't catch white grunts, and so the fact that they're number two on the headboat survey -- You know, they're not necessarily an important stock to me specifically, but maybe they

are important to folks in the other part of the region, and so I think, you know, maybe there is some good potential for that shift to regional/state-based management, to better serve not only our stakeholders, but the fishery in general.

MR. KIMREY: Absolutely, and that's sort of the point I was making, is white grunts, for us -- I mean, we see a lot of white grunts. You know, you can ask the fish dealers and the headboat guys, and the for-hire operators like myself, and so I definitely don't want to see them overfished, and I don't want to see a lack of management on them, but, if we can remove them from this FMU, and it would be one less thing that the South Atlantic Council has to worry about, it seems like it could potentially be a really good thing, as long as, moving forward, we're careful.

I know Randy has got some concerns from the commercial aspect, because, if they were able to be sold without an SG 1 or an SG 2, there might be a few people that would target them, but -- There will be some, but, you know, it's a long ride to catch grunts when you can't keep everything else that comes up with him, and that's how I see it, and so have you got some input on that, Randy?

MR. MCKINLEY: Yes. Randy McKinley, and, I mean, I just -- I mean, I'm good with taking just about everything off except the grunts, because, I mean, there's a lot of state commercial licenses in North Carolina. There's tons of them, and anybody with a Jon boat could almost go out four or five miles and catch grunts.

Yes, and they could, but they're just not a great -- I mean, it's not one of the ones on -- I've got high-end clientele, and they don't want grunts, but I could -- I mean, they just don't, and, I mean, they just don't. They want, you know, the good stuff, but I can imagine people just running out doing that, and then all the gags and everything else, the bass, they're going to be catching, and trying to catch -- You know, catch all the grunts they can, and so, I mean, I'm good with just about everything coming off, I mean, like sand tile and stuff like that, but maybe just not the white grunt, but that's from my perspective of where I'm at.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and that's why we're here, is to get your perspective.

MR. MCKINLEY: One other thing is I don't trust North Carolina whatsoever to come up with enforcement or regulations on this.

MR. KIMREY: No comment.

MR. MCKINLEY: Like Florida may would.

MR. KIMREY: So let's review my little short list here, and so I had porgy, queen snapper, cubera, white grunt, tomtate, and banded rudderfish. Those fish came up for question -- Or for Topic Number 1, and it's not really -- Well, it is a question. Porgy, queen, cubera, white grunt, tomtate, and banded rudder that have importance enough that we may want to recommend they might be removed from the FMU.

Out of those six fish of porgy, queen snapper, cubera, white grunt, tomtates, and banded rudderfish, does anybody want to remove that from the list, or think it should not be on the list? Everybody is good leaving those six on as a recommendation back to the council to consider leaving on the FMU? Okay. That's Question Number 1.

Moving on, Question Number 2 is are there species being considered that you think should be removed from the federal management? If so, should these species be removed from the FMU altogether, and should they be designated as ecosystem components? This is the adverse of Question 1. Is there some things you think we need to recommend for removal from the FMU, and should they be considered to be designated as ECs? Anybody? Anybody have any feedback on Question Number 2? Go ahead, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Well, I think, just like I just mentioned a moment ago, the tomtate -- Maybe consider removing them from the FMU, to streamline the process, but keep them as ecosystem components.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul. Yes, and I made note of that. We actually had that in Topic 1, but I had forgotten that you had said ecosystem component, and not actually leave it on the FMU. Does anybody else for Topic Number 2, for things that should be removed? Does anybody have any feedback on that? You all don't want to, I mean, you know, remove red snappers, or gag groupers? It would make managing them a whole lot easier. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman, and maybe a question for John. I'm not incredibly familiar with the scup. We don't get a lot of scup down in Ponce Inlet, but I'm wondering if the scup in the South Atlantic is a part of the same stock that occurs and is managed by the Mid-Atlantic, or are they separate?

MR. HADLEY: I believe they're a separate stock. I know they're definitely -- They're under a completely different management schematic than in the South Atlantic, for sure, and they're, as you mentioned, more common in the northern section of the South Atlantic, if that makes sense, or the northern portion, I guess, but, yes, a different fishery, different stock.

MR. KIMREY: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you so much for that answer. I guess, when we're talking about Number 2, you know, I would be okay with removing white grunt and banded rudderfish, but keeping them in the ecosystem-based, and bar jack. If I were to pick, you know, the top three, I would say those are the most important to us.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Haley. Anybody else have any feedback on question Number 2? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So, looking at it, like thinking through it, I guess with like the other side of my brain, I was looking, and, in my mind, and I don't know the exact definition of an ecosystem species, but it would -- To me, it seems like it would be more like fish that are generally eaten by other fish, like bait, you know, and I was going through, and, I mean, this is not ranking them or anything, but you know, margate, tomtate, sailor's choice, white grunt, porgy, and, anyways, everything on the right side.

Then almost everything on the left side, except for a couple of species, you know, or another thing that maybe is an ecosystem component is something that like aggregates in large number, like a spadefish or something like that, but I'm not -- I don't have any suggestions on taking anything off

of the list and adding it to whatever an ecosystem component species is, but, in good faith, I support whatever we go along with.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris. Darrin, you're up.

MR. WILLINGHAM: So, from the northeast Florida standpoint, we don't really see any reason to keep the white grunt, the tomtates, the sailor's choice, or the spadefish, or the banded rudderfish. We have just a ridiculous abundance of those, and they're a nuisance fish, and so it would be my recommendation to leave those on the list to be removed from the South Atlantic Council.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. I'll make note. Does anybody else have any input before we go over the revision on Question 1 and 2 here? I've switch things up a little bit. All right. Because of the request to move tomtates, white grunt, banded rudder, and bar jacks to ecosystem components, that takes them off of Question 1, which leaves us with all the porgies, queen snapper, and cubera, and so that would be for Question 1, to recommend from the AP to the council to leave on the FMU. All the porgies, queen snapper, and cubera, and how does that sound? It sounds reasonable to me. I mean, out of everything that's on the list, those three definitely seem like the most reasonable ones to maybe keep in the FMU.

As far as ecosystem components, out of everything that's on the list, for Number 2, we have tomtates, white grunts, banded rudder and bar jack, and that's because they definitely have importance, but maybe if we had to choose, to free up some space for the council and the fish managers, that's the ones we're willing to kind of put in limbo as an ecosystem component, and that's just my way of explaining it, but it seems that's sort of the way the AP is looking at it, correct? I mean, somebody shake a hand, or nod, or something, and give me some feedback. Okay. Perfect, and so does that sound good to everybody, as far as for Question 2? Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Yes, and I'm not sure if it's like an actual recommendation. You know, I would be comfortable with either moving, you know, those jacks, and those grunts, to either the ecosystem or a management at the state level. I would just -- You know, whatever we decide is best, but some type of management, and I would not like to see those species go completely unregulated, due to the importance.

MR. KIMREY: I think that's where 3 sort of comes in, at least partially, Question Number 3, but, before we go there, does anybody have anything else to say? Thanks for that, by the way, Haley. John.

MR. POLSTON: John Polston, and, as far as the cubera snapper is concerned, I think that should probably stay where it's at, and the reason I say that is I think, in buying and selling, we could run into some problems with giant mangroves, or small cubera snapper, if they're not managed under the SG 1 permit, and if it still just stayed there, then you know what you got to have to have one. If you let it go into some other place, and there's not that many caught around us or whatever, but there are some, and so I just think, since it's being managed okay where it's at or what, in my opinion, for safety purposes, for buying and selling in a legality way, I think I would just leave it where it's at on the cubera snapper.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John. That just sort of reiterates everybody else's thoughts, and so that's perfect. That's what we need, is everybody to get along here. So let's move on to Question 3 here.

If species were removed from federal management, but remain an ecosystem component species in the Snapper Grouper FMP, what are the AP's thoughts on maintaining or implementing the following: a permit requirement, a reporting requirement, a relatively non-restrictive, i.e., high poundage, high number, aggregate trip limit?

So, you know, if they're removed from the FMU, but we still need to keep track of what's happening, it would seem to me that a permit, with a reporting element, is a good way to do that. It's not going to give you -- You know, it's not going to put them in a stock assessment situation like they would in the FMU from the South Atlantic, but at least you can keep track of what's happening, and so a permit requirement, reporting requirement, or relatively non-restrictive aggregate trip, if they're removed, and thoughts on Question Number 3? Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Randy McKinley, and I just -- That one slide that had 3c, I put down -- That shows -- Where is that at? I just think that you don't want.

MR. KIMREY: Which slide was it?

MR. MCKINLEY: That one right there. I can't imagine developing some kind of permit at the state level for these reef fish. I mean, to me, the SG 1 is the only people that you really want on these reefs fishing, because, if you get another big population out there, I just think discards, and mortality, and that gets into a mess, and, like I said, I don't -- I especially don't want it run by North Carolina. Again, that's my thoughts.

MR. KIMREY: So, to clarify, because there's so many species, Randy, so you don't think there should be a permit at a state level, and there should be a separate permit at a federal level, even though they're removed from the FMU? That's what you're saying?

MR. MCKINLEY: No, and I just think there will have to be no sale on it.

MR. KIMREY: No sale?

MR. MCKINLEY: I guess no sale on them.

MR. KIMREY: No selling them without an SG 1?

MR. MCKINLEY: I guess, correct.

MR. KIMREY: That's how it would have to work?

MR. MCKINLEY: Yes.

MR. KIMREY: I don't -- I don't know that that's possible is it? If they're removed from the FMU, you can't say, oh, we're not managing them, but you still can't sell them.

MR. MCKINLEY: I guess then the state commercial license would do it, but I just -- I just feel like I know people that would take off out there and just try to target those.

MR. KIMREY: I know you're concern, and the potential is there, but, at the same time, it's --

MR. MCKINLEY: Well, I mean, the white grunt is the only one they would target. It's the only one, in our area, that they could catch enough to make it feasible.

MR. KIMREY: What are they worth wholesale off the boat, if you got two-pound white grunts?

MR. MCKINLEY: \$2.25 to \$2.75 a pound.

MR. KIMREY: Man, that's a lot of work to try and make a dollar off of them things.

MR. MCKINLEY: I'm telling you there's people that would do it.

MR. KIMREY: I know there's a handful of people that would do it. I guess maybe we should look at this as the lesser of two evils. Are we willing to take that chance to free up space on the council's plate, and the fish managers' plate, to move forward to get everything out?

MR. MCKINLEY: Like I said, my only concern is the white grunt. None of the other species it would happen with. It's just that one particular species, off our coast, they could access in very shallow water, but they're going to throw back a lot of gags, a lot of, you know, everything, but that's just my thought on it.

MR. KIMREY: I'm not trying to sway your decision. I'm just trying to look at both sides of it. Do we need to go back to Question 1? Do you feel strongly enough about it that we need to go back and put it on there with the queen snapper and the porgy?

MR. MCKINLEY: I mean, I know it's going to happen. To what impact it has on the whole South Atlantic, it's probably not much, but I just -- I see the problems with that one particular species.

MR. KIMREY: So I'm going to ask you one more time, and then we're going to move on. Do we need to go back and add that to the list with the queen snappers and the porgy?

MR. MCKINLEY: It's not that important to me, no, and we're good.

MR. KIMREY: So we're good, because I see -- You and I understand the mindset of the people in our area of, oh, we can sell those now, and they'll go out there and spend \$300 to catch \$150 worth of them, and I see it, and they'll release \$1,000 worth of good fish that are out of season. I mean, I see where you're coming from. Okay. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. So, at the risk of being cynical negative Nancy here, we said we don't have the time and capacity to do a greater snapper grouper permit and reporting requirement, but now we have the potential to do it for species that we might remove from the management unit, and is that what you're referring to in this question?

MR. KIMREY: Bingo. I was going to bring that up at some point, but my fearless compadre, David, did it for me.

MR. MOSS: All right. As long as we're on the same page, and that's all I wanted to know. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: That's just because there's so many of us that were passionate about the recreational permit, and we get, you know, that it was prioritized, but here we are talking about more permits.

MR. MOSS: I mean, look, and you know where I sit on that, and I'm all for it, but, in the interest of one of the, I guess, reasons behind this is somewhat of a deregulatory process, as we've been mandated, and I get that, and so then I would love to say, yes, a permit requirement, and I can't imagine that that's going to align with the guidance that we've been given.

MR. KIMREY: That's how I'm looking at this, guys, and this is just the reality of what we've volunteered to do. Most of the time, you have to take a lesser of two evils, figure out which one that is, get enough people onboard with it, and roll ahead, and so, with these removals from the FMU, you know, there's going to be consequences. There's always cause and effect.

It's just like, I mean, everything else in fisheries management, and you can't keep this, and now the decline of that, and so there's going to be repercussions that happen, but I think what we should do, while answering these three questions, and I think we've done a really good job so far, and we've had a great discussion, and it's moving at a fairly timely manner, is figure out what the lesser of the two evils are, and, if there's anything that we're really strongly considering needs to go back to the council, whether it be to take off or add or whatever, and roll with it.

My opinion, and I definitely want feedback from you, the rest of you, just like David did, on a permit requirement, let's not do that, and that's just my opinion. We can't get permits for anything else. Let's just -- That just seems like it's more -- Instead of streamlining, it's creating more issues. That's my opinion, and so I'm waiting on feedback for that part of Question Number 3. Anybody else, other than David? All right. I got a lot of clarity on that quick.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Can I chime in?

MR. KIMREY: Yes, please.

MR. WILLINGHAM: My hand has been up, and I promise.

MR. KIMREY: Hold on one second, Darrin. John, are we going to get some clarity?

MR. HADLEY: I was just going to speak, really quickly, to the point kind of David brought up, and just, I guess, provide a little clarification on the permit requirement and reporting requirement. Related to that, it would -- Since you're in the ecosystem component realm, if you're there, the council has said these species don't need federal management, and so you kind of -- You're backing off of regulations. One of the options would be to maintain a permit requirement and reporting requirement, and so that would be for-hire and commercial. It wouldn't be creating a new regulation that would be more stringent than what you have now.

MR. KIMREY: Right.

MR. HADLEY: I just want to make that, because I think that --

MR. KIMREY: I think that was some confusion, and I think we overlapped a couple of things, if they were -- Yes, and EC is not a new permit, and so let's clarify that. A permit requirement, if you currently have a for-hire permit or a commercial permit, like an SG 1, and they went to the EC, ecosystem component species, then it's not a new permit. It is you still have to report, just like when they were on the FMU, if you have that federal permit, for-hire or SG 1 or whatever, correct, John?

MR. HADLEY: That's correct, and so it would be maintaining what you have right now in relation to --

MR. KIMREY: Right, and I apologize. I allowed myself to steer off course with the permit thing as a whole. We were talking about the white grunts and all that. David.

MR. MOSS: Sorry, and I know Darrin has been waiting, but so, if I understand that correctly then, and perhaps I don't, then, if you don't have an SG 1, you don't have to report, and, because it's not in the FMU anymore, you can kind of do what Randy was talking about?

MR. HADLEY: No, and it would be -- If there was a reporting requirement, there would be a permit requirement, and so that's kind of the linkage.

MR. KIMREY: Well, there's mandatory reporting for the for-hire permits currently, too.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so you would still -- On the for-hire side, you would still need the snapper grouper permit. On the commercial side, you would still need a commercial permit, and so it would be SG 1 or SG 2, and, based on the guidance that the council has received, it would also need to include an open access permit. This is a hypothetical example, but the council could say SG 1, SG 2, and a dolphin wahoo commercial permit, and so with that permit comes a reporting requirement.

MR. KIMREY: If they're ecosystem component species, they're removed from the FMU, and there's still a permit requirement, and there's still a reporting requirement, that means they couldn't be sold without an SG 1 or an SG 2?

MR. HADLEY: They could be sold -- Well, yes. Exactly. They could be sold with a commercial -- They would need -- For them to be commercially sold, if they're in a federal ecosystem component species, they would need to have an SG 1 or an SG 2. However, there could be another permit that would be allowed within that, that would be open access.

MR. KIMREY: That's the one we were talking about right then, another permit. Yes, and I knew I wasn't making that up, and so that was the open access permit. I think that's what we were talking about, Randy and I. You know, if white grunt was removed from the FMU, and you didn't need an SG 1 to sell it, and there was an open access permit for them, and is that what you're saying?

MR. HADLEY: It wouldn't have to be a new permit. It could just be one of the existing federal South Atlantic permits.

MR. KIMREY: Just attach it to one of the other permits.

MR. HADLEY: Right, because the guidance that the council has received is they said that -- That the council has received during the meetings is that a permit requirement, a commercial permit requirement, is certainly within the realm of possibilities.

The limited access nature, that's a pretty stringent management tool, and so that's for a species in need of conservation and management, and so they could keep a permit requirement, and they could have the SG 1 and SG 2, but they would likely have to add an open access permit, and there's plenty of open access, you know, like a Spanish mackerel permit and a dolphin wahoo permit. That's a federal permit, and it has a reporting requirement with it. It would be -- It would just have to have that one additional option. It wouldn't necessarily be an ecosystem component.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. I thought I had a better handle on this, but I think I finally figured it out. Does everybody understand? Does anybody have any questions on that? Was I the only one that lost? I hope not. Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I just had a question. Why couldn't you just make a federal ecosystem endorsement that requires an SG 1 or an SG 2?

MR. HADLEY: You know, to get a full answer back to you, I would have to probably think about that, and ask a few folks. Just thinking again, the feedback that we, staff, have received, and the council has received, the SG 1 and SG 2 are limited access, and so you need to have at least one other permit in there that's open access, that would allow you to get that endorsement. It's just that limited-access nature is what would have to come out of the commercial side.

MR. KIMREY: You can't take it off the FMU and still consider it limited access, I think is what he's saying.

MR. BONURA: He's telling us you need an open access permit and an SG 1 or SG 2 to move the fish, correct?

MR. HADLEY: It would be an or and not an --

MR. KIMREY: Either or. If you had the SG 1, you wouldn't have to buy the open access permit. If you didn't have an SG 1 or SG 2, you would have to buy the open access permit, and it could actually attach it to an existing permit, something that's already there that -- I mean, whatever, and so it's not even like they would have to come up with a new permit. It would be like swordfish on the shark permit sort of situation. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sorry, and the council members were over there debating what you guys are debating, because I think that we understood it a little bit differently than what John Hadley is saying, and so, first off, we weren't thinking that a new permit would be established.

We were also thinking if you said -- You were going to say, okay, we're going to make this ecosystem component, but we're still going to keep a permit requirement, and/or a reporting requirement, because we want to track these species, we weren't thinking that you would then have to create something new, and make it open access, and so we weren't thinking that that was required.

We were thinking that you might just retain the existing say commercial or for-hire permit requirement, and then also continue reporting requirements, whatever category you put it in, I guess, because we were also looking at this report that the Mid-Atlantic Council received for all these different commercial species annually, and whether or not you should bring things into the fishery management unit, et cetera.

I get that there's a lot of confusion here, but kind of the overarching reason you would do these things, I think, is tracking with what the council is considering. I mean, these species were put in the fishery management unit. It's been almost fifty years since Magnuson was established, and none of these things have stock assessments. You now have capacity issues, less stock assessment scientists, et cetera, and you're never going to have stock assessments for these species.

You're never going to have that type of information, and, in thinking about how to manage, how to move forward, with the whole complex, there's fifty-five species in there. There's way too many species in there to really do anything meaningful with. By taking some of these out, or just tracking them, or just having a permit requirement, it might make it easier as fisheries managers. It might make it easier in thinking about, you know, our duty to manage this group of species, but I'm looking at the other council members that are here, if they would like to add more to this discussion. Okay, and they said that they feel like that captured our council discussion.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Jessica. I don't think we were completely off, but maybe a little. Who was over here had a question? David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, and I appreciate that clarification, Jessica. It is very helpful, but my question, back to that, is then how difficult would it be, let's say down the road, and perhaps you don't have the answer to this, using queen snapper as a for instance, right, and it becomes more and more of a robust fishery, particularly down south, and then maybe something like we were talking about earlier, sea bass, and we see that they're starting to migrate more and more north, and kind of that one, for lack of a better term, falls off the radar of the council.

How difficult would it be, if queens were removed from the FMU, to then get them put back on, because it becomes more and more of an important species, and that's kind of my fear, is, down the road, it's going to be more difficult to try to do an assessment of some of these species. It's almost like adding a second or third step to first get them reestablished as part of the FMU, and then have to do some kind of assessment process, or something like that, and that's my thinking anyway with it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So let me say this. None of these species on this list -- I mean, we're whittling down the species that we can assess even more, and so, even if one of these became more important, the likelihood that the council, through the SEDAR process, could do a stock assessment on it is small. Like I doubt that we would suggest that you would do a full blown multi-step stock assessment on some of these species.

Now, could a state like Florida do a stock assessment for some of these species? Yes, and Florida does do some of the stock assessments, like mutton and yellowtail, that then go through the federal process, including black grouper and goliath grouper, and so there are other ways to do this.

I know that federal management seems like the Cadillac of management here, but there might be other ways to come at this problem. I don't think it's terrible to find that another one of these species here has become more and more important, as maybe something else declines, and then people switch over to it, and I don't think it's the end of the world to come back and manage it, but I think that that's also why there are multiple options here.

Like you can take some completely out, and then a state could choose to manage that species in state and federal waters, which Florida has definitely done that. It's fairly easy for Florida to do that. It's not so easy for some other states to do that, but, also, I think that there's a way to just move some of these species into a different category, where it's not fully out of the fishery management unit, and it's in like a sub-component of the fishery management unit. It's like the cousin of the fishery management unit, and you're kind of putting it in a separate category, and you're saying we're going to continue tracking it.

I think the council is also saying, in addition to all of these species, there might be some other species out there that are becoming more and more important, and we want to track those as well, and so the council wants to use a process kind of like what the Mid-Atlantic does, where they're going to track kind of everything that the commercial harvesters are landing. It doesn't mean that it's only the people that have the federal permit. It's just everything that's being landed, so that we can look at some of those species and see what is becoming more important in our region, which could be a more tropical species, or maybe some of these become less important, because they move north, et cetera, but this is --

You can see the conversations that you guys are having is why this is a challenging discussion at the council as well to figure out what to do here. We're trying to kind of dump some things into a different category, so that we can better manage the species that we think are most important, and most in need of management, and you can see the challenges that, as you move through the region, something that might be really important in Florida might not be really important in North Carolina, or vice versa.

Maybe it's not really important in Florida, but it is in North Carolina, and so then what category do you move it to, but tracking the landings is one thing. Requiring a permit is kind of another layer, and so you can see these different layers, and so that's what I think we're asking the AP, is what type of layers are you going to add to these different species, and, by add, I mean it's almost like -- This is kind of how you all had structured the discussion here.

Like if you pulled it out, or if you pulled it out of this main fishery management unit, and then you started thinking, well, we've got it out now, and where does it go, or what do we do with it, or what are we tracking on it, and I think that is maybe another way to think about the question, is FMU adjacent.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Jessica. Let me go with Darrin. He's had his hand up a while, and then I'll come back to you guys.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you, and so, when it came to like Number 3, if you removed them from the FMU and put them -- But they remain in the ecosystem component species, I'm curious about the permit. Is the permit just talking about commercial and for-hire, or is that also trying to put that on the recreational fishing community?

MR. HADLEY: No, and that would be existing -- Basically existing requirements, and so commercial and for-hire, and not private recreational.

MR. WILLINGHAM: Gotcha, and, I mean, in the grand scheme of things, I totally understand what Jessica is saying on this, is they're trying to streamline the workload of the South Atlantic Council to the more important species, but, again, I'm under the hope that a lot of this will go all to state management eventually, and so I would be in favor of approving all of the species that have been recommended to take them off the FMU, but I'm not sure who wants to put that to a vote. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. In reference to Number 3, I love having my permit. I love having a report. Those things are good, and we should not change that. I guess the question, and so, in order to have potential state management of some of these species we're talking about, does it need to be totally removed from the FMU, or can you move it to the ecosystem-based, and then it be managed by the state?

MR. HADLEY: That's a good question, and a good point to make. I think we're still working on that, to give a very clear kind of cut-and-dried answer to that. It may depend on the state on whether -- Because there are some stipulations where -- So, if it remains as an ecosystem component species, it's under federal management. There's some stipulations where some states say we're not going to be more stringent than the federal management, and so that's where it's kind of a gray area, but that might vary from state to state, and so I don't have a great answer for you right now.

I apologize for that, but it's something that we'll work on, and the council will consider as they move forward with deciding, if they do want these removed from federal management, whether they would be best placed under total removal, totally handed over to the states, or if the states could have some management in place if they remain as ecosystem components.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, John, and, yes, that's kind of my question, and so like, you know, is it better, at this time, to just kind of proceed with caution, and kind of move these species over to that ecosystem-based, kind of like an escrow FMU cousin-type in-law house, where they're not totally living with you, but they're still in your backyard, until we figure out --

MR. KIMREY: Maybe we can get some clarity. I get your question. Hold on just a second, Chris. I don't know if Jessica would have an answer to that question. I don't know, and she was discussing with someone over there other things, I'm sure, because she's got a lot of exercise walking back and forth to the table today.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can you ask me the question one more time?

MR. KIMREY: Correct me if I get this wrong, Haley, and so she's asking if these species ultimately, that are being removed from the FMU were going to be managed at the state level, do they have to be completely removed from the FMU, and not put in an eco-component species for

that to happen, or do they need to go into the ecosystem component species to be managed by states, or does it matter at all?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, we're not 100 percent sure. We were having that debate over there, looking at some materials from the September meeting, and so I know that the Magnuson said that, if there is no federal management for a particular species, then the state, you know, can make a case to the council to manage in federal waters, which like FWC has done that.

Think about something like snook. FWC manages snook in state and federal waters, because the council has no intent of doing a snook federal fishery management plan, but there was some documentation, in the September briefing book, that indicated that, if something went into ecosystem component, that there might still be a way for a state to also put in some additional regulations, and so I'm wondering if -- Because we don't have all these answers, I'm wondering if maybe where you guys kind of started in this discussion is going to be the most helpful thing for the council, where you're talking about which ones need what level of management, and so like do we just need to track the landings? Do we also need a permit requirement?

You know, kind of what are you thinking, based on how important do you think those species are off of your state, and so I think that maybe that's a way to think about it, and then that kind of helps the council figure out which category for it to be in, or if it gets fully removed, or it goes to ecosystem component and gets some sort of aggregate limit or permit requirement or reporting requirement, but maybe -- You all started the discussion that way, like which species you felt weren't heavy targets, and that maybe they could either be removed, or have less restrictive management, and so maybe that's the way to think about it.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, Jessica, for even more clarity than John. It's just a different perspective, and let me rephrase myself. A different perspective on the same problem. Ultimately, I comprehended, and I took the same from both of you, is that nobody really knows, and I think that's the problem.

That's the problem the AP's having, okay, and you're asking us to choose, but you're not telling us what the potential outcome could be, and I don't expect you, or John, to have full clarity and tell us exactly what could happen, if you don't know, but, with that, on behalf of the AP, I'm going to tell you that it's hard for us to answer these questions with a whole heart, not knowing what we're signing these species up for, and so I don't know what to tell you. Maybe you all figure it out and get back with us.

MR. HADLEY: You know, I certainly appreciate that, and I think one thing to -- Two things to keep in mind, and they both relate to that this is in the scoping phase, and it's very early, and so, you know, saying that you want to remove tomtate, and you don't know what the fate of the tomtate is going to be, and I don't want to tell you totally don't worry about it, but the council is going to discuss this, in a lot of detail, and get more information, as they develop this amendment.

The AP will see this again, and so this amendment is going to be developed through next year, and so you will have another -- You know, you can have another take at this when there is more information, when the amendment is further developed, and so, you know, that's all to say, you know, it's good to keep in mind what the endgame is, but this isn't the final say, and it's not like what decisions are made today are final, and that's what --

MR. KIMREY: There's the clarity we've been looking for right there, and so let's keep that in mind moving forward, you know, and trust that the council, and the staff, as they move forward with this, something that is very young, they're going to pick it apart, and they're going to bounce it off us again, and so maybe, moving forward, we just go with what we know.

We have our little list, and we'll entrust in them that, once they know for sure what the ramifications of the ecosystem component species are, versus state management, they'll get back with us and bounce it off us again, and does that make sense? Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, and so I just wanted to go back and clarify that the council is still going to have to go through the whole evaluation, right, and there was that slide in the beginning that John had that has those ten, I think it is, criteria, and so maybe an easier way to put the question to the AP would have been, are there any of these seventeen species that shouldn't go through the evaluation, because that's really what is going to tell us whether they should be removed, right, if like those criteria are met, or whether they need to remain within, and so it's like a little test, right?

It's like you have to go through this evaluation, and so what would be helpful, I think for the council, is to know which species they should just not even bother, because they clearly need to stay in the FMU, and so are there any species like that, that we shouldn't go through the process of answering those ten questions?

MR. KIMREY: I think we sort of have that list, don't we? We had that an hour ago, man. What have we been doing here? Thanks, Myra, and that helped immensely, for me anyway. I don't know about everybody else. There were some people I missed. I know there was Matt. Okay. We'll do Matt, and then Chris.

MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you. This is Matt Matthews. I just had a couple of quick comments on this. One, it's my understanding, in all this discussion, that we're not talking about species that we actively have states interested in managing. It's one where -- When we talk about state management, we're talking about the possibility of a state potentially taking it over in the future.

For right now, we don't have a state saying we want to take over management of this species, and with that goes the idea of collecting data on them. If we're collecting data on a species right now, why would we not at least keep them in a category, whatever we want to call the category, that allows us to continue collecting data on them, because, at some point, it might become a commercially-viable fishery, or a recreational target fishery, that it wasn't before, and, if we have a gap in data, because we decided to roll it off altogether, I think that would negatively impact our ability to regulate it better.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Matt, and I think that's a great point. You know, whether they're on the FMU, or they're in ecosystem component species, or they're just going out there to be on their own, doing whatever, if there's already a reporting requirement, I think that should definitely stay in place, because there's absolutely no benefit to removing that, because you're dealing with something that's already been implemented, but, potentially in the future, there could be some sort of science or something that could come out of that reporting. If it's in place, and under reporting, no matter where it lands, FMU or not, I think we should -- You know, for the permit holders, it's not that big a deal reporting everything anyway, and let's just keep reporting on it. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. Chris Conklin, and so I think I can remember, when I was serving on the council, that we looked at adding bullet and frigate mackerel to the ecosystem component, and we had someone from the Mid-Atlantic, I believe, come and do like a presentation about creating an ecosystem component of the fishery.

I went to the Mid-Atlantic Council page and I think this is -- It's pretty -- I mean, I know that there's a lot more species. It says that they manage sixty-five species, and they have only seven FMPs, that comprise and manage fifteen species directly with the FMP. After that, they've got fifty-plus forage species managed as ecosystem components, which means that the council can set possession and landing limits to prevent the expansion of directed fisheries on these specific species in the Mid-Atlantic, and, along with that, they use the ASMFC and the New England Management Council and some states to manage the rest of that stuff.

I think that's kind of what we're looking at, getting at to sort of the same scenario, and streamlining the stuff, and so it's not like it's going to be forgotten about. It just goes into a different bin, and we keep an eye on it, and have the ability to come back and, you know, still control it, but not directly, you know, having an FMP.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris. I assume everybody understands that he's making a comparison there. Did anybody have anything else? We've got to figure out where we are here on this Number 3 question. What are your thoughts, John?

MR. HADLEY: I'm here to ask you guys your thoughts, but I think, based on the AP's discussion, it sounds like there's an interest in at least exploring a permit requirement, keeping and maintaining a permit requirement, and maintaining a reporting requirement, and that's important, and then potentially having -- I don't know if there's been much discussion on the aggregate trip limit. That would be, you know, an aggregate limit, but, again, we can save that for the next AP discussion, if you feel like you don't have enough information on that.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thanks, and so back to Jessica's request and Myra's clarification. Let's go back to Question Number 1, where we came up with a list or porgy, queen, cubera. Is there anybody on the AP that feels that those three should be removed from the FMU, because, if not, we can make the recommendation to the council to not consider those for removal from the FMU. All the porgies, and, you know, there's one, two, three -- Well, there's three actual porgies, or four porgies, and then queen snapper, and cubera.

Is there anybody here, by a show of hands, that thinks they should be removed from the FMU? By a show of hands, anybody here thinks that they should stay? Okay. I just want to make sure I didn't phrase that incorrectly and get a response 180 degrees out of phase of what I was thinking. Okay, and so there's our list for that. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I don't want to speak for anybody else, but I thought Darrin wanted -- Darrin, I'm not going to speak for you, but I thought he was voting for removal from the FMU, and so I don't know if your tally is right here.

MR. KIMREY: Well, he said he thought they all should be removed from the FMU, but, since it's not a motion, and it's not a formal vote, I'm just trying to come up with a list. Everybody in this room, which is fifteen people, and so I was just -- Paul, work with me here, man. Work with me.

Question Number 2, real quick, tomtate, white grunt, banded rudder, and bar jack. Those are the ones that we had recommendations to be removed from the FMU and moved to the ecosystem component species list. A show of hands of who agrees with that, removing those from the FMU. My goodness, I've said that a lot, or to the ecosystem component species. Okay, and so there's our list, guys.

Question Number 3, permit requirement, we seem to really think there needs to be a reporting requirement if you have a permit already. A relatively non-restricted aggregate, we're going skip over that, and we'll get them to send that back next time. Okay? We're going to abstain from Bullet Point 3 on Number 3. Darrin, is that you? Okay. All right. So I'm not sure the best way to make this recommendation, but I do have us a list here of the answers for these three questions to go back to the council. Are you good?

Let me review what I have with you real quick. I'm sure you've got it, and I've said it five times already, but just to make sure. Porgy, queen, and cubera to stay on the FMU. Tomtate, white grunt, banded rudder, bar jack, move to EC. You know, if you have a current federal permit, we think you should continue reporting, whether on the EC or off the FMU altogether, and, for Bullet Point Number 3, circle back to us on that one. I think -- Does everybody agree with that? Okay. Great. Man, that was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you and so with that, I'll close, really quickly, with the next steps for this. So, as Jessica mentioned, the council has requested an annual report of commercial landings for unmanaged or ecosystem component species in the region, and so that's kind of that effort to keep tabs on any growing fisheries for unmanaged species. Then, at the December council meeting, the council is going to discuss this, with comments from the AP, which we've just reviewed, and then also comments received during scoping hearings and from scoping.

With that, again, we're looking at developing this amendment through the end of this year, and into next year, and we'll be coming back to the AP once we have a little bit more developed amendment, kind of to be looking at it in an actions and alternatives sort of outline, and so thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John. Did I see a hand up? Mike, do we take a break, real quick? Okay. Let's take a break, guys after that, and that was a little stressful, trying to figure all that out. What are we doing, Mike? All right. Let's just do fifteen and come back, guys.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. KIMREY: All right, guys. Let's see if we can get everybody to settle down, and let's keep rolling here. We're going to hand the mic to Christina. She's going to talk about some blueline tilefish stuff coming right up. Is everybody settling in?

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, and so I think I've met most of you by now, but, if not, my name is Christina Wiegand. I'm the Fisheries Social Scientist with the council. I traditionally work with

the mackerel and cobia fishermen, but occasionally I do get to moonlight with the Snapper Grouper FMP and work on things like wreckfish and blueline tilefish, which is what I'm going to talk to you all about today.

This is going to be Abbreviated Framework 5, which looks at revising stock catch levels for blueline tilefish, and so just a quick little bit of background about the blueline tilefish stock. I'm guessing most of you guys already know this, but, for the sake of having it said, it is a single genetic stock that ranges from the Mid-Atlantic coast all the way around through the Gulf of America, and so the South Atlantic Council manages blueline tilefish within the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction, and on that North Carolina-Virginia line down through the Florida Keys, and then the Mid-Atlantic Council, as of 2017, also manages tilefish within their jurisdiction.

SEDAR 92 was an operational assessment for blueline tilefish that was completed earlier this year, and, similar to previous assessments, they sort of modeled a northern chunk of the stock separately than the southern chunk of the stock, with that dividing line being Cape Hatteras, and so north of Cape Hatteras modeled together, and south of Cape Hatteras modeled separately, and this is because of data availability differences between the area.

That stock assessment was completed, and the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee reviewed that. They used data-limited approaches to set the acceptable biological catch level, and they set that level for the north of Cape Hatteras stock and the south of Cape Hatteras stock, and then what happens to get those two different ABCs split by jurisdiction is there is an apportionment of that north of Cape Hatteras ABC that is allocated to the South Atlantic, representing that sort of what you'll hear people refer to as the sliver, that area between the North Carolina-Virginia line and north of Cape Hatteras.

Using the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey to inform that apportionment, it results in about 70 percent being allocated to the Mid-Atlantic and 30 percent being allocated to the South Atlantic, to represent, again, that little sliver of area between the North Carolina-Virginia line and Cape Hatteras. That ABC is then added to the south of Cape Hatteras ABC to get a total ABC for the South Atlantic jurisdiction.

The council reviewed the results and the ABC recommendations from the SSC at their June 2025 meeting, and the council did request that staff reach out to the Mid-Atlantic Council to request a meeting to sort of jointly address that regional apportionment of blueline tilefish.

Ultimately, the Mid-Atlantic Council responded and said that they felt comfortable moving forward with that 70/30 split, as recommended at this time, because it was developed and approved by a joint meeting of both the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic SSCs, but that they do agree to sort of move forward in the future with a joint process to discuss the regional apportionment, and so I'm going to pause quickly there, before talking about how the council intends to implement these new catch levels, to see if there are any questions from this group about how those catch levels were derived.

MR. KIMREY: Does anybody have any questions for Christina? I have a quick question. How do these catch levels compare to the last stock assessment? Are they --

MS. WIEGAND: So one of the things that's in the stock assessment is a switch from the MRIP-CHTS to the MRIP-FES numbers, and so they're not directly comparable, and Mike can correct me if I'm wrong, but I do believe that this does represent an increase in available catch, correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and it's at least a numerical increase in the available catch, but, like Christina said --

MR. KIMREY: That's the whole pounds versus thing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and that's why I was curious is trying to figure it out, but so there could potentially be an increase? Nice. I like that. Okay. I mean, I occasionally go fishing for blueline, and sometimes I don't get to go, because it closes. Any questions?

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then, moving right along into how the council intends to implement these catch levels, which you can see in the tables on your screen, and so the council discussed the need to implement this increased ABC that was recommended, preferably in a timeline that would allow these new levels to be in place for the upcoming 2026 fishing season, and so, in order to do that, it would need to be an abbreviated framework, which the council moved forward with.

The one sort of catch with this is that, to address catch level recommendations through an abbreviated framework, things like sector allocation percentages would need to be maintained. Right now, those are 50.07 percent commercial and 49.93 percent recreational, and they would need to be maintained, even though we do have that recreational catch estimation method change from CHTS to FES.

Staff did do a quick analysis and found that, even switching to the FES survey, there's a relatively small difference between recreational and commercial landings relative to the current sector allocation percentages, and so, based on that analysis, the council really felt like the benefit of getting the increased ABC in place was greater than the potential benefit of sort of waiting for a more prolonged process that would include reevaluating sector or that regional apportionment percentage.

That being said, the council does still intend to work with the Mid-Atlantic Council to explore looking at that regional apportionment later, through a separate process, and, at that time, they could also consider long-term changes to sector allocations, if needed, and so the intent is to move this fairly quick.

The AP is seeing it -- I can scroll down quickly to the timeline. The AP seeing it at this meeting, and the council will see it in December, review AP feedback, any feedback that we receive from the public, and the intent is for the council to take final action at the December meeting on this amendment, in order to get those increased catch levels in place for the 2026 season, and so, with that, again, I will pause to see if there are any questions, in terms of how the council intends to implement these new catch levels, before moving on to a quick question about management measures.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody? Okay.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then the council did have one question for the AP. I've got the blue-line tilefish management measures on the screen, just for reference. Table 3 is the recreational management measures, and Table 4 are commercial management measures.

Given that there is that sort of increase in ABC, the council was curious if the advisory panel would recommend considering an increase in the commercial trip limit for blue-line from the 300 pounds from May to December 31 to 400 pounds, during that time period. A note that this isn't something that could be considered in the abbreviated framework, but is something that could be considered later down the line, and so the council was just curious if the AP had any feedback on the possible increase in the commercial trip limit.

MR. KIMREY: Sorry, I was reading. Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Randy McKinney, and it looks like it's going up 20 or 30 percent, or whatever it is, the total amount. When did it close this year? It closed in July, possibly?

MS. WIEGAND: Late July, we believe, and we'll look up the exact date for you, but we think July.

MR. MCKINLEY: I think so, and I would be for it as long as -- I mean, it's become a pretty important fish. You know, people are liking it as a substitute for grouper and everything, and so I would -- To me, the more important would be extending the season, instead of doing the trip limit., but if -- I don't know, and I'm sure you probably haven't run numbers on that, but, if it would extend the season at the 400, I would go along with it, but, if it shortened the season, then I wouldn't want to do it. That's my feedback.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and just feedback on the closure date this year. It closed on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, and then there was a six-day reopening in September.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I mean, it would be nice if it went through the summer.

MR. KIMREY: So, for the sake of having a longer season, you're saying you would prefer that it stay at 300 pounds? Okay. Does anybody else have any feedback on that? Scott.

MR. BUFF: Scott Buff, Holden Beach, commercial. I would agree with Randy. I think that all the tile fishing, and snowies, those boats are going fishing for the same thing, and so, if you leave all that together, where it would stay somewhat to where it run together, that gives them, I think, what, ten boxes of fish, counting the snowies, and that's a pretty decent trip, and so I think that we leave it at the 300.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Scott. Does anybody else have any feedback on that commercial trip limit? I think we're good. Next.

MS. WIEGAND: That is all I needed from the AP. Thank you very much for your feedback.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and I do have some, after looking at it. The January to April trip limit is pretty minuscule, and so if there was -- If the council was going to look at increasing either one, I would prefer to do it in the first season, and, you know, for ease of regulation or whatever, I would recommend that it be 300 pounds in each season.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris. All right. Do you got everything you need, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: I sure do.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. Well, thank you very much. Nobody else has anything for her? Come on up, Julia and Meg.

MS. BYRD: All right. Good afternoon, everyone. I think I've had an opportunity to meet most folks, but, if not, I'm Julia Byrd, and I manage the council's Citizen Science Program, along with Meg Withers, who is our Citizen Science Project Coordinator, and so we're going to give you kind of a quick update on what's been happening in the council's Citizen Science Program since you all met earlier this spring.

Kind of we have three projects that are underway now, SMILE, FISHstory, and SAFMC Release, and so we're going to give you an update on what's been happening with all of those programs, and then Meg is hoping to get some input from you guys on a few questions about the SAFMC Release project, and so first off is our SMILE project.

This is a project that's run by the Reef Environmental Education Foundation, or REEF is their acronym. They're a program that's been working with recreational divers to collect data for decades, and so the SMILE project is really focused on partnering with divers to collect length information from some of our data-limited species, and so a variety of snappers, groupers, and some parrotfishes as well.

We're working with divers that are using kind of laser-mounted underwater cameras to collect length data, and so the divers go down, and they put the laser on the fish of interest, take a burst of photos, and then those photos are analyzed on the backend to get a length of those fish.

The SMILE project, we've had funding for kind of three years for a pilot project, and the project has mainly focused on kind of developing the camera, and the housing for the laser, and kind of working out technical issues with that, developing the methodology for the divers to use when they're taking photos of the fish, and then, on the backend, to help process the data, they're developing kind of an AI, or artificial intelligence, workload, and so to be able to kind of more easily get the length information from the photos.

They're developing kind of an artificial intelligence model that can help pull kind of those length data out more quickly in the future, and so the pilot project is wrapping up. Through the pilot, they've had over fifty divers that have done just around -- Just under 300 dives down in the Florida Keys, to kind of test this technology. The pilot project is wrapping up now, and so they're really focused on kind of processing and analyzing data.

We're really excited that they got an additional year of funding, to kind of help expand the project even more, and so they're working to kind of finalize that artificial intelligence kind of workflow, and they're also starting to work with dive shops, and so to try to get the cameras, SMILE cameras, into more divers' hands to collect more information.

Another thing that's pretty cool, that they've done as part of this project, is there's this data visualization tool, where you can go online, and there's a map, where you can kind of go in and see where they've collected data on these fish, and look at the kind of sizes of the fish that they've been able to collect data on, that sort of thing. If that's of interest, we can send you the link to that data visualization tool, if you want to check it out.

Another thing that's been going underway with this project, that's been pretty kind of informative, is they've surveyed recreational divers to better understand who might participate in this project, why people might participate in this project, and any barriers to people participating in this project, and so they did a survey that ended -- I think it was at the end of August, and so they're kind of crunching those numbers, and those will be available soon.

Then the last thing I wanted to mention on the SMILE project is they were -- A REEF crew was actually able to present to the South Atlantic Council's SSC in April, to get input on the methodology, and get input on if they think these data could help be informative to management, and the SSC gave really positive feedback, and gave them some feedback on the methodology, that the SMILE crew has already kind of incorporated into the project, and so that's just a quick overview, but, if you're interested in kind of learning more about the project, Jen Locke, who is with the REEF program, did a great presentation as part of the council's October seminar series, and so, in the presentation, there's kind of a link right here, if you want to check out the recording of that.

Next, a quick update on the FISHstory project, and I know many of you guys are familiar with this project, but this is the project that's using old, historic fishing photos to help us learn more about kind of what was caught and the size of fish that were caught back in the 1940s through the 1980s, when catch monitoring programs either weren't in place or were just getting started in our region.

As many of you know, the project has kind of three components, and so I just wanted to give you a progress update on those. First is we're trying to archive old, historic fishing photos. The more photos we have from across the South Atlantic region, the more representative the data are, and so, thanks to many folks who are sitting around this table, we've been able to archive over 2,300 photos across the South Atlantic, and we've gotten some new photos in that we're processing for analysis now, but we have a couple of holes left.

One, we need more photos from the Carolinas, and then we need more photos from the 1980s throughout the region, and a shout out to Captain Paul Nelson, at the end of the table. He let me know today that he found another kind of album of photos from the 1980s, and John Polston is going to help bring that album back up to Charleston, South Carolina in a couple of weeks, and so thank you, guys, for always being on the lookout to contribute photos to this project.

The second component of the project is, once we have all those photos archived, we need them analyzed, and so we do that in part through the online website called Zooniverse, where people,

volunteers, from kind of all over the country, or world, are able to help us identify and count fish and people in these old historic photos.

Since the project launched a number of years ago, we've had over 4,000 volunteers analyze just over 2,000 of those photos, and then, to help validate the data in those photos, we have a validation team of fish ID experts, and that's a mix of fishermen and scientists, and our validation team -- I'll say a little bit more about that in a few minutes, but they've been super active over the past kind of one to two months, helping us validate some of those photos.

Then the last component of the project is we're getting size of fish in the photos, using kind of the wooden lumber on the leaderboards as a scale, and so, to-date, we've measured all of the king mackerel and all of the red snapper in our current photo archive. The red snapper length compositions were put together, and we presented them at the South Atlantic red snapper data Workshop that was held earlier this spring. They were recommended for use in the assessment by the data workshop panel, and I'll kind of show you the length data that we were able to get from those photos in a few minutes.

Then we're updating the king mackerel length compositions now, and we'll be kind of presenting them for consideration at the next SEDAR South Atlantic king mackerel assessment, which is scheduled to tentatively start now I think in 2027.

Since you all met back in April -- We hadn't had all of our currently archived photos complete by volunteers in Zooniverse, and now we have, and so the volunteers in Zooniverse had been very busy, kind of in the spring and summer, and all of those photos are classified, and so now the next step is getting our validation team to analyze a subset of those photos, and so, right now, we have twenty-three members on our validation team.

They hadn't been active in a while, and so we held five training sessions in August. The training sessions were one hour. Validation team members just needed to come for one training session, where we kind of went over the validation process, and so over the past, I guess it's been about seven-and-a-half or eight weeks, they've been actively validating photos, and so collecting data the same way a volunteer would in the Zooniverse project, and, that way, we're able to compare what our fish ID experts see to what the volunteers see.

Each week, we provide updates, when the validation team is active, on their progress, and are able to give shoutouts to folks who have been validating rock stars, and we have two of our validation team rock stars on the AP sitting around the table. Richie Gomez and David Moss have been doing an awesome job helping validate photos, and so this is a really key process for this project, and so we're really thankful for you guys for helping validate fish within these photos, and, if anyone else is interested in checking out old, historic fishing photos, we would love to have you on the validation team.

Then the next thing I wanted to do, kind of the final thing I wanted to share with you guys for FISHstory, is just share a little of the length information that we were able to gather from these photos, and so this is looking at red snapper length compositions by kind of decades.

If you look at the 1950s, you can see that kind of the size of fish found most frequently in the photos was between twelve and fourteen inches, but you still see kind of a lot of these kind of

larger-sized fish within the photos. If you look at the 1960s, you can see kind of the sizes found most frequently in photos is still the same twelve to fourteen inches, but you can start to see fewer of some of these larger fish within the photos, and then, if you look at the 1970s, again, you see the same pattern, where the highest frequency of fish within the photos are twelve to fourteen inches, but then you see even fewer of these larger size classes, and so this is one way to kind of look at the images.

Another way to kind of look at this is by looking at annual length compositions, and so, in order to kind of put together annual length compositions, we needed to have a certain number of photos, but I wanted to share this with you guys, because it's really cool, but it looks like we're able to see some year class strength within the size of fish in these old, historic fishing photos, and so we can see when there's a good year class, or a good recruitment, or some signals of good recruitment coming in to the fishery, through these old, historic photos.

So, for SEDAR 90, which was the South Atlantic red snapper assessment, we put together kind of a working paper summarizing the data. If you want to check that out, you can, and there's a link to it right here, but this is another way to look at length compositions, and so, across the bottom, you can see the different years, and then, across this axis here, you can see the total length. This is in centimeters. I know you guys, and me too, think about fish in inches, a lot of the time, and I didn't have time to convert this, and so I apologize for that, but, when you're looking at each year, you'll see different kinds of size blue bubbles, or dots. The larger the dot is, the more fish there were in that size class.

I wanted to show this to you, because I think it's pretty cool that these old fishing photos can give us signals of year class strength, and so, if you look, starting in 1961 to 1962 to 1963, you see kind of a diagonal of these larger bubbles kind of moving up in size classes, and so you can see that that was perhaps a signal of a good recruitment coming in right there, and then also in 1966, 1967, and 1968.

I guess I wanted to show this just to kind of highlight how valuable these old, historic fishing photos are, and just thank so many of you around this table who have helped contribute photos, are on our validation team, and are kind of helping us unlock all of these data from this historic time period, and so that's a little update on SMILE and FISHstory, and now I'm going to hand things over to Meg to give you an update on our SAFMC Release project.

MS. WITHERS: Awesome. Okay, and so now we're going to switch into SAFMC Release, which I know a lot of you all are familiar with this project, but, if you want to check out more information after we chat about it today, that QR code takes you to our webpage.

We have a few updates for you on this project. Participants are continuing to record information about their released shallow-water grouper and red snapper through the free mobile app SciFish. We're continuing to really prioritize outreach for this project, to recruit new folks, to get them to participate, and a lot of that outreach is still done in collaboration with the best fishing practices team, because our messaging aligns really well, and so doing outreach together continues to be really fruitful.

We have some updates for you on the presentation of data from SAFMC Release at the SEDAR 90 data workshop, and then we also want to update you on how the Sea Grant South Atlantic

Release Rodeo went, and, as Julia alluded to earlier, we kind of want to pick your brain about future directions for the project's participant recognition program.

Kicking things off with SEDAR 90, we presented a lot of information from SAFMC Release, including our length information, at the data workshop, which was earlier this spring. Our working paper is linked above. We're going to look at a couple of plots here, but, if you just want more, we have our working paper linked above.

This is one of the plots that we shared during the data workshop, showing our length information for red snapper, released red snapper, that were recorded with the project. We're really excited to share that the length information were recommended for use in the stock assessment. There are a lot of steps to be taken between that data use recommendation and the data being implemented into the stock assessment, but we're really excited to share that milestone for the project, and are so incredibly grateful to all the SAFMC Release participants, some of whom are in the room who have contributed data to the project, because, without their contributions, we wouldn't have had this information to share during the data workshop, and so we're really, really grateful.

Diving into this plot a little bit, initially, it was made in millimeters. My brain doesn't work very well in millimeters, and so we've overlaid it in inches, to kind of help visualize the size of these fish. This is looking at total length information for released red snapper that were recorded with the project from 2022 to 2024.

Our timeframe starts in 2022, because that's when red snapper were added to the project, and so the bars that you're looking at are showing you the relative frequency of the lengths of those fish that were recorded with the project, and then the line, and kind of the shaded portion, is kind of smoothing everything out, so you can kind of better visualize the shape of our data.

Then, with all of that information, you can kind of see that we're seeing some fish kind of as small as like eleven-ish inches, as big as like thirty-eight-ish inches, and then the most common length of the red snapper that were recorded with the project is like about twenty inches, but we wanted to compare our data to other data sources that were available on the lengths of red snapper that were released in the South Atlantic on recreational trips.

We compared our length data to the MRIP Headboat At-Sea Observer Program's data, as well as Florida FWC's For-Hire At Sea Observer Program's data, and that goes out on headboats, and that's the green box, and goes out on charter boats, and that's the gray box, and then the Release data is the blue box.

In order to kind of interpret this plot, I would just focus on kind of the colored boxes. The colored boxes are showing you the middle 50 percent of the length data, and so, if I go back here, if you were to kind of like visualize the middle 50 percent chunk of that data, that's what's being shown in those boxes here, and what you also kind of want to pay attention to is the black line that's in the middle, or not always the middle, but it's inside the colored box. That's the median, or the middle value, of the length data, and so we're kind of looking to see which boxes look most similar, which lines are closest to each other.

When we do that, we can kind of see that the Release data are looking most similar to the MRIP Headboat At-Sea Observer data, and we're looking a little bit different than the Florida data, and

this could be because the MRIP Headboat At-Sea Observer Program is operating Georgia north. SAFMC Release participants come from all the states in the South Atlantic, and so we could be picking up on some regional differences in the size of fish.

Then, also, comparing Release to the MRIP Headboat At-Sea Observer data, you can see that we're getting some larger fish than what they're seeing, and this could be due to kind of the differences in where folks are fishing, and so a lot of the data that's coming to the SAFMC Release project is coming from charter trips and private recreational trips, which could be fishing in different areas than headboats, and so that's a little bit of a comparison of our data to some other available data sources in the region, and, again, if you want to check out our working paper, there's a lot more in there.

Moving on to the Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo, the last time we saw you all, the Release Rodeo was just getting started, and so now we kind of want to come back to you all and let you know how it went, but, before we do that, I just want to share a brief reminder, because it was a while ago when we talked to you about this, and so I just want to share a little bit of a reminder of the background and the structure of the rodeo.

This was an idea that was born from Graysen Webb, who was the Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellow at the time, and she's now in grad school, and she's doing awesome things. We miss her dearly, and so Sea Grant wanted to put best fishing practices gear in fishermen's hands, and SAFMC Release wants more entries that can be used for data validation, and so we teamed up on the rodeo.

The rodeo operated from May 1 to July 31. Participants could earn up to four entries per month if they included a photo of their fish with their SAFMC Release entries, but they could double their entries if they included a photo of their fish on a ruler, and so then we could validate the length of that fish.

At the end of each month during the challenge period, Sea Grant would put all those entries into a magical hat, and would pick two names of winners per month who would earn best fishing practices gear that was being given away, and then, at the end of the rodeo, there was one grand prize giveaway from Sea Grant, which included a Turtlebox, which was donated by Mike Abel from Hadrell's Point Tackle. He donated that to Sea Grant, and then, also, SeaQualizer donated a Kite rod and reel combo to Sea Grant, and one lucky winner got both of those items.

Okay, and so now we're really excited to share with you that the rodeo was a success. We looked at SAFMC Release submissions during the challenge period this year, and we compared them to averaged information during those months in 2023 and 2024, and, when we did that, we saw that there was a 28 percent increase in submissions, but, not only that, we saw that the number of submissions with photos doubled, and the number of submissions with photos that could be used for length validation almost tripled, and so we were really excited to see that progress during the challenge period. It was awesome.

Sea Grant also met a lot of its goals through this initiative. They were able to distribute best fishing practices gear to randomly-selected participating fishermen. They received a lot of positive feedback about not only the challenge structure, but also the Sea Grant giveaways, and then they built meaningful relationships with fishing community members, and so we are really excited to share that it looks like we're going to be able to do the Release Rodeo again next year, and we are

also just -- We want to give everyone who helped make the Release Rodeo a success a big thank you, because there were so many folks who helped us spread the word, who encouraged folks to get involved, who helped us design this. This was our first year doing this, and so we got a lot of guidance and input from folks that really helped to make it a success, and so thank you to everyone who helped us.

Okay, and then , moving on to the last thing that I have for you, the Release Rodeo ran a few months out of the year, but SAFMC Release participants can earn thank you packets from Sea Grant year-round, and they can do that through our participant recognition program. Now we're looking to potentially make some changes to the program, and so I just wanted to briefly kind of share with you, or maybe remind you, if you're already familiar with the PRP, of what we have going on.

Currently, SAFMC Release participants get a shoutout in our SAFMC Release newsletter for their first and fifth SAFMC Release entry, and then they can earn thank you packets for their fifteenth, thirtieth, and forty-fifth submission, and then we also name a Release Champion, who is the person who submits the most entries in a year, and so that's all based on the quantity of submissions.

Participants can also earn recognition for submitting the smallest and largest of each species. We have a continuous milestone, which is called Around the Reef, and, by continuous, I mean it doesn't reset every year, and it is tracked across years, and the person who meets this milestone will have submitted entries for all the species in the project, and then, finally, Sea Grant has adopted some of our photo categories, and so participants can earn thank you packets for submitting photos that meet Sea Grant's guidelines. Then Sea Grant, at the end of the year, picks who wins each photo category. If you're interested in checking out the whole overview document, in all of its glory, it is linked down below.

Okay, and so we're really excited to share that we're looking to add new milestones to the recognition program in 2026, and the primary goal of these milestones is always to thank our participants. They take time to submit information about their released fish. That's incredibly valuable, and so we want to thank them for taking that time, because it means a lot to us, and it really helps us understand what they see on the water.

We would like these new milestones to support project recruitment. We would like the recognition program to be more of an attractor to the project. We want to encourage submissions throughout the year, by increasing kind of the frequency of recognition opportunities throughout the year, instead of having things kind of clumped at the end of the year, and then we would also like to encourage submissions with as much detail as participants are comfortable with, such as including photos in their submissions.

We have some examples of kind of new milestones that we're brainstorming. These are by no means set in stone. These are kind of just ideas to get us started, and so, if you love them, that's great. If you hate them, that's also great. Just tell us.

The first idea we have is to have a referral program, and so recognizing someone for referring a new participant to the project. Then having quarterly recognition of top submitters, instead of just recognizing a Release champion at the end of the year. Have quarterly features of photos from

submissions in the SAFMC Release newsletter, and then also maybe have a species spotlight, in which we would recognize submission of one of our less-commonly-recorded species.

Now I have some discussion questions for you. The first is what new milestones do you think would help the recognition program meet its goals? What kinds of milestones would you find exciting? What would bring you to the project repeatedly throughout the year? How can we engage both frequent and occasional submitters, and should we implement more submission challenges like the South Atlantic Release Rodeo, and so those are my questions for you all.

MR. KIMREY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure, and I'm not going to answer like anything in order or whatever, but I did have some ideas for some prizes. You could hit up Gray Taxidermy or King Sailfish Mounts for a mounted fish, and then, if you're having a rodeo, you should maybe have like a belt buckle, or a really nice cowboy hat, or a pair of boots as a prize, or you could take your pick. That's all I have right now, but hey, I was paying attention. We could do chaps, too.

MS. WITHERS: Thank you so much. That's great.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris. You've got to follow that, Andy. Go ahead.

MR. FISH: I don't want to seem negative, but it's almost like did I hear you correctly that you're incentivizing releasing, which is incentivizing discards, as a competition almost to some, I expect.

MS. WITHERS: We are careful, when we design this recognition program, or the Release Rodeo, to make sure that we are not encouraging folks to stay on fish unnecessarily. That's a really important thing to bring up, because that's something we definitely want to avoid, and so that is -- For example, with the Release Rodeo, that's why we capped people at four entries per month, because we -- There were nicer items donated to Sea Grant for the Release Rodeo, and so I could see someone being like, oh, that's a Turtlebox, and I kind of want to like see how many of these fish -- So we would like to make sure that we cap that, and so that's something that we're really mindful of.

MR. KIMREY: Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Gettys Brannon here. Can you hear me?

MR. KIMREY: We can. Go ahead.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you, Julia. This was a very good presentation. Just something to throw out there, as far as with the Boating and Fishing Alliance and CCA and the American Sportfishing Association, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Center for Sportfishing Policy, all of the groups that sort of coalesce to make up the fishing stakeholder community from the recreational side, we would love to see this, and maybe some of the other projects you've sent it out, but, if you could get us all together, and send us some of this information, we would love to spread it out through our channels, to get more people involved, and make sure the tackle manufacturers here in the state know about it.

I know you mentioned having Haddrell's involved, which is great, but like how can we help, is really what I'm asking, and, two, if you could make a note to get this to our group specifically, and we'll be more than happy, at least from the Boating and Fishing Alliance side, to send this out, and try to get more people engaged, but thank you for all your hard work.

MS. WITHERS: That's incredible. Thank you so much. We would love to follow up with you afterwards. That's very kind of you, and so looking forward to connecting about that. That's awesome.

MR. BRANNON: Let's just put together a stakeholder plan, and like how do we get all of the stakeholder groups engaged to understand, because it helps us out too, right? When we start hearing all the complaints about what the fisheries council is doing, or what we're, you know, not doing to get the word out, and like this is one of those in action things, that you can turn around and look at somebody and say, well, if you participate in the SAFMC Release program, or if you, you know, participate in this or that, then -- It's one of those layers of real groundwork, and citizen science, that we can hopefully amplify for you guys, and so let's make a conscious effort to try to get together after this.

MS. BYRD: Yes, and thanks so much. Gettys, I can't thank you enough for that comment, and we would love to work with you, and so what might be helpful is if Meg and I can reach out to you after this, and kind of get a gameplan on how it might be -- How we can best get all of -- Like put together information to share with you guys to help spread the word, and so we might be reaching out to you after this to set up a call, if that sounds okay.

MR. BRANNON: Please do. Thank you so much.

MS. BYRD: Awesome. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. Haley Stephens. Amazing job, girls. This is really cool, and it just goes to show that, you know, fishermen are willing and happy to participate, and to contribute, you know, things along the lines of data. I wonder if, and I don't know what it is, or what it even could be, but I wonder if there is some type of promo item that we could provide, like after your first milestone, that doubles as a measurement tool.

I don't know what it is. I'm trying to think of something that could be helpful while aboard the boat. You know, I know this is Release, and so like a gaff that has a built-in ruler wouldn't necessarily be the answer, but something along the lines of that, that's dually-purposed to help promote the measurements, and the photos of the measurements.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Haley. Okay, and so does anybody else have any questions? Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: That's a great presentation. You know, I was just thinking that, the way we handle our customers, and all of our online bookings, it would be really neat, and I'm not the guy to do this, but I'll pitch the idea, is that, you know, if I could get something to my customers beforehand, before they go out, then it's way more likely I can get them to buy into it and get

involved with it, and it's really just a click of a link for them to go check it out, and we're talking tens of thousands of customers a year.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you. Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: Hi, girls. Can you elaborate on any of the rewards that were given out for the winners?

MS. WITHERS: So Sea Grant shared lead weights. They provided lead weights and non-offset circle hooks to those monthly winners, and then it was that donated Turtlebox and the Kite rod and reel combo. That was last year that Sea Grant had available. Obviously, I'm not exactly sure exactly which items would be donated to Sea Grant for next year, which items Sea Grant would want to include in those monthly packets next year, but we're open to suggestions that maybe, you know, we could try and pursue.

MR. GOMEZ: I would think some of the local marine hardware stores in the Keys would donate tackle credits, and things like that, and even some of the fish houses, with bait and chum and things like that, and I'm sure they would be interested in that.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Richie. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you. Haley Stephens. I guess just a quick question. Is this intended specifically for private recreational anglers, and not those who are aboard for-hire trips, where the operator is responsible for reporting? We're not getting duplicate fish reported, correct?

MS. WITHERS: So SAFMC release is open to anyone who wants to participate. If we ever do have like a group scenario, where there are multiple people who may be wanting to contribute information to the app, usually what we suggest is that like one person has the phone, so you know that you're not getting duplicate fish, but it is kind of open to what folks prefer, in terms of that situation, but SAFMC Release is open to all sectors, and I think Julia has a comment.

MS. BYRD: I'll say something else, too. With Release, what we're focused on is length information and information that helps inform discard mortality, and so the depth the fish was caught, did you descend the fish, did you vent the fish, was there shark depredation, that kind of information, and so that information is being collected by some observer programs, that like length information and things like that, or through -- I know the EFPs are collecting a lot of information that's a little bit different than that.

You know, our primary participants are private recreational folks and charter folks. However, it is open to commercial folks, and headboat folks as well, and we'll try to make sure that, if an observer is on the boat, we're not getting observer data and kind of data through SAFMC Release, or we can kind of match that up, so we're not doubling any kind of information. Did that answer your question, Haley?

MS. STEPHENS: Yes, for sure, and I apologize for not being familiar with the app, but is there some type of indication, when making your submission, that you were on a for-hire trip, or if you were on a private boat? I'm just -- I'm concerned about duplicate reporting.

MS. WITHERS: Absolutely. That's a very helpful question.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody else? I use this app. I've made a few submissions. It's easier -- It's easier than eTRIPS. It's a little more streamlined. I like it better. I can't use it for primary reporting, but, if any of you guys are interested, or girls, I highly recommend you check out this program. It's pretty neat. I've tried to help them a little bit. Does anybody else have any questions, or concerns, for Julia or Meg? Are we good? Are you all good? You all did an outstanding job, as always. Thank you.

MS. WITHERS: Thank you for all the input.

MR. KIMREY: After much discussion with our true leader, Mike, we're done for today.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on October 28, 2025.)

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OCTOBER 29, 2025

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Drury Plaza Hotel North Charleston in North Charleston, South Carolina, on Wednesday, October 29, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: All right, everybody, let's get going here. Good morning, everyone. Everybody looks fairly spry. We'll finish up today. Real quick, you know, there's been a few little changes in sort of our schedule here. We're going to start with trip limits. We're going to go back to Amendment 61, and run through that real quick, after we do the commercial trip limits, and then we're going to finish up with the elections, and there is a little other business, and so we'll get started here with commercial trip limits, and I think that's Allie doing that, or Mike is doing that. Here we go.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, for the commercial trip limit discussion, this is an item that kind of came up within the scoping process for Amendment 60, and I'll give you guys some context. The council is looking to follow up on some of the comments that were submitted, and so, during scoping of Snapper Grouper Amendment 60, and that's that commercial permit and trip efficiency amendment that's being developed right now, and we held scoping for that ahead of the September council meeting.

There were a few comments, within that group that were submitted, that noted difficulties in some parts of the region for commercial fishermen to be able to sell fish that are caught over the weekends when their local fish houses are closed. Council members and staff, we kind of followed up on this issue, and there apparently are some different interpretations of the regulations that are being applied in different regions.

We brought that to NOAA General Counsel, and that's the lawyers within NOAA Fisheries, asking for some advice on interpretation, and they brought up the Code of Federal Regulations. This is the actual legal language that is on the books, and some of the relevant language applying to this issue includes definition of a trip.

A trip is defined as a fishing trip, regardless of the number of days of duration. It begins with departure from a dock, berth, beach, seawall, or ramp and it terminates with a return to dock, berth, beach, seawall, or ramp, and so, within this definition, there isn't really the discussion of sale. However, in the definition of commercial trip limits, trip limits are limits on the amount of applicable species that may be possessed onboard or landed, purchased, or sold from a vessel per day.

Within these different pieces of legal text, there is some space there where we can see how people had some different interpretations, but, now that the issue has been brought up, we're trying to figure out what is going to be the consistent implementation of this regulation moving forward, and is it meeting the council's intent for what trip limits are supposed to do, and so the council members stated, in September at their meeting, that the intent of limiting purchase or sale was to allow for more efficient enforcement, but it wasn't intended to prohibit harvest on days when the fish houses are closed. That was never the original intent of those trip limits.

The council members also noted that the completion of a sale can also be unclear, given their current practices. There's a level of flexibility that is used within the commercial sector. Fish may be, for example, transferred from the fishermen to the dealer, but the payment may not necessarily be completed at the exact same time, and so is sale when the payment is made for the fish, or is sale when the fish are transferred from one to the other, and so trying to clarify what is the interpretation there.

The council is trying to address this issue, and trying to figure out what the path forward should be, so that they can then look into the legal language and make whatever necessary changes have to be made there, in order to make sure that the legal language is reflecting the council's intent, and is also a workable solution for the commercial fishery in this context.

We have a few discussion questions here, just trying to get an idea of any of your experiences with this type of limitation for one, but, for another aspect, if the legal interpretation, or I guess the regulatory interpretation, of, you know, areas where fishermen have been limited, and not been able to sell their catch on days when the fish houses are closed, and that means they're not able to go back out and get another trip limit, if that were applied everywhere, how would that affect your business, if that's something that is currently affecting you, because we're trying to make sure that there's consistency, but, if consistency is applied, what are the ramifications of that everywhere, and so that goes into the second question.

How would you be affected if you could not sell your fish to a dealer upon landing, and needed to go back offshore, and, if all trips were enforced to end upon the sale of the fish, sale of the landed fish, meaning another trip could not begin until those fish are sold, how would your business be affected?

Then, finally, what are ways -- What are potential solutions to this issue? What are ways to allow the sale of fish harvested outside of the fish house operating hours, while also maintaining law

enforcement's ability to efficiently monitor the trip limits, and so it's not a long presentation. Those are kind of the discussion questions that we're putting before you, and I'm going to pull up a page, so I can take some notes as you all have your discussion, but, if there are any initial questions, I can try to answer them, and lean heavily on my council members that have done a bit of extra leg work in regards to this issue.

MR. KIMREY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. Good morning. Chris Conklin. So what is the council's intent, and, currently, what is the state -- You said, in some areas, it's enforced, or interpreted, differently, and so, currently, are you saying that some states, or officials, are allowing fishermen to go out and catch a limit of fish and then come to a fish house on Monday morning with two trips' worth of fish, or three or whatever, and then complete a sale on a Monday, so that they can be efficient over the weekend, and it's the council's intent to disallow, that or allow it?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It's kind of the opposite of what is happening, and so we heard about this issue coming out of some areas in Florida, and what is happening is the fish house is closed, and so the harvesters -- If they go out on a Saturday, when the fish house is closed, and Sunday the fish house is closed, and it's not opening up again until Monday, they go out on Saturday, and they catch a limit, and they can't go back out on Sunday and catch another limit.

They have to wait until Monday, when it opens back up, to be able to sell, and what ends up happening is they lose out on potentially one to two fishing days over the weekend, and that wasn't necessarily the council's intent, and, Kerry, if I butchered that, please correct.

MS. MARHEFKA: No, and I was just going to add more context, because this has kind of been my pet issue, because the fishermen, I think, reached out to me first, but this is happening primarily in north Florida. There's one law enforcement agent through NOAA, a NOAA OLE guy in north Florida, who was interpreting it in the way that this guy couldn't go -- A couple of these guys, at this one fish house, because the fish house wasn't open on Sunday, couldn't go fishing until the fish house opened again and they officially sold their fish.

I started calling the other NOAA -- Like our NOAA OLE guy, and he was like that's not how we enforce the rule. As long as you have a paper -- When you come in, if you've started filling out your trip ticket, and, you know, you've put the trip end date, you leave your fish on land, and you go fishing again, we're not going to pop you, but the guys in north Florida were getting popped, and so what was upsetting to me was that it was getting enforced differentially, and, as we all know, we're all doing these different things to sell our fish, right?

Like we're our own dealer, and so easy for me. I mean, I can just say, yes, we bought it from ourselves, and no big deal, but some people -- There's a guy in Georgia that drives his fish three hours to get it to his dealer, and so he'll come in, put his fish on land, do another trip, and drive two trips to his dealer at once. We're all scrambling in ways to move our fish that really doesn't line up with this intent of when you -- The moment you sell it to a dealer is when your trip ends.

I was hoping it was going to be just as easy as NOAA OLE saying the guy in north Florida is interpreting it wrong, but it turns out that it is in the regs this way, and I don't know about your time on the council, but I've gone back in the minutes. I've gone back in all of the actions in

snapper grouper, and it was never intended, by any council body that I can find, that a trip ends with sale. The trip ends when the fish hits the dock, as far as I'm concerned, and that's what I want to clear up.

What I was saying to Mike is like, you know, have other people been affected by this, and I don't think a lot of people have, but, now that NOAA OLE knows there's a discrepancy in how the officers are doing it, they're going to have to enforce it all one way, and I suspect it will be the more constrictive way, and so we're trying to do what we can fast enough so that this is not an issue, but my -- What we were trying to get, to build a record, is, if this is enforced in such a way that the sale provision -- That your trip ends when your fish is sold to the dealer, how much would that affect you?

It might not be have affected you yet, but, if they start enforcing that, how much will it affect you, so we can get that on the record and build the record of why that was never the council's intent, and it doesn't make a lot of sense with how this fishery operates.

MR. KIMREY: Interesting. Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and so, I mean, I've talked to guys all throughout the region. I wasn't aware of this. I mean, with the loss of working waterfront, fish houses practically, and a bunch of landing locations are out of business, and a lot of guys have boats with trailers. I mean, it's become the business model to fish as much as you can and then bring it and do trips -- You know, sell your fish a trip at a time, which I don't know if it's legal or not, but that's the efficient way to be a fisherman these days.

Unfortunately, you know, if there's not like a possession limit for how much fish you can have on the land, and like I waterfowl hunt a lot, and the possession limit while you're hunting is different than what the possession limit is if you are caught driving around with like birds or deer or anything else, and so that could be somewhat of a solution, to have something like that, or just leave it kind of open-ended.

I mean, I know a lot of guys have heartburn that they're thinking that people are, and it's probably happening, going out and catching more than one trip limit, or over the trip limit, and then breaking up and selling two trips, or three, or whatever, and, hey, that's an efficient way to do it too. I'm not saying I do it, but because I'm not that good of a fisherman, but, you know, commercial fishermen are, you know, backed in the corner, and I think that doing something to allow some level of this would be a useful way to have it legally done, you know, and be more efficient, legally, and so, yes, finding a way forward would be a good thing.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris, and definitely some good points there. Something to think about. You know, like Chris mildly alluded to, there's always a bad apple or two that are trying to figure out a way to abuse the trip limit, and then, you know, I'm sure that's happening. I don't think it happens a lot. Maybe that's how this was derived, as somebody trying to enforce it, but we've definitely got to figure out a way to remedy it, because, between the loss of waterfronts and everything else, I mean, it's becoming more and more tricky. Go ahead, Chris, and then John.

MR. CONKLIN: If that's the intent, you know, at the end of the day, it's up to law enforcement to -- I mean, they have these big, nice boats, trucks, plenty of gear, life jackets. They want to go out

on the water and try to catch people over the limit, then that's what they should be doing, instead of riding around on the hill, you know, drinking coffee and eating donuts and riding up and messing with guys at fish houses, because that's what I've seen. It's real easy to, you know, be a sitting duck, and it sucks when they ride up, because it's just a big pain in the ass, and it screws up your whole day.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, John.

MR. POLSTON: John Polston. I would say I think the council needs to change somehow, to make it clear of sale, verbiage of the sale, because I've been doing it close to forty years now there in Daytona, and we've always -- If I get 10,000 pounds of something in, there is no sale. There's no sale at all until I can get -- Find out what I can cost average the fish at, and then I can pay the boat, and so there's no actual sale, but what we call sale, in our own minds, and not to be illegal about it, is, when my guy goes out -- My guys don't work the weekends, but I make arrangements to where they can put them in a vat, drop them off, go back the next day, and they've -- You know, they've got their dates on it, and they got their -- You know, they leave the VTRs on there.

I mean, to me, that's a sale, but no money ever transferred hands or anything like that, and that's - - That could be the way enforcement officers say that's what a sale is, is when actual money transfers hands, and that's not good, because that would mess up a lot of things, because there's a lot of fish left on consignment, you know, especially when you're dealing in heavier poundage.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John. Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I go along with everything Chris and John said, and that would be ridiculous. I don't -- That's never been the intent. Even the state -- Our state people know that it's their job to catch people if they're on the water with more than one limit, and, like you've said, I mean, there's people that travel long ways bringing fish. That would be absolutely ridiculous, to not be able to put them in a vat.

I mean, they can take pictures. I mean, I know that could be altered or something, but, you know, I've had them call me and tell me what they had, and then they go back out the next day, and then bring them, and that would be just devastating. Like John said, I mean, we don't -- I bring those fish in, and I don't sell them right then, and that's what any dealer would do, and so I think that would be absolutely ridiculous, and I can't imagine that NOAA would want to have any kind of intent to do anything like that. Thank you.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Randy. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish. In the past, with working with -- As a dayboat, and a multi-day boat -- If you're a dayboat, you absolutely have to be able to drop your fish off after hours, get ice after hours, and what we've done, and always assumed was legal, is if we put our fish in a vat and we got -- We actually have a piece of paper.

I have pre-printed ones, with the name of my boat, the number of my boat, and a VTR, and then I write my VTR in, put it in a Ziploc bag, and we put it with our fish. I'm assuming that's legal, but, if we couldn't do that, and, you know, the fish house guy has to give you a key. You have to have a good working relationships with everybody, and, if we couldn't do that, that would be very

detrimental to a dayboat. It's a little less impactful on a multi-day boat, because you kind of want a half-a-day off anyways, but, if there's not clarification, and hopefully a uniform response, and something put out, then this would be a real problem.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Andy. I don't think there's any doubt about that. It could potentially be a huge problem. You know, back to the loss of working waterfront, I mean, there's a lot of guys in our area that, especially with the weather, the way it is nowadays, if they've got a two or three-day window, they're squeezing in as many legal trips as they can, as many offloads as they can.

A lot of our guys run center consoles. They don't have a lot of room to do. They can't do a multi-day trip. You know, they've got room, and ice, for, you know, a solid day trip, but they have to get them off, most times, and so we've got to figure this out. Go ahead, Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Good morning, everyone. Haley Stephens, and so I completely agree with what all of our commercial stakeholders have stated so far. You know, I'm thinking of it from a food handling perspective. You know, if you're working in a restaurant, every single one of your things is labeled, and then, that way, if you have a health inspector come in, you know, they're dotted, and they're labeled. We're talking about commercial fish. We're talking about food, and so, as long as it's properly labeled, there is no reason why that shouldn't be acceptable for either law enforcement or a food safety standard, and so, you know, I don't see why that could not be acceptable.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Haley. Anybody else? Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I just -- I'm going to add to what Andrew said about the dayboats and stuff. That would really be horrible for a dayboat, because it would sort of punish them, and make them sell to whoever was the closest to them, instead of shopping around and going to where, you know, the prices may be better, and that's just -- That's not the way it should be.

MR. KIMREY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I'm looking at the codified text on the background slide. I mean, the purchase or sold part, it seems like, if you just took that out and put "landed", I mean, and had the definition of a landed trip clarified, and codified, then, I mean, you would probably be good to go, but, other than that, purchase or sold is -- I've ran into issues with that between different enforcement agents as well, on what that means.

You know, I've had them say if you get in the night before a season closes, as long as you're back by 11:59 or whatever, you take one fish off the boat, and start a trip ticket, and I've had people literally at the dock doing that, but we don't have a dock anymore, and so, you know, that's back when it was worth it to be in the commercial fishing business, and the volume is gone, and so it's not worth having somebody up all night for just the minuscule amount of fish that we're allowed to have, but, yes, the purchase or sold thing I think is the hang-up. Landed would be the proper way.

MR. KIMREY: Andy.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish, and this kind of fits, but I've seen these YouTube videos of people fishing on piers at night, and they're fishing at 11:30 at night, and they land a snook or something, and then the law enforcement is there, but they tell them, okay, go put your snook, or whatever you catch, and you go put that in your cooler, and you've got the date and the time you caught it, because, at 12:01, you can catch another one, a.m., and so it's kind of along those same kind of line. If you do the due diligence, and go put the fish in the cooler, and put the date and time you caught it, and you're not running your mouth at a law enforcement officer, you might not get singled out as much.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody else? Mike, are you getting a little bit of stuff you need here?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I've got some notes written down that we can use to develop the report, and so I think Chris has his hand up, and so, if there are any other further discussion, we can keep going.

MR. CONKLIN: The only other thing I would add would be that the commercial fish are counted. They go against the quota. As long as there's paperwork being filled out, and it's going to the government, it's not like we're going to overfish anyway, and so, I mean, what's the big deal?

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Vince.

MR. BONURA: I agree with pretty much what everyone had there. I think, in Florida, it's basically if you have a trip ticket, or like an invoice, or a bill of lading on the fish, it constitutes that the fish were offloaded, but I had one more thing too that I'm not sure -- I'm pretty sure that, if you're trip fishing for like goldens, or long-range fishing -- If you're a hundred miles from home, and you happen to be home by 11:59 p.m., because, at 12:01, it closes, how could we, you know, figure out, if you're like going on ten knots, and you're a hundred miles, and you actually couldn't fish on the last afternoon of the opening there, because you would have to be headed in for your trip limit, because it closes the following morning.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, man. Anybody else? Scott.

MR. BUFF: Scott Buff. I'm going to go along with what he just was talking about. I think that it would really be nice if we had some way to adjust that midnight unloading, that last day of that season, no matter -- I don't think it matters, boats or what it is, and it's really aggravating to have somebody there at midnight to try to get these boats unloaded, and so I don't know whether that could be addressed in this, but it sure would be nice to have that to where, as long as that boat is at the dock by 11:59, and I think would be a much better way to put that, than the fish have to be offloaded by midnight, because a lot of these guys -- I mean, they'll run it right to the last minute.

This probably ain't the place to bring this up, but we've talked about it three or four times, and so I'm going to go ahead and let it fly, but this working waterfront, guys -- I don't know how much longer all this stuff -- That we're going to have these docks and stuff to use, and the thing that I want to bring up is you always see these grants, in these posts, and the stuff in these books, on the Mid-Atlantic stuff, and the Pacific, and there's never anything posted for the South Atlantic. I don't know why that is. I don't know whether that's their lobbyist, or how all that works, but one of those m=Mid-Atlantic states just got like \$25 or \$30 million to redo their waterfront, and there's never anything for our side.

I'm telling you all that it's not going to be too many more years down the road, and there's not going to be no docks to unload these boats at, because the property value is worth so much that it doesn't make sense to tie boats up and unload them at the docks, and I say this at every meeting, but we're fortunate we own ours, but, at the end of the day, this stuff is going away. I remember when there was probably three or four within, you know, a couple of miles of us. Now there's hardly anywhere to park these boats, or unload them, and so I think that's something that the council needs to address.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, Scott. John, did you have something?

MR. POLSTON: Yes, and I was just going to tell Scott it's the same issue we've had for years, and what I did is I got with the head FWC officers, and I also got with the federal enforcement guys, and I said, look, and so, you know, the same thing you just said.

They said, look, John, we don't expect you to go down there at midnight and unload the boats, but you better -- The boats better be tied to the dock by midnight. He said, if they are, we have no problem with you guys unloading them in the morning, as long as they are, but don't let us catch you, you know, coming up the river at six in the morning to, you know, do the unloading. I said, that's fair enough, and so, as long as you try to do the right thing, and show them you're trying to do the right thing, at least in our case, they worked with us perfectly fine, the enforcement did.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John. Does anybody have anything else they want to add to this discussion? Mike, you good? Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I'm counting on the council to get this one right, and do what needs to be done, because it's just not going to work.

MR. KIMREY: All right, everybody. We're going to run across, real quick, the species matrix, Amendment 61, the stuff we worked on yesterday afternoon, just to make sure that we've got that where we want it. Allie is going to give us a quick review.

MS. IBERLE: Thank you. All right, and so, yesterday, after you all's discussion, we put together this chart, to make sure that the feedback that you provided yesterday was captured correctly, and is sent to the council, and that we're all on the same page, and so I'll go through the columns first. The first column is just maintaining status quo, and so you want to leave them in, these species that have the X, in the FMP. They would retain catch levels, management measures, and they would stay within whatever complex they're currently in. Nothing would change.

Column 2 would be just straight removal, and so they would come out of the FMP. There wouldn't be catch levels, and there wouldn't be any of the current management measures, no reporting, permitting, anything, and then the last columns are -- Or the next three columns are the EC species designation, but, with that EC species designation, there's been discussion about kind of three different stipulations with that designation.

The first was designating it as an ecosystem component species, but removing all management measures, and so, you know, you would be saying this species is important to the ecosystem, but it wouldn't have catch levels, any management measures, you wouldn't be monitoring it.

Then the next column, and so 3a would be the EC species component -- The ecosystem component species designation paired with a permit. 3b would be that ecosystem component species designation paired with reporting, and then the last column is species that we didn't hear any specific advice on at this time. If you guys don't really have strong feelings on those species, that's fine, too. Obviously, from the discussion yesterday, this is a kind of a complicated topic, and so, if that's not something that you can determine, that's valuable feedback for the council.

Then the other thing, really quick, is we wrote down some other recommendations that we had heard yesterday. I just wanted to make sure that that wasn't missed. Those are there at the bottom, and so I will turn it back over to you guys, to just make sure I have this correct, and, if not, I can modify it.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. Chris Conklin. Just a question for you, Allie. 3a, EC plus permit, I'm unclear what permit you're talking about, because I know, yesterday, we had a discussion about like creating another permit, and all this bullshit, or sorry, stuff, and so we don't -- It's not my intent to want to do that, and so I just wanted to clarify.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so what's in the document thus far would be -- We don't really have all of those details fleshed out, and so it was just discussion, kind of at the council table, when, you know, this started to get off the ground, of some kind of permit that would, you know, help track the landings of these species.

I know that that permit would need to be open, and not limited entry, but I don't think the details of that have been fully fleshed out. I think it's more of just something that the council has discussed that could accompany that EC species designation, and so, if it's, you know, not something that the AP thinks should be considered, we can remove those Xs, and, you know, you guys could recommend just reporting, or maybe with a caveat to you want to see more details about what that would look like, which I imagine, you know, as we get those details from the council discussions, we'll then bring to you in the spring.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris. Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Maybe -- Paul mentioned that on the scup, and I just -- For the life of me, I couldn't imagine having scup over there and not having the white grunt. We don't catch scup. I mean, I guess maybe in the northern part of North Carolina or something, but that's not a fish that we sell, or do anything with, really, and so I can't imagine that would stay there, and the white grunt wouldn't, but, really, it's not that important, and so I'm not going to argue anything about it.

MR. KIMREY: So, real quick, are you saying that we should move scup into the 3a EC column with those --

MR. MCKINLEY: That's what I would do, is put the grunts back over there, but that's -- I mean, that's --

MR. KIMREY: I know I had a few other hands up. Does anybody else have any more feedback on that particular fish, the scup? Does anybody have a comment, or question, that relates to the scup? David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. Again, I never caught one, and don't fish for them, but I've been told, by quite a few people, that, especially in the northern reaches, it's a bread-and-butter type species, for like the northern end of North Carolina, and then as you get into more into the Mid-Atlantic region. I'm just making that known. Again, I have no idea. I don't fish for them, and have never caught one.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, David. Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and I would just dovetail with what David said, and kind of looking maybe for some guidance from other headboat operators on the AP, and private rec guys up my way, that I know, the two headboats that historically operated out of Morehead City, and I say historically, because one headboat has just been sold, the Carolina Princess, and so, as of next year, to the best of my understanding, it will just be a single headboat operating.

That is indeed, in Raleigh Bay, North Carolina specifically, and not so much Onslow Bay, the best I can tell, but that is a target species for headboat operators, a highly-coveted species, believe it or not, by the customers on those couple headboats, and so just something to bear in mind.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thanks, Paul, and so I think everybody is okay with scup, maintaining the status quo, and do you think that the grunt should stay with the scup? Is that what you're saying, Randy? I'm just trying to make sure.

MR. MCKINLEY: Yes, and I said that multiple times yesterday. I think the grunt should be over there, but it's -- Like I said, it's not that big of a deal. I mean, it's --

MR. KIMREY: When was the last time there was a stock assessment on a white grunt in the South Atlantic? There's never been one, and so we have to look at the big picture, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I'm fine.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. All right. Does everybody think that we should leave white grunt where it is, and definitely leave scup where it is?

MS. IBERLE: Scup stays in status quo?

MR. KIMREY: Scup stays in status quo. Gettys, go ahead, and I've got some other guys that have had their hands up too before, and I'm trying to conquer one issue at a time here, but let's start with Gettys. Sorry, and I don't know where Gettys is, but K.P. is standing by. Go ahead, K.P.

MR. SCOTT: We catch a few scup. We catch some scups. I would just as soon leave them as is. I'm just echoing what everyone else is saying.

MR. KIMREY: Perfect. Thank you, man, and K.P. is probably where there's more scups caught than anywhere. I think Myra wants to chime in.

MS. BROUWER: Good morning, everybody. Yes, and I don't remember if it was mentioned that scup is actually managed by our council only through Cape Hatteras, and so, north of the Cape, the management unit belongs to the Mid-Atlantic, and so I don't know if that makes a difference, but --

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Myra. I think I remember hearing that, but I definitely hadn't thought about it in the last two days, but it's good to know. I don't know if that changes anybody's idea about leaving scup as status quo.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: It doesn't change my mind. Again, as Randy said, this is a relatively minor species, but Raleigh Bay is, you know, where these fish are coveted by the Morehead City headboat operators, and that's south of Hatteras, and so --

MR. KIMREY: All right. Chip, I had some questions all the way down on that side. Are you on this topic? Okay. We'll let Chip go, and I'll get to you guys eventually. Sorry.

DR. COLLIER: I know we're discussing scup here, but when you see the reports from the SERFS crew, the trap video survey, they often call it a stenotomus species, and that's because of the difficulty in distinguishing between a scup and a longspine porgy, and so maybe it's going by a different name. If longspine porgy is something that you call it, that's likely the same species here, but I'm not seeing anybody's face light up that they catch many longspine porgy either, and so just making sure that it's not being missed because it's called something else.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chip. I had a few hands. I know Jeff, and Matt was -- Who else was over there and had their hand up? Jeff, go ahead, buddy.

MR. MARINKO: Jeff Marinko here. I'm looking at this from my perspective, the commercial multi-day boat thing, and I do jump from state to state, normally two or three states a year, and this all looks like it's going to add a ton of confusion, if I need different state permits, or requirements, and it looks kind of like a nightmare, and I also thought about this last night, and something just doesn't seem right, taking grouper and snapper away from an SG 1 in any way. Even though these aren't big species for us, it just doesn't feel right. That's all I've got to say.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Jeff. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I was just going to mention that those species that are over at the no AP consensus, and you all can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think we all seem to agree that just completely taking them off altogether, unless the states specifically have an intent to take over management, at least the reporting requirement would be a good thing, and so keeping them on that -- Where the question mark is, I guess. Number 3 is where I would put those.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Matt. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks, and so are you wanting us to go through line-by-line and decide whether to move an X, like right here today? I mean, is that the intent, because you're trying to help us do something, but we haven't really done anything.

MS. IBERLE: No, and I think you guys have done some, and I think, if the group is seeing glaring issues with what's in this matrix, by all means, tell me to change it, but I think this is providing feedback, in and of itself, and so I guess, with moving this group of species here, you know, unless there's not huge objection by the group, I can go ahead and move those Xs that would take the non-consensus at this time and make them EC species, with no other management measures, if the group is amenable to that.

MR. KIMREY: Right, and, just to recap real quick, you know, they've made this since our discussion yesterday. Today was a review, because there was a number of species that we didn't get any feedback on, and, you know, yesterday afternoon, we talked briefly, and I said, well, there's a chance that, if there's no feedback from certain species that were on the matrix, that they're going to just let the council make the decision as to what to do with those, and so, in an effort to give you all a 100 percent voice, we're revisiting this now.

You know, there's a number of columns up there. There's a number of species. If anybody in the room, even if we need to go to a vote, needs one species on a different line, now's your chance. After this, it's going to the council, and then they're going to roll with it. Okay? Go ahead, Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman. Haley Stephens. I'm okay with removing Atlantic spadefish altogether. I don't believe that there's a size limit. It's kind of part of that aggregate bag limit. It's not really a species that's targeted. They are very difficult to catch, and so, in an effort to make a decision, I'm okay with taking that off.

MR. KIMREY: I mean, I agree with Haley, as far as from a snapper grouper perspective, as far as little hook fishing, headboat fishing, stuff like that. You will occasionally catch one, but it's -- For us anyway, you know, you don't get a lot of them in your bag when you're fishing with two-hook rigs on natural bottom. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and that's what I think a lot of what we're not getting, and not thinking about, is that they are a part of like an aggregate bag limit, a lot of these species, and so, if we're fearful about moving them somewhere else, they're still going to be like under a bag limit, and so that's good to keep in mind.

MR. KIMREY: Matt, go ahead.

MR. MATTHEWS: I'm going to disagree with that on the Atlantic spadefish. In South Carolina and Georgia, we target them specifically, and they're schooling fish, and it's one that, you know, if we had a shift in effort away from bottom fish, and towards spadefish, we could have a pretty significant impact on that fishery really quick, and it would make me really nervous to take them off altogether, because of that.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and I'll revisit my previous comment. We do target spadefish at times, and there's certain people that target them pretty frequently. It's just not something you get. I just don't see how it fits in as an aggregate bag fish under the snapper grouper complex, because you're rarely going to catch one while you're fishing for everything else that's on this list. Go ahead, Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: Matt Matthews again. I'm not saying that it needs to be part of an aggregate bag limit for the snapper grouper complex. What I'm saying is it needs to be something that we

don't completely remove from consideration, because, you know, if we forget about it, and completely remove it, then it's going to be harder to get it back.

MR. KIMREY: Well, for stuff like that, I mean, it seems like we need to lean on our state for a regulation, and spadefish are fairly popular to target, by, you know, a select few. It's kind of a niche thing. I would do more of it, but the dang weather is always so bad. You have to have calm weather to do it properly, you know, but, anyway, there were some more hands that were up before Paul. Did I get everybody? Go ahead, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and I think this dovetails in with Jeff's comment. It does feel a little strange to consider removing misty grouper from the FMU. If I understand the life history of misty grouper, and I don't think I do really well, but maybe dovetailing in with Jeff's thought there, and it's slow growing, long-lived, late to mature, and so it's got those K-selected characteristics that might make it more vulnerable than a whole bunch of other species on this list that we're considering removing from the FMU.

It does feel a little bit like, if we remove misty grouper, that could be a little bit of a U-turn from what I understand was the whole motivation to create that complex of nine or ten MPAs in the South Atlantic, and this is a move of like fifteen or sixteen years ago to create that series of MPAs, and so misty grouper -- I think it's worth the council considering, you know, whether that rises to the level they want to keep that in the grouper complex, and afford that maybe some additional protection down the road, by keeping it in the FMU, just based on its life history.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul. Anybody else? Allie, did you get all that?

MS. IBERLE: I did, and so, obviously, the recommendations that you guys send to the council is, you know, what you guys provide. However, when I'm hearing, like specifically with spadefish, if you -- There's some direct targeting, but not a lot, and maybe it's helpful to have an aggregate bag limit, but we don't necessarily feel it needs to be in the FMU, and maybe that would be a good candidate for the EC species designation and reporting.

In my mind, that, you know, combination of designation and reporting could get you to -- You know, there's not restrictive -- You know, you don't have an ACL, and you're not having restrictive management measures. However, the reporting would allow the council to, you know, touch base on that, and so if effort shifted, and was more direct in the future, as things in the fishery changed, that would provide the council an avenue to maybe revisit management measures in the future, is what I'm thinking. I'm getting thumbs-up from council members. Also, we have Darrin online.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and I see the other two guys. Darrin, go ahead.

MS. WILLINGHAM: Good morning. Darrin Willingham in northeast Florida. I think that the idea of this was for the South Atlantic Council to be able to take a lot of workload off of their species to potentially, you know, count in the future, and my understanding is none of these species have been counted, and I'm curious as to --

Do we think that any of these species will actually be counted in any foreseeable, reasonable near future, because I know we're spending a lot of time on this, but it just seemed like they were trying to -- That the council was trying to clean up its list, and I don't think that we're giving them much

back, other than saying we have this concern, this concern, this concern, this concern, and, even if we give all of our concerns back to them, they may just look at it and say, well, okay, we'll leave them on the list, but we're still never going to count them. That's just my idea.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin, and we have several council members here with us today. I'm going to speak on their behalf, because we had a conversation about this yesterday. What you just said is correct. Most of this stuff, there's no plan to count, as you said, which would be a stock assessment.

Most of them haven't had a stock assessment, and, in an effort to streamline fisheries management, for several different reasons, one of them being the EO, and just for the sake of trying to make things faster, you know, if they can remove some of this stuff from their plate, whether it's been counted or not, it's not looming over them in any fashion, but, with that being said, some of it is very important, and so we don't want to just sweep it under the rug and forget about it, and so that's the part we're trying to figure out now, you know, as to where we're going to land them if they come off the FMU. Chris, go ahead.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and so, I mean, I don't think I'm going to make a motion, but, after reading what the Mid-Atlantic does, and what you just said about the EC, you know, I would recommend moving everything to some form of EC component, 3a or 3b, and then let the council figure out what they want to do in there, but I would move everything except for queen, cubera, and the misty grouper over there, where it's still going to be paid attention to, and let the council figure out how much they want to pay attention to it, and leave those three species in federal management.

Especially, like we talked about yesterday with cubera snapper, there's a lot of ID issues with that. There's probably some issues with misty grouper too, until they die and get their stripes sometimes, and then, queen snapper, you know, we were talking about that, with, you know, a big recreational push for deepwater fishing. It's really come online, and so I could see keeping that in there, but, after all I've talked about, and read and everything, that's how I feel.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris. I mean, I tend to somewhat agree with that. Ultimately, there's definitely a few of them that we need to leave status quo. I think that's a general consensus amongst the entire AP, cubera, and queen, and things that could, you know, potentially have a fair amount of commercial pressure, in addition to recreational pressure, and they need to stay on that FMU, so we can keep track of them, and so that we can limit the number of people that have access to commercial sale of that fish, right?

MR. CONKLIN: I guess it's my understanding that, if you move something to 3a, and we're concerned -- Like, you know, somebody is concerned about white grunts being sold, if you move it to 3a, you still have to have a permit to sell it, and I don't know, and if somebody could clarify what permit that might be.

MR. KIMREY: You do, but it wouldn't be a limited entry. It wouldn't be on an SG 1 or SG 2.

MR. CONKLIN: I don't know if it would be or not, but, I mean, like you said, who the hell is going to go out there and try to make a living on a dollar-a-pound fish?

MR. KIMREY: Right, and somebody clarify that for us.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess it's somewhat related to that point, and so I do want to bring it up, just clarifying what does EC mean, versus removing from the FMU, versus what would maintain, you know, status quo. The biggest difference between a status quo and an EC is an annual catch limit. Do you think that we need to limit, on a yearly scale, how many of this species of fish are caught?

If you do think that, then it should say status quo, federal management, and there's an ACL tied to that species. If it does not -- If you think that it does not need an annual limit on how much of that species can be caught, then that's where it would go to an EC species, and that's where EC doesn't mean that it's ignored. EC, you know, can have -- That's kind of the different options that are being brought here of, you know, it can be an EC species, where you still have to report it, and it still needs -- You know, you can still require some type of open access permit in order to be able to access that fishery.

Taking it completely off the table is removal from the FMU. That is what that status is, is the council is no longer going to, you know, necessarily put any management attention on it, even though they may still get reports of what's being caught, because there are -- I think, most of the permits, you have to report all of your catch, even if it's not necessarily for the species that are tied to that permit, and so there's still going to be a level of reporting that goes on, but you don't need an annual catch limit.

Just kind of scrolling lightly through the recent, you know, catches related to the limit, many of these species are nowhere near the ACLs that have been set for them, or put in place for their complexes, and, even if they are in a complex that is kind of close, they're not the primary contributor, because like, for example, the snapper complex, and gray snapper is, by and large, the big snapper in that complex that is contributing to the ACL.

Some of the other snappers that are in that complex really aren't contributing a whole lot to the catch that's being had there, and so that's why this group of species has been designated so far, is because they either exist in these complexes, where they're not contributing a whole lot, and not getting anywhere near the ACL that's been set, and so it's kind of like why set a limit that's not actually going to be limiting, or they're in a category by themselves.

Again, they're in that situation where they're not being caught at the level that -- At a level where they're approaching a limit that there would be concern about the stock, and its status moving forward, and so I just wanted to give that little bit of context of these different categories of what they could potentially mean when we get to the end of this.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, Mike. Who else had their hand up? A couple of hands, I thought, before Mike stepped up. Maybe not. John, go ahead.

MR. POLSTON: Yeah, John Poulson. Actually, real quick, Mike just said what I was going to say. Regardless of which ones you move wherever, as a dealer, no matter what type of fish it is, I have to report it as buying it, and so they keep talking about no reporting. No matter what type of fish it is, it's still going to go on the trip ticket, and so it can always be looked at that way as well. It's not like you forgot about it or anything. It has to go on the trip ticket, and so it still actually is being reported. Reporting is still going on, no matter which one it is. That's all I wanted to say.

MR. KIMREY: Right, and I think that's one of the points, John, they were trying to make is, with all the federal permits, whether it's a dealer permit or whatever, and even our for-hire permits, we're required, if we're in federal orders, to report everything we catch, and that's -- On some of these species that might not stay on the FMU, I think it seems like the AP in general -- I know I do, and I would still like them to be reported.

You know, required reporting is not a big deal, and everything is in place for that. All you've got to do is just hit the button for one more fish, whether it's on an FMU or not, and so, anyway, on this matrix right here, guys, you know, we've got a little bit of a different opinion on the porgies and things. Are we going to leave them status quo, move them to EC? I'm not sure about the best way to move forward to get the true majority opinion of the AP on that topic. I mean, can we do an unofficial show of hands? It will be officially recorded, but not officially official, and so, you know, I don't -- What do you think, Allie?

MS. IBERLE: So maybe let's just -- What I've heard so far is, queen and cubera snapper, everyone seemed to be okay with leaving those two species as status quo, leaving them in the FMP, and they would retain the ACL, current management measures, and then I'm hearing the same for misty grouper, and so maybe the cells that I have highlighted in green are those set in stone, and that's the AP's recommendation.

MR. KIMREY: Does everybody agree with that, the status quo for queen snapper, cubera, and misty grouper?

MS. IBERLE: So then I guess let's take it by chunks next, and so porgies, and so that's this group here. We had talked about leaving it status quo. We talked about how those species will be reported regardless on the trip ticket, but then we also had the suggestion to maybe just say, you know, the AP would prefer the EC species designation, with either a permit or a reporting, and you guys would like a little bit more details, once the council further discusses that, and so I guess what I would prefer would be to kind of lock down the porgies group, either status quo or what Chris had discussed, Option 3a and b, or one of the two.

MR. KIMREY: Okay, and so just a show of hands for the porgies. You know, there's four porgies there, and I suppose we can include the scup as well, or break it apart if you want to. By a show of hands, status quo, leave those status quo, or move the porgies, and this is just for a recommendation to the council now, and keep that in mind. It's not like it's going to be a law next week or something. A show of hands of everybody that wants to leave those porgies status quo. That's definitely a majority. Make your comment, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and I would say lump out the porgies. Again, I'm just looking at this perspective from my own little small universe out of Morehead City, Raleigh Bay and Onslow Bay, and the scup, when I go out headboat fishing, on a pretty regular basis, the scup porgies, by number, outnumber the combined jolthead, knob, and whitebone by at least, and hip shooting here, guys, at least ten to one, if not fifty to one, on a trip-by-trip basis, and so I would say leave scup as status quo and move the other three porgy species over to 3a or 3b. That would be my ten cents.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul. If we were to remove scup, a show of hands on everybody that's willing to move the rest of the porgies over to the EC columns. David.

MR. MOSS: In the interest of moving this along, and I'll go with whatever everybody wants to do, but I also just want to make sure that the council folks that are here hear that -- I know, when Allie showed the list of like what their criteria was, that they're going to go through or whatever, one of the things was are they a targeted species, and, even in the Keys, in the wintertime, when the yellowtails aren't biting so good, there's a couple of headboats that will target porgies down there, as kind of their wintertime bread and butter, when they switch from yellowtail and so just, again, for the council folks, you know, it is targeted down there. Not all of them, obviously. There's, I think, two or three species that they go after, but it is a targeted species.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, David. John.

MR. POLSTON: John Polston. The only reason I would disagree with what Paul just said is because, to me, it doesn't matter where you put the porgies, but, wherever you put one, you've got to put them all, because you're going to get into a lot of problems with enforcement, and is that a scup, or is that a whitebone, or is that a jolthead, for identification purposes, and so, as far as I'm concerned, I think it's very important that, no matter where you guys want to put it, you got to put all of them there.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John, and I definitely see your point. We all know that identification is a major issue, you know, especially in the private rec sector. They just don't get as much practice as the rest of us, and so I feel like we're really flopping around on this here. We need to nail this down. Let's try this one more time. A show of hands on status quo for porgies, including scup. Everybody that wants to leave it status quo, show me your hand. All species, including scup, including scup. Okay. There we go. I think we got it this time, and we are exactly where we started. Good job.

MS. IBERLE: I will note that, when we package up your recommendations and give it to the council, it's not just going to be as simple as an X. Obviously, we're going to you know, have notes on, you know, the discussion that you guys have had on scup, and we'll package this, you know, not just as black and white as this matrix is. We just put this together to make sure that we were capturing it correctly, and so we'll make sure that all this feedback gets summarized for the council, and you have council members here, and so that brings us to the next kind of chunk of species.

I don't know if it's easier to maybe do these next ones individually, and so, right now, we have bar jack, banded rudderfish, white grunt, tomtate, all with Xs in both 3a and 3b, and so that's kind of this chunk here, and that is considering that EC species designation, either with a permit or with reporting requirements for those species.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Real quick, we missed a question or two. Darrin was online, and then Chris Conklin. Is Darrin still standing by with his question?

MR. WILLINGHAM: Actually, I was just trying to raise my hand, and so, anyway, for the vote. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. Perfect. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks, and so, once again, and I'm thinking a little further now, and looking back at what the Mid-Atlantic does, and how they do it, and I would be comfortable with anything that is assessed or -- Hang on. Anything that is unassessed, and is not in the assessment lineup, and we're never planning on getting an assessment, to wipe it off and put it in some sort of EC, keep eye on it, and still get the reporting, and, at the end of the day, be done with it. That's what I'm comfortable with.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris, and I think that ideology is how this list was comprised, because, in all actuality, you know, most of this stuff has never been counted, and it might not ever be counted, and so why should it even be on the list, but, you know, also, so many of us have seen such a decline, and sometimes we're scared to just, bam, there it is, and you can do whatever you want with it, and you know what I mean?

I think that, whether that's going to be the case or not, I think some of us, especially people like me, that have seen decline, and a lot of these other guys that have been around a while, and we've seen some stuff go away quick, just by whatever, but I think we have nailed down what the majority wants on the top part of the list there, all the way through the porgies, and so now we're on bar jack, banded rudder, white grunt, tomtate, in the two columns, EC columns. Is everybody good with those right where they're at? I think we were. I think everybody was pretty satisfied with that. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, and maybe it's a question for Jessica. Do we know if the white grunt will go through an assessment?

MR. KIMREY: Here we go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I feel like I need a tee-shirt that has like a no smoking sign on it, and a white grunt in the middle of it, and so I've been the one pushing for no assessment for white grunt. There is a bunch of data out there, but I would go back. I thought that Mike did a really great job kind of explaining why you would want to keep something in there, and so I don't know that the bar jack, banded rudderfish, white grunt, tomtate need an ACL on them, but, yes, I'm hoping no assessment on white grunt, just because I think our focus is really on some of these other species, and tracking things like vermilion snapper, gray triggerfish, other things like that.

MS. STEPHENS: I was only halfway joking, but, no, and it makes a lot of sense, and so, a lot of these fish that are landed, they are accounted for in our reporting, and so they don't necessarily need a stock assessment, but we do have access to information if we need it, and so I'm okay with keeping these four where they are.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Sounds good. What about misty grouper? Are we going to leave that status quo? I think that was the consensus on that. Yes, and then what do we have left? Spadefish, sand tile, blackfin snapper, sailor's choice, margate.

You know, they're under no consensus right now, which means we didn't have a lot of feedback yesterday. We had some feedback on spadefish today. I think it is my opinion that spadefish definitely needs some sort of management. Now, whether it needs to come from the federal level or not, I don't know. I think that, if it was removed from the FMU, and just -- You know, the states need to step in, just to prevent overfishing, because people that know how to do that can target

them. You can catch a lot of them, and we don't want to wipe them out. They're a schooling fish, and they hang out. Once they show up for the summer, they kind of hang out in the same areas. The rest of that stuff, does anybody have any feedback on sand tile, blackfin snapper, sailor's choice, margate? Jeff.

MR. MARINKO: I still think snappers should be with the snappers, and I would piggyback like what John said, too. I mean, I don't know, and snapper should stay with the snappers, and that's all I think.

MR. KIMREY: Keep the snappers with the snappers, says Jeff. Does everybody else -- Is there anybody else that feels that way, or enough of the AP, that maybe we need to move that couple of those snapper types, like blackfin, back over to status quo, even though there's not a lot of assessing going on? Please jump in, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I was going to say something on Atlantic spadefish, and so just a reminder that one of the species that was removed from the FMU a while ago was sheepshead, and so the council members kind of think sheepshead and spadefish are kind of in a similar boat, and so we're not saying it doesn't need any management, but the management went over to the states, but, like John Poulston said, I mean, it's still getting tracked if it gets landed, et cetera, but it seems like, spadefish and sheepshead, that you might do the same thing with, and so there's that.

Then just remember, as you're thinking about sand tilefish, blackfin snapper, sailor's choice, those species, does it need an ACL? I mean, that's kind of the way to think about it, and so just trying to add in a little bit more and help here.

MR. KIMREY: Right, and remember, guys, that, just because it doesn't have an ACL, it doesn't mean that the state can't put limits and regulations on it, and, you know, I think everybody is intermingled enough that, if the states feel like they need a regulation on it, if it was removed from the FMU, they're going to step up and do that, and I don't think it's going to be like, oh, wait, and I didn't know, for the last five years, that you could just keep them all. The state is not going to look at it like that, and so, you know, just be mindful.

You know, it is our job to narrow this down and move along, and so a show of hands on the last few species on this matrix that were labeled with an X for non-consensus for yesterday. Do we want to move those over to the EC column? I guess it would be sand tile, blackfin snapper, sailor's choice, spadefish up at the top, and margate down at the bottom. A show of hands for the first column, the 3a. Go ahead.

MR. MCKINLEY: I would agree with Jeff, and I would keep the blackfin snapper, and then put the other ones in the other column.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. I'm getting quite a few nods on leaving the blackfin snapper status quo. Does anybody oppose doing that, other than the council? You all are over there looking at us funny. Okay. Well, if that's the AP's recommendation, that's what we'll recommend to the council. The rest of those, Darrin, you got a comment for us, buddy?

MR. WILLINGHAM: Yes, sir, and so, the blackfin snapper, I don't feel strongly about one way or the other. The margate, the sailor's choice, and that sand tilefish, I would say take them off altogether.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Darrin. Who agrees with Darrin on that? Take them off the FMU, and are we going to make them a Column A or Column B recommendation? Somebody give me something here, or I'm going to do it for you. All right, Paul.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I know nothing about them, and so that's my something.

MR. KIMREY: Well, Paul took my answer. Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: So, maybe for the sake of moving this along, keep misty grouper and blackfin snapper where they are, and move the others to the EC, because it just -- You know, we, as fishermen, we're kind of like hesitant. We're a little bit scared maybe, but I think that middle ground, you know, sends the message of what the council is looking for of, hey, these species are important to us, possibly, but we're just not sure, and it's just, you know, a casual recommendation to move those over to there, and it still allows for flexibility.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and I agree with Haley. I mean, I kind of see the concern on the blackfin snapper and the misty grouper, especially the misty, I mean, because there's been things, like Paul was talking about, done to try to help those, you know, and big things, with the MPAs and all that. The rest of this stuff, it is my opinion that we can put in the 3a and 3b column, and make this recommendation to the council, and trust in them that they're going to do what they're going to do.

The things that are removed from the FMU, you know, we're going to have to entrust in the state to manage properly, once that goes down, and, you know, I think they probably will. I haven't made that call yet. Matt had a comment, and then Chris.

MR. MATTHEWS: You hit what I was going to say. I second that, what Haley said.

MR. KIMREY: Perfect, and thank you, Matt. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and just one final thing, to dumb it down a little more, is, when I go on the SERO website to look at ACLs, how far they're along, and see where they are, and I just look at - I'm like why in the heck is there an ACL on that species, and I'm like this is the dumbest thing ever, and so, anything you have to go through to find what you're looking for, put it in an ecosystem component and be done with it. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Thank you, Chris. I think we conquered that one. Good job.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Thanks, guys, so much for working through this matrix, and, again, we're going to capture a lot of the nuances of the discussion of some of these species and, you know, how we got to where we are. We'll package that for the council for December, and so that's all for Amendment 61.

MR. KIMREY: Thank you, Allie, and I think we'll go ahead and take our break, guys. It's ten to, and I don't know if it's 10 or 11, but I've taken my things out, but I've not checked out. We'll try

to do maybe fifteen on this one, in case some of you guys do want to try to check out, or gather your things, and so which actually means ten after ten we'll see you all.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. KIMREY: All right, everybody. I know there's a lot of side conversations, and I'm sure they're great, but, for the sake of moving along, and getting me back to North Carolina this afternoon on time, if everybody could migrate back to their seats.

All right, everybody, and so we're going to do a little SEDAR update. This is pretty much our last topic, other than Other Business and the elections you all have been tasked with thinking about in the last couple of days, and so we're still missing a couple of people, but I say we go ahead and get started.

MS. OTT: All right. Sounds good, and so hello, everyone. My name is Emily Ott, for those I have not met. I'm the SEDAR Coordinator for South Atlantic stock assessments, and so, if you've been part of any South Atlantic stock assessments, about in the last year, you've probably heard my voice on the webinars, but today I have a brief update for you all on completed, upcoming, and ongoing assessments, along with a few SEDAR process changes.

Diving right in, the South Atlantic SEDAR assessments that were completed in 2025, you guys have already been briefed on these, the first being SEDAR 92, Atlantic blueline tilefish, which Christina mentioned was completed in March of 2025, this past year, and then SEDAR 96, Florida yellowtail snapper, which was a joint assessment with the Gulf, and that was completed in January of 2025.

Then, moving into the SEDAR assessments that are in progress right now, SEDAR 90, the South Atlantic red snapper assessment, that had the data workshop back in April, and is now entering its assessment webinar stage, and then, for SEDAR 94 -- Sorry for those online. The screen is paused. One moment. All right. Do you see it now? Okay. Perfect. Thank you, Christina.

Anyway, SEDAR 94 is Southeastern hogfish. This is also a joint assessment with the Gulf, and this also had its data workshop already, this past summer, and is entering the assessment stage as well. Then, lastly, SEDAR 95, Atlantic cobia, about a year ago, this assessment was put on hold, due to changes in staffing, and now this assessment is being taken over by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and they're still working out some details with the project schedule, and, once that schedule is solidified, I'll have it posted on the SEDAR website, but, right now, it sounds like there should be a review workshop in about a year that SEDAR will be coordinating, but, again, I'll update that schedule on the SEDAR website once we have more information.

Now, for upcoming SEDAR assessments, SEDAR 104, the South Atlantic dolphinfish management strategy evaluation, SEDAR is just coordinating the review workshop component of this assessment, and that review workshop should be in, I believe, the summer of 2026, and then the last assessment for upcoming assessments is SEDAR 106, South Atlantic gag grouper. This was slated to begin in January of 2026. However, given the ongoing shutdown, I have a feeling that may be postponed a little bit, and just a hunch, and so hopefully we get that started in about February or March of 2026.

Then just a reminder that don't forget about that SEDAR project grid that's on the SEDAR website. It's on the front page, and you can't miss it. This grid has all of the scheduled assessments, upcoming assessments, assessment requests, and I just cropped the South Atlantic piece, because that's what you guys care about from the grid, but this grid includes all of the SEDAR cooperators and upcoming assessments, and so the Gulf, Caribbean, Florida, the commissions, and so please take a look there.

Just to orient you to this grid, green represents the SEDAR Steering Committee has approved this assessment being scheduled, and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center has scheduled this. The orange is the steering committee has approved this assessment, but it's still pending the lead analytic agency, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, to schedule that assessment, and then I apologize, and I went colorblind when creating this legend, apparently, because the future requests should actually be blue in the legend.

That represents that the cooperator came to the steering committee and said we want, you know, these assessments on the agenda for the future, and so it's pending actually getting permanently scheduled. Then the pink are the Southeast Fisheries Science Center updates, which are conducted outside of SEDAR, but we just wanted you to be aware that they're going on, which is why they're included on the grid.

All right, and so, getting into the SEDAR process changes, there have been a few modifications to the process. The main three stages of SEDAR, the data, assessment, and review, do remain, and the assessment stage, the components within that, and the structure of that is what has been modified.

This graphic here shows the way SEDAR currently operates. To orient you with the graph, the graphic, the colors represent which entity is coordinating that component of the assessment, with green representing SEDAR, the gray representing the lead analytic agency, which I'll discuss on the next slide, and yellow representing the cooperator appointed technical team, and blue representing the cooperator.

The way SEDAR currently operates for the assessment stage, SEDAR will coordinate either an assessment topical working group, a series of webinars, or just assessment webinars, but now, looking at the changes, there is now -- You can see there still remains that SEDAR coordinated assessment stage piece, but now, above that, there is an alternate route that the assessment can take, as you can see, the gray box for the assessment stage, and that gray, again, represents the lead analytic agency.

This means the lead analytic agency, which is the Southeast Fisheries Science Center in the South Atlantic's case, will be taking over the assessment stage component, and they will be conducting that assessment stage internally. However, to maintain that feedback from stakeholders and other technical experts, there is now this component called a technical team, and so this technical team will be composed of fishermen, stakeholders, technical experts, stock assessment scientists, SSC members, and this group of individuals will be serving as an informal way to get feedback.

Because the lead analytic agency is conducting the assessment internally, they will call upon this group as needed, and so it will probably look something like them asking you when you're available for a phone call to receive feedback, because, the way SEDAR currently operates, we

have to federally notice meetings, about a month in advance of a meeting, and so, if the analytic team needs quick feedback, that makes it a little hard to get that feedback when needed. The goal of this is to streamline the assessment stage, and hopefully shorten the overall assessment timeline.

All right, and then the last thing I have for today is just if anyone is interested in being a part of upcoming assessments, and so, again, the SEDAR 106 South Atlantic gag grouper assessment, which is slated to begin in early 2026, this will include a topical working group, which focuses on reproductive dynamics, and so, if anyone is interested in sitting in on that topical working group, you can let myself or Mike know, and then, as a general announcement, the South Atlantic Council will be looking for interested people to participate in that technical team in the near future.

Again, as a reminder, this is coordinated completely outside of SEDAR, and so I will not be a part of this piece, but I just wanted to provide everyone with the information to keep in mind if they're interested in participating in this, and so the South Atlantic Council is still working out some details for this team, as it's a new process, but right now it sounds like they envision this being a standing team with a few potential alternates.

The goal of the standing team is to hopefully keep consistent guidance to the analytic team, when you're getting it from the same people, and then, again, this technical team will be informal meetings, and so this will be an as-needed team to be called upon when the analytic team feels like they need feedback, or they have questions, ran into a wrinkle in the assessment, and so all of that to say, about the technical team, typically in the past, when the council has come to you all looking for volunteers for an assessment, they would say, who wants to be an appointed observer.

Now they'll say who wants to be a part of the technical team, and so that was the main reason I wanted to update you all on the new terminology there, and then, if people want to stay informed with assessments, but committing to an assessment is too much of a time commitment right now, I encourage you to go on the SEDAR website and look under upcoming events, and that's where we'll have all of our upcoming meetings, along with registration links, so you can pick and choose which meetings are important to you, and which ones you're actually available for, and so I encourage you to look there on the website.

Then the last thing I have for today is Julie and I -- Julie is the Program Manager for SEDAR, and we both maintain email distribution lists for all of the assessments that are coordinated through SEDAR, and these distribution lists will receive updates regarding project schedules, meetings, meeting registration links, and so, if you all would like to be updated pertaining to any particular assessment, please let me know, and I'm happy to add you to any of those email distribution lists, and I believe that's all I have for everyone today, and so thank you. I appreciate your time, and that's all I have.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Emily. Does anybody have any questions for Emily? I was going to ask about the technical teams, but she covered it before I could. Anybody? All right. I think we're good. Thank you.

MS. OTT: Well, I won't complain, and no one online has questions either.

MR. KIMREY: Mike, do you have anything that I have before we move forward? You're good? I think that concludes it. We'll move on to the elections and then Other Business, and that will wrap us up for this meeting. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to nominate Chris Kimrey for chair of the AP.

MR. KIMREY: There you go. Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I'll second that.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Does anybody have a nomination for anybody outside of me? I won't be offended if you do. Don't be scared. Richie.

MR. GOMEZ: No, and I just want to nominate Haley as vice chair.

MR. KIMREY: All right. We'll do the actual election separate, and so, for me staying chair, does anybody else they would like to nominate, outside of myself? Do we need to take a vote, Mike? Okay, and so let's do a vote for me remaining chair. A show of hands. It looks like a lot to me. Thanks, guys. Everybody online, and I see a lot of little name tags from online. Okay. I would say we're good on that. We have one nomination for Haley as vice chair. Does anybody else want to second that, and/or nominate someone different? Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Second.

MR. KIMREY: We have a second for Haley. Andy. Was anybody over here raising their hand for anything other than seconding the nomination for Haley? Does anybody else have a different recommendation for vice chair other than Haley Stephens? Okay. A show of hands in favor of Haley Stephens for vice chair. Good job. Pretty sure you got that in the bag, and three of those. All right. Thanks, everybody. I know there was a couple of topics for Other Business. I heard brief little tidbits from a couple of AP members, and so a show of hands, where we'll get that started. Okay, and we'll start with Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. The first thing was I didn't know if somebody could elaborate on the golden tilefish assessment, the data discrepancies there that are causing it to be reassessed right now. We hit on that like with Number 1, I think, and kind of everybody missed it. I didn't know if you could update us on that, and then I'll let somebody else go, and then I have one more small thing.

DR. COLLIER: So this is what was presented to the SSC, last week during their meeting, to describe the discrepancy that occurred in the golden tilefish assessment, and, on the graph to the right, you can see in the blue line, that was the original SEDAR assessment. In the green line, that's the revised values, and then the orange line is what was used to track the ACL.

You can see, beginning in around 2018, there was a pretty big difference between what was being used to track the ACL, the revised estimate, and that original value. That was noticed when we were trying to develop some of the management measures for golden tilefish, and so we talked with staff at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and then staff at Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program, who houses a lot of the commercial data.

When we couldn't figure out exactly why the difference was occurring between those, we met with some of the state partners, trying to narrow down exactly where the differences in the data were coming from. They were coming from a variety of directions. We weren't exactly certain -- We weren't certain why those blue estimates were so much higher than the other data sources that we had, and so we had ACCSP dig into the data, dig into the computer program that estimated the landings.

They could not recreate that blue line. We tried to look at was this information from let's say golden tilefish being caught in north of Cape Hatteras. It did not seem to be that, because, if you added a lot of the fish from the Mid-Atlantic region, it wasn't coming up to this number. Was it potentially some fish that were being caught in the Gulf of Mexico that were being added there, because some of the golden tilefish fishery occurs down in the southern -- In south Florida, and so it could be a potential shifting of where the fish were being attributed to, the Gulf of Mexico or to the South Atlantic, and that did not seem to be the issue.

We could not recreate the issue. The person that actually wrote the code no longer works with Atlantic -- With the ACCSP data group, and so we just scrapped that revised value, or that the original value, and those revised values were used.

Now there might be some concern that is this occurring for other species, and there are minor differences for a lot of commercial data that comes out. There's always changes that are going on in the commercial data, some improvements that occur over time, and so there are little changes, like you see the difference between the ACL and that green line. There are some differences there, and so that's to be expected, but, when we see these large differences, greater than 100,000 pounds, we do flag those, and try to make sure that we get those addressed, and understand why they're occurring and making sure that multiple datasets add up to the same thing, like we're seeing in the later half of the 2018.

Does that make sense, Chris? I can't give you a smoking gun of we missed this one person's trips, and that's what caused this difference. We don't have that. It just seemed like there were some coding errors that were in the -- That was used to extract the data, and we couldn't recreate it.

MR. KIMREY: Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I think I remember when this was presented, and didn't like NOAA do this in-house or something, and then, basically for the average Joe, this is obviously showing that the commercial fishery didn't overfish the golden tile fish every year, which is a good thing, right?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and that's correct. It was done in-house. The data, the landings estimates, were provided by ACCSP for that assessment, and so, even though Southeast Fisheries Science Center is doing some of the assessments in-house, they are still getting the data from other partners, and this just highlights the need for at least our staff to go back and recheck some of this information that we have access to, to make sure it's all making sense, and I think this really highlights some changes that we need to do internally to make sure that we're getting the best information to the SSC and using the correct stuff for management.

MR. KIMREY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Only one more thing, and so I'm not aware, or I don't know either way, if there's been like another assessment, or if current catch levels, or catch level recommendations, were made from after the adjusted data, and what will be the repercussions, or the benefits, or anything from this?

DR. COLLIER: So this was just presented to the SSC last week. Like I said, they approved the values coming out of the revised stock assessment that incorporated this new commercial catch stream, and, what is happening with the ABC recommendation, basically, in 2026, the estimated increase in the allowable -- In the golden tilefish acceptable biological catch is about 30,000 pounds, and so it is an increase.

The other thing is it addressed -- Or the other minor thing that changed in this was golden tilefish were right at overfishing levels, and now it is less than overfishing, and so it's no longer overfishing. Previously, if you rounded up, it got to one, which indicates overfishing, but it was like 0.999, or something or something very close, and so the status is no longer overfishing. The status is not overfished, and the ABC increased a little bit, for about 30,000 pounds.

MR. KIMREY: Anybody have any questions about that? Andy.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish. I had a question about commercial red snapper for 2025. Right now, the app says we're at 142 percent. I have heard that there will be no repercussions for next year. I was wondering, first of all, how do we get to 142 percent, in this day and age, and hoping that, and -- So, first, some clarification on if there will be repercussions for next year.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks for that question, Andy, and I'm going to do the best I can with the limited information that I have available, but I'll let you guys know what we know from the council, and so the landings were being monitored. The Southeast Regional Office, when they saw that the landings were approaching the ACL, they developed the closure package, and they sent that up to Headquarters, so that it could go in place.

Then, for whatever reason, and we haven't really gotten clarification on what happened after the package was sent to Headquarters, but it didn't go into place right away, and that's what led to the overage this year. For the red snapper commercial fishery, there is no post-season payback that is in place in the management plan, and so the ACL is not going to be reduced next year. It would be the same ACL as what it was this year, and so that's what would be in place moving forward, and so there is no payback. I don't really have a full understanding at this point, and that's just kind of what the council knows at this point, but that's what we were told from the Regional Office at the last council meeting in September.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike. Did I help you out a little bit? It didn't do much for me, honestly. I've been asking that question for weeks, months, whatever, and I appreciate everybody trying to answer it, but I think you have to ponder about the backstory on that one. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was told, because I called some friends in the Gulf, and I was concerned, you know, that it made the commercial look like it was a standalone, some kind of benefit we were getting or whatever, but supposedly, in the Gulf, recreational amberjack went the same exact way, and so don't be trying to hate on us. Thanks.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chris. K.P., are you online?

MR. SCOTT: I am.

MR. KIMREY: Did you have a question, or a comment?

MR. SCOTT: No, and, if my hand was raised, it was a mistake.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. No worries, man. Thank you. Somebody had a hand up over here to my left, I thought. Maybe not. John Polston.

MR. POLSTON: John Polston, and I'm not sure who I should ask this question to. I've talked to Andy Strelcheck about it, but I really have a major peeve about the closure notification. You got your highly migratory, we'll just say, for example, and they're closing shark tonight, and they -- You know, they write their closure, and it's going to close October 29 at 11:59 p.m., which is very, very clear. No questions about it, but you have the grouper snapper, and they write a closure, and they're saying it's going to close, in bold letters, October 30 at 12:01 a.m.

What I'm -- I know the verbiage is correct and everything like that, but, for God's sake, for clarity, I don't think nobody would have a problem with giving up the two minutes. You know, put the bold letter on the 29, and, I mean, I literally had a fisherman that had a -- He had a choice, and it's his fault for not reading it through, but the bold letters called what he thought was a closure day, and it wasn't. It was, you know, when you already had to be at the dock, and so I'm just saying -- When I talked to Andy about it, he said that I'll check with regs, and see if we could write -- He goes, I agree, and, you know, it's much clearer if you just called it the day it's actually closing, and not the morning two minutes later. That's just an opinion.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John. It can definitely be confusing. Anybody else? Paul, go ahead.

DR. RUDERSHAUSEN: As long as, I guess in the foreseeable future, that fishery-independent data are still going to be a cornerstone of the assessment process for a lot of our snappers and groupers, and maybe this is a comment for you, Mike, and I would welcome perhaps a lot of other AP members as well, at each of these biannual AP meetings, I would welcome an update from the SERFS folks or MARMAP folks on that fishery-independent sampling, for at least some of the cornerstone species, our gags and red snappers and that kind of thing, what those long-term trends are showing.

We saw a couple of graphs in that in the first day of our meeting this week, and so I think that would be great to see that, you know, that presentation by Wally Bublely, or one of his counterparts, one of his work colleagues, be a part of -- A regular fixture at these meetings, and I'm guessing maybe he doesn't have any updates, because those video frames and data haven't been crunched yet for a calendar year, or for the summer of 2025, and maybe that's just an April meeting kind of thing, but I would welcome an update.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Paul, and I agree. I would like to see more of that myself, and, you know, Wally is here from time to time, but it would be nice to have -- If his workload permitted, to see him a little more regular. Mike, go ahead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and that's something that the AP has received in the past, and we can get it on the schedule for April. We do typically try to do it once a year, as they develop the report. Normally, after they're done with their fall sampling, they'll have an initial report that goes to the council first, and then you all can see it in April, and I think we might have had it at that last meeting, but I can't remember off the top of my head, but, yes, it will be once a year.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike.

MR. KIMREY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I would suggest having that like right out of the gate, at the very beginning of the meetings. That way, we have an idea of what's going on. It's, you know, fresh in our minds, so we can make decisions based on the current trends.

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and, I mean, that's sort of my thought, is -- I mean, that's the -- You know, one of the things that it's not real time, but it's the closest to real time we can get for an idea of what's happening, other than our own observations, you know? Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Just thinking to trying to save a little bit of time on the meeting agenda, as well as reduce burden on South Carolina DNR staff and Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff, maybe having the report that is presented to you all in April, and have that as a background document in October, and, if there are any species that are being talked about during that meeting, those are the ones that are highlighted in October, just to remind you this is what's going on in these individual species, because it is a lot of information that comes to you, and I think just a reminder of what's going on for those specific species would be very helpful for the meeting, as opposed to having another thirty or forty-five-minute presentation that could be pretty long, and pretty intensive for South Carolina DNR to put together. Additionally, they're often sampling into October, and so they might not always be available.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Chip. Anybody else have any comments on that, or other business? I thought there was a third. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I have an other business thing. This is particularly for our Georgia advisory panel members, but I do want to highlight it for everybody else, because it will be coming to you at a certain point, and so I want to pull up the council website. Within the council website, you go to Meetings, and you go to Lines of Communication, and this is the series of meetings that the council is going to be holding.

They're going to hit two states per year, and this is a meeting where council members from that state will be there, and present, and this is designed to be a two-way format, so there can be conversations between stakeholders and council members.

This is different than like a public comment, or public hearing session, in which you get your three minutes, and you say your piece, you know, and then the council members -- You know, they listen to it, and then they go do what they do. This is meant to be a back and forth, a conversation where you talk to council members. This also is not a situation where there is one management

action that is the focus of what's being talked about. You're not selecting from your alternatives. You're not developing the actions for an amendment.

This is you bringing whatever is your primary issue, and coming to your council member and being able to talk about it, and so we definitely would encourage AP members -- If you're available when this comes to your state, we would encourage you to attend, and, as much as you would be able to circulate this information within your spheres of influence, please do so. We're really looking to have a lot more interaction between fishermen and the council members, so that the council members can be able to have that representation for the stakeholders, as is talked about.

Georgia, we will be there next week. We'll be in Brunswick on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Darien on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and Savannah on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and the next state will be North Carolina. Those meetings will occur in February of 2026, and then kind of the next round of meetings will be the meetings for South Carolina and Florida. That will later next year, into 2027, and those dates will be announced, but this is kind of the first round of this initiative, and the council is looking to hold two meetings per year in this fashion for the foreseeable future moving forward.

This is not meant to be a one and done. This is meant to be a consistent opportunity for stakeholders to be able to interact with their representatives on the council, and so I just wanted to point that out, and, if anyone has any questions about the meeting, you can ask me, and, if I don't know, I will point to Christina.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Mike. Anybody else with other business? Anybody have any questions for Mike? Anybody want to talk about white grunts anymore? I know Jessica does. She's still pushing for Atlantic-wide stock assessment. Mike, I think we're about to the end of it. Do I need to add something? Did I miss something?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We can open it up for public comment.

MR. KIMREY: Okay. Should I do that now?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. KIMREY: Okay, and so, if you guys have nothing else, we'll finish up by opening up for public comment. If there is public comment, now is the time.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We don't have any in the room. If you are signed in online, and would like to make a comment, please raise your hand, and we will get you recognized. I'm not seeing any hands raised online.

MR. KIMREY: All right, everybody. If you all don't have anything, that concludes our meeting for the fall 2025.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 29, 2025.)

- - -

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

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
December 8, 2025

SG AP Mon

10/27

First	Last	Position	Seat
✓ Chris	Kimrey	Acting Chair	Charter
✓ Vincent	Bonura		Commercial
Jon	Braun		Commercial/Charter
<i>u/s</i> Gettys	Brannon		NGO
✓ Scott	Buff		Commercial/Recreational
✓ Chris	Conklin		Commercial
Tony	Constant		Charter/Recreational
Jack	Cox		Commercial
✓ Andrew	Fish		Commercial
✓ Robert	Freeman		Charter
✓ Richard	Gomez		Charter
✓ Joe - "McH"	Mathews		Recreational
✓ Randy	McKinley		Commercial
✓ Jeff	Marinko		Commercial
Chris	Militello		Recreational
✓ David	Moss		Recreational
✓ Paul	Nelson		Commercial/Charter
✓ John	Polston		Commercial
✓ Stephen	Raney		Charter
✓ Paul	Rudershausen		Scientist
<i>u/s</i> K.P.	Scott		Charter/Commercial
✓ Cameron	Sebastian		Charter/Commercial
✓ Haley	Stephens		For-Hire
<i>u/s</i> Darrin	Willingham		Recreational
Todd	Kellison		NOAA

SGAP Mon  
10/27

First	Last	Suffix	Position	Affiliation
✓ Trish	Murphey		Chair	NC Division of Marine Fisheries
			Vice-Chair	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
✓ Jessica	McCawley		Chair	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Robert	Beal			GA DNR Coastal Resources Division
Carolyn	Belcher			
Gary	Borland			
✓ Amy	Dukes			SC DNR Marine Resources Division
✓ Judy	Helmey			
Francis (Dewey)	Hemilright			
James	Hull	Jr.		
✓ Kerry	Marhefka			
Tom	Pease			Seventh Coast Guard District
Charlie	Phillips			
Tom	Roller			
Robert	Spottswood	Jr.		
Andy	Strelcheck			NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region
	Warner-			
Deirdre	Kramer			Office of Marine Conservation OES / OMC
TBD	TBD			U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representative

SG AP Mon  
10/27

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SG AP Tue  
10/28

First	Last	Position	Seat
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✓ Vincent	Bonura		Commercial
Jon	Braun		Commercial/Charter
<i>wlb</i> ✓ Gettys	Brannon		NGO
✓ Scott	Buff		Commercial/Recreational
✓ Chris	Conklin		Commercial
Tony	Constant		Charter/Recreational
<i>wlb</i> ✓ Jack	Cox		Commercial
✓ Andrew	Fish		Commercial
✓ Robert	Freeman		Charter
✓ Richard	Gomez		Charter
✓ Joe "Math"	Mathews		Recreational
✓ Randy	McKinley		Commercial
✓ Jeff	Marinko		Commercial
Chris	Militello		Recreational
✓ David	Moss		Recreational
✓ Paul	Nelson		Commercial/Charter
✓ John	Polston		Commercial
✓ Stephen	Ranney		Charter
✓ Paul	Rudershausen		Scientist
✓ K.P.	Scott		Charter/Commercial
✓ Cameron	Sebastian		Charter/Commercial
✓ Haley	Stephens		For-Hire
<i>wlb</i> ✓ Darrin	Willingham		Recreational
Todd	Kellison		NOAA

Dr. Walter Buble

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✓ Jessica	McCawley			Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Robert	Beal			GA DNR Coastal Resources Division
Carolyn	Belcher			
Gary	Borland			
✓ Amy	Dukes			SC DNR Marine Resources Division
✓ Judy	Helmey			
Francis (Dewey)	Hemilright			
James	Hull	Jr.		
✓ Kerry	Marhefka			
Tom	Pease			Seventh Coast Guard District
Charlie	Phillips			
Tom	Roller			
Robert	Spottswood	Jr.		
Andy	Strelcheck			NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region
	Warner-			
Deirdre	Kramer			Office of Marine Conservation OES / OMC
TBD	TBD			U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representative

SG AP Tue  
10/28

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10/29

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Jon	Braun		Commercial/Charter
Gettys	Brannon		NGO
✓ Scott	Buff		Commercial/Recreational
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✓ Richard	Gomez		Charter
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✓ Stephen	Ranney		Charter
✓ Paul	Rudershausen		Scientist
wls K.P.	Scott		Charter/Commercial
✓ Cameron	Sebastian		Charter/Commercial
✓ Hately	Stephens		For-Hire
wls Darrin	Willingham		Recreational
Todd	Kellison		NOAA

10/29

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Gary	Borland			
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✓ Judy	Helmey			
Francis (Dewey)	Hemilright			
James	Hull	Jr.		
✓ Kerry	Marhefka			Seventh Coast Guard District
Tom	Pease			
Charlie	Phillips			
Tom	Roller			
Robert	Spottswood	Jr.		
Andy	Strelcheck			NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region
	Warner-			
Deirdre	Kramer			Office of Marine Conservation OES / OMC
TBD	TBD			U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representative

SG AP Wed  
10/29

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# Oct. 2025 Snapper Grouper

## Attendee Report: AP Meeting

Report Generated:

10/30/2025 10:46 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

135-974-555

**Actual Start Date/Time**

10/27/2025 11:51 AM EDT

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

Barrows

Bianchi

Bonura

Brannon

Brouwer

Bubley

Byrd

Conklin

Degan

Dingle

Dukes

Evans

Finch

Freeman

Guyas

Hadley

Helmey

Huber

Iberle

Iverson

Kolmos

McWaters

Murphey

Oliver

Ott

Scott

Scott

Silvas

Smart

Smillie

**First Name**

Katline

Alan

Vincent

Gettys

Myra

Walter

Julia

Chris

Jacqui

Julie

Amy

Joseph

Margaret

Mackenzie

Martha

John

Judy

Jeanette

Allie

Kim

Kevin

Mark

Trish

Ashley

Emily

Kenneth

Haley

Rachael

Tracey

Nick

Spanik  
Starling  
Stephens  
Thomas  
Vecchio  
Walsh  
Wiegand  
Willingham  
Withers  
collier  
cox  
moss  
stephens  
Bogdan  
Harmon  
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Julie  
Jason  
Christina  
Darrin  
Meg  
chip  
Jack  
david  
Nic  
Jennifer  
Jake  
Michael  
Michelle

# Oct. 2025 Snapper Grouper

## Attendee Report: AP Meeting

Report Generated:

10/30/2025 10:59 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

135-974-555

**Actual Start Date/Time**

10/28/2025 07:32 AM EDT

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

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Bianchi

Brannon

Brouwer

Byrd

Conklin

Dukes

Evans

Finch

Foss

Guyas

Helmey

Howington

Iberle

Iverson

Klibansky

Kolmos

Marinko

McWaters

Murphey

Neer

Oliver

Ott

Schmidtke

Scott

Scott

Silvas

Smillie

Starling

Stephens

**First Name**

Katline

Alan

Gettys

Myra

Julia

Chris

Amy

Joseph

Margaret

Kristin

Martha

Judy

Kathleen

Allie

Kim

Lara

Kevin

Melissa

Mark

Trish

Julie

Ashley

Emily

Michael

Kenneth

Haley

Rachael

Nick

Savannah

Haley

Thomas  
Vecchio  
Welch  
Whitmer  
Willingham  
Withers  
collier  
cox  
moss  
plessett  
stephens  
Bogdan  
Bonura  
Bubley  
Degan  
Dingle  
Freeman  
Hadley  
Harmon  
Huber  
Scott  
Smart  
Spanik  
Walsh  
Wiegand  
Willis

Suz  
Julie  
Rob  
Morgan  
Darrin  
Meg  
chip  
Jack  
david  
eric  
Nic  
Jennifer  
Vincent  
Walter  
Jacqui  
Julie  
Mackenzie  
John  
Jake  
Jeanette  
Haley  
Tracey  
Kevin  
Jason  
Christina  
Michelle

# Oct. 2025 Snapper Grouper

## Attendee Report: AP Meeting

Report Generated:

10/30/2025 11:00 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

135-974-555

**Actual Start Date/Time**

10/29/2025 07:25 AM EDT

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

Barrows

Bianchi

Brannon

Brouwer

Bubley

Byrd

Conklin

Curtis

Degan

Dingle

Finch

Griner

Guyas

Hadley

Helmey

Hiers

Howington

Huber

Iberle

Klibansky

Marinko

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Perkinson

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Homer

Kathleen

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Allie

Lara

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Emily

Matt

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moss  
sinkus  
Bogdan  
Bonura  
Dukes  
Evans  
Foss  
Freeman  
Harmon  
Iverson  
Kolmos  
McWaters  
Murphey  
Neer  
Oliver  
Scott  
Seward  
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Vecchio  
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Mackenzie  
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Mark  
Trish  
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Haley  
McLean  
Tracey  
Savannah  
Julie  
Jason  
Rob  
Michelle  
Meg  
Jack  
eric  
Nic