

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL

**Crowne Plaza Hotel
North Charleston, SC**

April 18-20, 2022

TRANSCRIPT

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Vincent Bonura
Tony Constant
Andrew Fish
Richard Gomez
Chris Kimrey
Andrew Mahoney
Chris Militello
Paul Nelson
Andy Piland
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Nick Smillie
Christina Wiegand

Attendees and Invited Participants

Rick DeVictor

Dewey Hemilright

Additional attendees and invited participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, North Charleston, South Carolina, on April 18, 2022, and was called to order by Mr. Jimmy Hull.

MR. HULL: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to this edition of an in-person Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting. It's really good to see everyone's face, who I've heard your voices, and now I see your faces, and then everyone else's face, who I used to recognize everyone, but you start to get forgetful, and so I'm going to ask that, to start out, if you will make sure that your nametag is pointed this way, so that you can be recognized when it's time for you to raise your hand and provide your input, and I would like to start at the end of the room, with Andrew Mahoney, please, and have an introduction around the entire AP, so that we can all see everybody and recognize everybody initially here, and so we'll start that way. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. MAHONEY: Andrew Mahoney, and I'm from the commercial sector in Bluffton, South Carolina.

MR. GOMEZ: Richard Gomez, Key West area, and I do charter fishing for-hire.

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

MR. MEEKS: Thomas Meeks from Savannah, Georgia, or Dublin, Georgia, but close enough, but recreational.

MR. CONSTANT: Tony Constant, and I'm from Beaufort, South Carolina, and I'm recreational.

MR. MILITELLO: Chris Militello from West Palm Beach, recreational fisherman.

MR. HULL: Jimmy Hull, Ponce Inlet, Florida, commercial.

MR. LORENZ: Bob Lorenz, Wilmington, North Carolina, recreational.

MR. BONURA: Good afternoon. Vincent Bonura, and I'm a commercial fisherman and wholesale dealer out of Florida.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: James Paskiewicz, commercial fisherman and wholesale dealer, middle Keys.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish, commercial fisherman, Cape Canaveral, Florida.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian, operations manager with Hurricane Fleet, Little River Fishing Fleet, and Coastal Scuba, and we operate headboats, charter boats, commercial boats, everything.

MR. PILAND: Andy Piland, charter boat, Hatteras.

MR. COX: Good afternoon. Jack Cox, commercial, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

MR. LEWIS: Selby Lewis, commercial, Wilmington, North Carolina.

MR. NELSON: Paul Nelson, commercial/for-hire, Ponce Inlet, Florida.

MR. FREEMAN: Robert Freeman, recreational and commercial, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

MR. KIMREY: Chris Kimrey, charter and a touch commercial, Morehead Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

MR. HULL: All right. Thank you for that. It's really good to see everybody, and welcome again, and so back to you, staff. What do you have next?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We're just going to introduce -- We have one AP member online right now signed-in, and that's Todd Kellison. Todd, if you wanted to introduce yourself.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Todd. Are you there? All right. We're going to move on in the agenda items in order here. We need to have an approval of the agenda, and so I would ask if anyone does not approve of the agenda, and say so, or raise your hand. Does anyone disapprove of this agenda? Seeing none, the agenda is approved.

Then we also need to have the approval of the October 2021 AP minutes. Is there anyone here that is opposed to the approval of the October 2021 AP minutes? Raise your hand. Seeing none, those are approved, and, at this time, we would like to provide an opportunity for public comment. Is there anyone from the general public online or here in person that would like to provide some public comment? Please recognize yourself. Okay. There's no one online there, and so now we're going to move on to Jessica McCawley and the committee chair remarks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Hi there, and it's nice to see everybody in-person. My name is Jessica McCawley, and I am the Snapper Grouper Committee Chair for the council, and I am from Florida, and so I'm just going to give you a short presentation, and then myself and Kerry Marhefka, who is the Vice Chair for the committee, we will be here for the duration of your meeting, if you have questions for us, and we'll try to get them answered.

We've had a couple of council meetings since you guys last met, both in December and then March, and so, to hit some highlights from what we've been talking about, and you guys are going to talk about a lot of these things this week, and so Regulatory Amendment 35, which is the release mortality reduction and red snapper amendment, and so we like to call this the short-term actions, and so this is the amendment to look at reducing the number of dead releases in the snapper grouper fishery.

It also has -- We're trying to reduce those dead releases in order to have consideration of a higher ABC recommendation for red snapper, and so part of the things that we're considering now, that we talked about at the March council meeting, include things like seasons and area closures and some other crazy options like that, in order to try to reduce discard mortality, and so I'm hoping that you guys are going to have some really good insight on that this week.

Another thing that we talked about at the last couple of council meetings -- So the council had a private recreational workgroup, and that group concluded their business, and now Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 has been initiated, or reinitiated, and it's moving again, and this is a

private recreational reporting amendment that would be establishing a recreational permit, and so this is something that I know you guys have been talking about, and I feel like you've been making this recommendation to the council for a long time, and I know this is just getting started, and it's going to take some time, but I think you guys are going to get an update on this this week.

Another thing that the council talked about was the first research track stock assessment, which was on scamp, and so what happens now is now an operational assessment will happen, and so the research track doesn't actually give you management advice, and so now the scamp operational assessment will happen, so that we can get some management advice from that.

Work also continued on a bunch of other amendments, and so the council took final action on red porgy, and then the council has also been working on an amendment for greater amberjack, as well as snowy grouper, golden tilefish, and blueline tilefish, and I think you guys are going to talk about -- And gag grouper, and I think you guys are going to talk about those this week, and then, also, the committee, the council committee, received an update on the snapper grouper management strategy evaluation.

We call this the long-term amendment, and so this is the holistic look at the entire snapper grouper fishery. This will take some time, and we consider this more long-term, looking at how we could change some things that are happening in the snapper grouper fishery, and there will be this whole modeling effort that will look into that. All right. I'm going to turn it back to you, Mr. Chairman, and that concludes my presentation.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jessica. Does anybody have any initial questions on these subjects before you for Jessica? Thank you very much. Okay. Moving along, the next item is an update on the recent regulations and status of amendments, and so I will turn it back to you, staff.

MS. BROUWER: Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Myra Brouwer, and it's good to see everybody in-person. Because I worked on this amendment last, I'm the one up here giving you an update, and we've talked about red porgy for a number of APs already, and so I just wanted to kind of close the loop and make sure that everybody had an update on where the council ended up.

The attachment that is in your briefing book basically just has a summary of the various actions and what the council selected as their preferred, and so, overall, the amendment establishes a rebuilding timeframe for red porgy, which is overfished and undergoing overfishing, and that timeframe would take -- The rebuilding plan would end in 2047, and they also set a new total annual catch limit, based on the recommendation from the Scientific and Statistical Committee, who reviewed the assessment and considered it best available information, and these are the total annual catch limits, in both gutted weights and whole weight, for red porgy from 2022 onwards to 2026, where that level would remain in place until the council modifies it, or there's a new assessment that requires a modification of those catch levels.

The council also took action to revise the sector allocations. They didn't change a whole lot, and it was already at a 50/50 split between commercial and recreational, and so what they did is they just utilized an allocation formula that they've been using for many snapper grouper species, and other species, and, basically, it just takes the average of historic landings and an average of more recent landings and uses that to calculate the split between commercial and recreational, and so it ended up falling out at 51.43 percent to the commercial sector and 48.57 percent to the recreational.

They also took action to modify management measures, and so they reduced the trip limit, and red porgy has a split season for the commercial sector. Not that long ago, the council took action to put that in place, and so now there is no longer a spawning season closure, and that used to be in place from January through April, and so that got taken away back in 2020, I think, and so now the trip limit has been reduced to fifteen fish for both the seasons, at the beginning of the year, January through April, and May through December.

For the recreational sector, the council reduced the bag limit to one fish per person per day, or one per trip, and they established a recreational fishing season also, and that would be May through June, and so these are pretty restrictive measures, and red porgy hasn't been rebuilding, despite management efforts, and there seems to be some issues with recruitment in that population, and then, finally, they took action to revise the accountability measures, in light of all the other changes that they did to management, and so that amendment has not yet been transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce, or to NMFS, and so that's the next step, and then you can expect to see the regulations becoming effective sometime later this year, I would think sometime in the winter. Any questions on red porgy? Okey-doke.

MS. WIEGAND: Hello, everyone. My name is Christina Wiegand, for those of you that I haven't met, and I've been working on the wreckfish ITQ amendment, Amendment 48, and so, if you guys will remember, way, way back into 2019, which feels like another lifetime ago, the council had completed a review of the wreckfish ITQ program, and there were several recommendations to come out of that review, most focused on modernizing the program. These guys still use paper coupons, and so that's what this amendment is working on, and the big actions will be moving away from that paper-based coupon program to an electronic program, making some modifications to the fishing season, and spawning closure, which are mostly administrative in nature, to fit better with the electronic program.

Cost recovery is going to need to be implemented by this fishery, as is required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. We're also looking at making some changes to the wreckfish permit requirement, and that is because there are now new ways to work eligibility into an electronic system, and we're hoping to avoid, you know, duplicative requests of fishermen. Last, but not least, the council is also looking at making modifications to offloading site and time requirements, to provide fishermen with a bit more flexibility, as well as considering a requirement for a vessel monitoring system in this fishery.

At their March meeting, the council did approve the range of actions and alternatives to be analyzed, but the shareholders will be meeting sometime this summer to discuss and provide input on the range of actions and alternatives that has been included in the amendment, and, of course, as we continue to develop it, we'll keep the Snapper Grouper AP updated as well.

MR. HULL: Any questions from anyone? By the way, when you do -- When you are recognized, please state your name. This is recorded, and they have to transcribe it, and they need to know who is speaking, and so please remember to state your name. Thank you. Okay. Moving on, we're going to move right into the fisheries performance report update for black sea bass, and so this is an update, and we have done one in the not-too-distant past, and so I'm going to hand this over to Mike, and we'll get started on this important fisheries performance -- This is one of the primary jobs of the AP, is to provide these fisheries performance reports to the council and to the

science, and so it's real important that we give them our observations the best that we can on this. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Jimmy, and so this is going to be a little bit different than some of the past fishery performance report processes that this group has gone through, because we are not developing a brand-new fishery performance report, and this one is going to be updating one that was done a few years ago, and I will highlight some of the changes that we're going to be going through with that process.

First of all, we're going to just look at kind of what we'll be going through today. First, I will go to the fishery performance report app that's been developed and show you some of the information on the fishery, and some of the stuff came from the last stock assessment, and other information has been updated more recently, and it includes more recent commercial landings, recreational landings, things of that nature.

Then we'll take a look at some of the information that is in the 2017 report, and then I'll put that on the screen and basically ask if you all have seen any change in the fishery since what was reported at that time or if the comments that were given at that time still hold true right now, and then, finally, we'll take a look at kind of the general discussion questions that we typically ask, and there will be more of is there anything that you see within this group of questions that hasn't already been covered elsewhere, and so we're hoping to not be too redundant in that, but also to make use of the information that you all provided to us in the past.

There are some specific questions from the upcoming SEDAR -- From the analytical team, that they provided, and those are going to be highlighted in the discussion questions, when we get to that point, and so, first, I'm going to open up this app, and this is something that you all can access as well. It is linked in your agenda, as well as the presentation that's included in the briefing book, and, if you just click over to "Snapper Grouper AP", that tab, that will show you black sea bass information.

All right, and so, first, just looking at the life history page, we have a growth curve included there, and you will see the length-at-age for black sea bass right there, as well as the length-weight relationship and the maturity. Black sea bass size at maturity mostly occurs by the time they hit nine inches, which is, I believe, about three years old, ask these data points read, and, beyond that, basically it's 100 percent maturity for the females.

Moving down to the index of abundance that was used in the last stock assessment, this is kind of the trend pattern that was observed there. From the looks of this, there is a lot of variability, but it doesn't seem to be heavily directional one way or the other, and we do note that, in the last year of that data that was used in the assessment, there was a decline, but we've seen similar declines like that in the past, and so it will be interesting to see what the more recent years of data show, when those come about.

Looking next to the annual landings, we'll first -- I guess I will do the combined first and go into the sectors after that, and so the combined landings -- We see, over time, there is a declining trend in the poundage across the two sectors, and, sliding down to the regional aspect, the teal color, or the blue color, that you see on the screen is the Carolinas, and the kind of reddish-orange color is Florida/Georgia, and what you can see, especially in the most recent years, is that the landings of

black sea bass are coming almost entirely from the Carolinas, and there's been a pretty massive decline to the Florida/Georgia landings.

Then, looking at the releases, the combined releases, these only go through the time period of the last stock assessment, because the commercial releases get adjusted within the assessment, and they get treated, and so those are part of that assessment process, and we don't have them for the more recent years for both sectors. We do have them for the recreational, and I will show those when we get to that sector, but, going into the most recent years used in the last assessment, the releases were on a pretty strong increase.

Next, looking at the sector-specific information, landings show a similar trend to the combined overall pattern. Looking at the regional aspect, it's heavily Carolinas for the commercial landings, and then the releases that were incorporated into the last assessment actually had a declining trend, and so, when we switch over to the recreational sector, there's a similar decline in the recreational landings, as we've seen in commercial and overall, but, when we look at the regions, the areas, where black sea bass are being landed, there's a bit more Florida and Georgia in the recreational than what we see in the commercial, and then, from the releases, there was that big increase that was kind of moving the overall pattern, and there seems to have been some decline in the recreational releases since then, but still, overall, across the timeframe, from 2000, there's a trend of overall increase there.

Next, looking at the seasonal aspects, for the commercial fishery, looking at it on a monthly, or a by-wave, scale, it seems to have the peak landings occurring over the winter months, November/December and then January/February, with the lower landings occurring in the middle of the year, and, for the recreational fishery, there is the peak that happens during the summer months.

Looking at information about commercial revenue and price, we only have this for more recent years, and 2016 is the furthest back these data go, but, just taking a look at what the ex-vessel value has done within that time period, there has been a decline in the value coming into more recent years, as well as a decline in the price. Then, finally, looking at the economic impacts, in the commercial sector, we see a decline in the dollar amount for sales, and a decline in the dollar amount for income, and then a decline in the estimated jobs associated with commercial harvest.

For the recreational sector, not as much of a strong trend, and there's kind of more variability here, but there are the estimated sales associated with recreational fishing and the estimated income and estimated jobs, and those are all showing similar types of trends, and so that's the app information that's available, and I can pause there, to see if there are any questions related to that information.

Just interjecting right here something that I forgot about, as far as how these reports are being used, and I'm going to pass it over to Christina, because, right now, we have an allocation method that's being developed, and one aspect that's being talked about for use within that is the fishery performance reports, and so I will let Christina talk about that a little bit more.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Mike, and so we just wanted to give you guys a bit more information on how these fishery performance reports are going to be used going forward. They will continue to be used the same way they always have, like Mike was talking about, to inform assessments, but, as you know, with the switch to the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey, the council is going to be

discussing allocations quite a bit in the coming year or two years, et cetera, and so one of the things that staff has developed is the allocation decision tool, and it essentially walks the council through a series of questions that helps them understand what types of topics they should be considering when discussing allocations.

In order to provide particularly some social and cultural information to the council, these fishery performance reports are going to be used to help the council decide which direction to go when answering those questions, and so the answer that you give related to the life history and the experiences that you're having on the water, in terms of recruitment, in terms of the age classes you're seeing, things like that, all the way down to the different economic impacts you're seeing, as well as to the importance of these fisheries to your local communities, all of that information is going to be used to help the council make allocation decisions, and so, since that's sort of a new use for the fishery performance reports, we just wanted to let you guys know that this information will be going directly towards allocation discussions.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Christina, and, kind of in that process, I just recalled, and I wanted to give a little bit more introduction to what's going on with the fishery performance reports, because I feel like I may have skipped over some information, and so this fishery performance report is being developed ahead of SEDAR 76, which is going to be a stock assessment of South Atlantic black sea bass.

This is going to be an operational stock assessment, and, as Jessica talked about before related to scamp, scamp was a research track, and it's going to be followed by an operational, and this is an operational, and the reason why there wasn't a research track before is a research track is used to develop an appropriate model for a species, and so they look at data, and it may not be the most, you know, current, latest, greatest data, but it's the data that is used to inform what type of model is appropriate for that species.

For black sea bass, we have an assessment that is in the not-so-distant past that has a model that was used for that species, and was deemed appropriate for it, and so we didn't need a separate research track, and we're just using the information from the last stock assessment, which was in 2017, and that is now going into the operational mode, so that management decisions can be made off of the SEDAR 76 assessment, and so just a little bit more information about where this process has come from and is going, and so we can move forward a little bit better there.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So it was clear that the commercial was going down, and is there a correlation with how much activity was also being forth in that sector, because I know three or four guys in our area that got so many fines, and broke so many rules, that they just said the hell with it and stopped, and I think -- How many permits are there right now, like thirty-six total permits for that, and is that right? If I take out those four, that's a 10 percent reduction, just by those four given up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: As far as I know, those are overall numbers, and so it doesn't account for effort, but something like that, a nuance like that, where there is, you know, a reduction in effort, that's something that would go into the fishery performance report, so that can be accounted for as this information goes into a stock assessment.

MR. HULL: Okay. I've got Richard first and then Jack.

MR. GOMEZ: Just a question, because it sounds like you're saying that sea bass can be sold, as a recreational fisherman, because that was -- Wasn't that mentioned, the sale of sea bass, on the recreational side, was going down also, or did I hear that wrong?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, and that has to do with the -- The sale is associated with recreational trips, and so not the sale of the fish, but the economics of selling trips associated with that.

MR. HULL: Jack and then David.

MR. COX: If there's ever been a fishery that has been impacted by climate change, to me, in my area, there's not been one more so than this one, and over the last -- You know, I've been participating in the fishery for a long time, and it seems that we don't have the cold waters that we've had to keep the fish around as long as they used to, and I know, working in a fish house that packed a lot of the trawl fish up in the Mid-Atlantic, they got a really robust stock assessment about eight or ten years ago, and I think a lot of our fish have moved further north.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Jack. David.

MR. MOSS: Jack, you actually just answered my question, and I was going to ask you, Jimmy, because I know that you have traditionally fished for them, but it was interesting that there was such low landings for Florida, and I was just curious if that was the case, if you were seeing them more north.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that question, David. Yes, I'm a black sea bass pot fisherman, or at least I used to be, and it's not worthwhile for me to go pot fishing anymore. I just participated in a -- I have fished recently, this winter, and participated in a ropeless gear experiment with it, and we caught a few fish, but it's just like it's been for the last couple of years, and it's just not what we -- We have cameras on there, and what you do see is red snapper everywhere, and so there's a few bass, and the bigger bass will swim with them, but, you know, that, with climate change, and the ocean is changing, but, no, in my area, it's not worth going. I know, up to the north here, in the Carolinas, they are still catching some fish, but, in my area, no. What you see on those graphs is the reality for Florida. Selby.

MR. LEWIS: What year, and I was trying to look back, did they go to the 350-pound trip limit on hook-and-line? Does anybody know that, off the top of their head, because I think that makes a big difference in our effort, in the Carolinas especially.

MR. HULL: I'm sure that Mike can speak to that, or someone, but, yes, there was -- I am not sure what the hook-and-line commercial limit was, but, obviously, as Cameron suggested, effort, and you need to see the effort reductions, due to a lower trip limit, or it's just not worthwhile to go, and so, obviously, you're going to see less landings if there's less effort, if that helps answer the question, Selby. I'm not sure.

MR. LEWIS: I think it's 350 pounds now, and it was over a thousand pounds, a certain amount of years ago, and it's worth us going hook-and-line now for 350 pounds.

MR. HULL: That's important information for the fishery performance report. Thank you. Okay. Let me -- I see Todd, and you said that Todd is online, and then, right after Todd, we'll go to Paul and then Chris. Todd.

DR. KELLISON: Hi, Captain Jimmy. Sorry, everyone, for disconnecting when I got asked to introduce myself, but I'm Todd Kellison, and I'm with NOAA Fisheries. I'm a non-voting member of the panel, and I'm sorry that I couldn't be there in-person this week, and so I will look forward to the next meeting. My comment, and maybe it's a question, and it's about -- Could we go back to the index of abundance?

It says MARMAP, in the line at the top of that figure, and so I'm guessing that's based on the trap survey, but I'm just curious, and I don't know if anyone knows, but that index looks very different than the indices that have been in the trends report every year, which is a report that South Carolina Department of Natural Resources generates, and it's a compilation of species-specific trap indices, based on the updated data for that year.

Looking at the -- Based on those reports that I have been looking through, there was a high in abundance in the index in 2011, and it's been declining every year since 2011, and I'm not sure what the -- So we didn't survey in 2020, because of COVID, but it declined from 2011 to 2019, and I'm not sure about the -- We have 2021 data, but I haven't seen -- I don't have that data, and so I'm not sure if it went down again in 2021, but it looks very different from the index that's shown there.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Todd, I can check on that index and kind of the why and the comparison between the two. I will need to touch base with Chip though, just to see what the differences might be.

DR KELLISON: Sure, Mike, and, if it's okay, I will email you the most recent -- I don't know if Wally is in attendance this week, but he would have the most recent information, but, if not, I will email you the most recent trends report and point you to the figure that I'm looking at.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. That sounds good.

DR. KELLISON: Okay. Thanks for allowing me time to comment.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Todd. I would agree that the chevron trap survey is certainly the method, best method, for a fish like this that will definitely trap up, and I know what that has looked like also, and so thank you for that. Paul.

MR. NELSON: I used to be a pot fisherman, and I know what happens in Florida, besides the water warming up, is that -- If you look at the dates, they coincide with the snapper opening, or closing, and the sea bass abundance went down, and the commercial landings went down, and, in our area, the sea bass are top food for red snapper, and, the more red snapper that are around, the abundance of sea bass went down, on the landings anyway, and so that's what I'm seeing in our area.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Paul. I think, Chris, did you have your hand up?

MR. KIMREY: I did. Just a real quick question, and I believe, and Mike would probably remember, and I think it was under yearly landings, and I was just curious -- I noticed some trends, and I was kind of guessing at the dates, and, you know, when we had a closure on sea bass, for a year or two, there were some really close correlations.

The releases went way up during that timeframe, and there was something else that I noticed, and I was just wondering if Mike or somebody knew if those spikes correlated exactly with the closure, and it would make sense that there would be way more releases, and there was something else that I noticed, and it's been so long that I can't remember what it was, but it was directly related to that closure, and my question is, is that figured in when it was closed, and when they increased the size limit from ten to twelve and then thirteen, and all those things correlate, and are those all parts figured into this data, that it was closed?

I mean, if not, that brief closure we had, when the stock assessment was skewed, and everybody, you know, figured it out fairly quick, but it could affect things long-term, if that wasn't calculated really close, and I was just curious if that's in there, and I wish I could remember which slide it was, so that I could more accurately ask my question, but it was -- What year was the closure? Does anybody know? Jack, do you know, when they shut it down? Was it 2014? It was about 2014.

So, in 2014, one of these graphs showed the releases spiking, almost off the chart, and I think it was around 2014, and so is that -- Recreational releases, right there, and that's about 2014, and so my question is -- That spike is obviously created by the fact that recreational anglers couldn't keep them, and I'm in the charter business, and so we couldn't keep them, and we wanted to, and, you know, that's there permanently in the data, but is that closure that was, by many of us, considered incorrectly put in place, is that figured into this, moving forward? If not, it's going to skew the data, and that's my question.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The management history is included with the information that goes into the assessment, and so that's available for them to reference, and that's something that they would look at when looking at a spike like that and asking the question of, well, why that datapoint, why then, and what was happening around the fishery, and so they will have the information surrounding that, regarding any closures or anything of that nature.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike. Does that cover it for you, Chris? From my experience, they do take account for management effect on landings and discards. However, it's also the same reason why they choose to have fisheries-independent data above fisheries-dependent data, because of all of the effects of management, and, to your point, it's up to us to make sure that they do know that, when these assessments come up and things like this are presented before them.

MR. KIMREY: I mean, that pretty much answers my question, and I just didn't know how to properly ask it, I suppose.

MR. HULL: You asked it perfect. Thank you, and that's the kind of stuff we need in this report. I've got Robert, and then I've got Tony.

MR. LORENZ: I just want to follow-up a little with Chris, because I was on the recreational side here, and I was on this AP back in 2015 and 2016, and I know, during that period of 2014 and

2017, black sea bass, to me, was extremely -- I live in southeastern North Carolina, and it was extremely confusing, because they were everywhere. The issue was they were very small, and then the seasons -- The controls went from a closed season, and then we went -- We also went, either before or a little after, to -- A lot of us like to fish for it during the cooler years, like from now, or we would be out there in January or February, and they closed the season until June for North Carolina.

Well, by June, we weren't that interested in the sea bass, but, you know, they were always there, and what had happened was they were extremely small, and there were a lot of small ones being caught. If you were in from sixty feet of water, they were extremely little guys, seven or eight or nine inches, but we could pretty much, on most days, even in the summer -- If we went out to ninety feet to 120 feet, and, for those familiar with North Carolina, Frying Pan Shoals, from like just northeast to almost west-northwest, and, if you stayed in ninety feet of water -- I mean, we caught some nice fish, and we would limit out, and I would show Jimmy pictures, years ago, and that's as late as 2017 or 2018.

That management period was quite confusing, where we had shutdowns, and we also couldn't fish during periods where we liked to fish, and then, by the time we could fish, so many fishermen were after them, more inshore, but then they're extremely -- They're extremely small when the weather is warm, and the large ones would only come, you know, inside of ninety feet of water -- It would be mostly during our cool-weather seasons, when the temperature of the water dropped below seventy or, more preferably, towards sixty degrees.

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Chris, I was noticing the same thing, and I didn't notice which slide it was, but could you go back to that slide that Chris was talking about? What I was noticing, a little bit different than what you were, is that snapper, red snapper, was closed just before that big decline, and that gave the red snapper a handful of years to start recovering before sea bass started its death spiral, and we all have said that these snapper are eating -- Every time a sea bass sticks his head out of the water, he gets eaten, and there's a graph that shows it, right up against the -- If you put the red snapper beside it, you're going to watch it, and I think you would probably find the same with red pogy.

Along another question of what Selby was asking about with pots, I used to see a lot of pots in South Carolina, and does anyone know if anybody is running pots still, because we don't see near the numbers that I used to see out there, but I believe you will see the amount of sea bass has declined since the red snapper has increased.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony. Jack.

MR. COX: To your question, Tony, it's that what happened is that, like I said, the stock assessment got very robust up in the Mid-Atlantic, and so their ACL went way up, and so they got a fulltime sea bass fishery, and so they could go out there and catch, you know, 20,000 or 30,000 pounds of sea bass on one trawler in a day, and it kind of depressed the prices, and so a lot of the guys just backed off of fishing for them.

MR. HULL: Anyone else right now got their hand up? I would just concur with a lot of what's been said. In my area, again, even if -- There is some full-sized bass that can swim amongst the snapper, but the smaller animals are being eaten, and, also, what they eat -- They're both eating the same thing, and they're eating a lot of what's necessary for those smaller bass to survive, and then their habitat gets taken over, to where they have to fight the most aggressive fish down there, red snapper, and so you know, that's what we've been saying. A lot of people have been saying it. They've done dietary studies, and they've said, oh, we don't see that, and, well, it doesn't have to be the sea bass, but it could be what they're eating, because they're all eating the same thing, and the habitat gets taken over.

I've got some videos that I brought from the recent trips that we had, and it's amazing, the amount of snapper that comes around that baited pot, and it would just amaze you, but this is the kind of stuff we need, is information on black sea bass, and so this has just been kind of open conversation, and I believe we're going to go a little bit more, Mike, into this.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so I'm going to -- A lot of these points have been touched on by you all, but I'm just going to go through what was said in the 2017 fishery performance report and kind of put that on the screen, and I will take pauses throughout that process, to check-in with you all and see if these things are still the case, and are there some of these points that need to be taken out, or removed.

First, I will look at some of the stock observations that were discussed in that performance report, and you see them there on the screen, and I am going to try not to read everything verbatim, but there were comments, in North Carolina, about healthy abundance, but that there was a change in the timing of when the catches were occurring at that time. There were some that had commented that the abundance had decreased recently.

Within the private rec sector, there was comment about the fish of the legal size limit, greater than thirteen inches, not being available in the inshore waters, and so kind of out of reach for the average private angler, and there was also a comment that the black sea bass could become abundant on artificial reefs, but don't typically remain there long enough for anglers to continue to have access.

Some of the observations that came out from Florida is there was a decline in abundance that was commented on by folks throughout east Florida, including Ponce Inlet, and there was commentary about climate change and warmer water in the area keeping the fish from coming into the area, and there was a comment about the abundance related to the 2017 hurricanes, and there was a potential increase with some of the cooler water, and some folks were starting to see a little bit of black sea bass, but, at the time, it wasn't really long enough to see if it would hold. There were all sizes of black sea bass being seen within Florida, with small fish being seen in the nearshore areas and some of the traps. There were observations about some of the dietary habits, feeding on crabs, worms, and scallops, and doing so in live-bottom areas.

Then the comment here of size of fish not changing, but the size is tied to the water temperature, and so, if there is colder water, then you would see larger black sea bass, and then a couple of other comments related to the stock. From Georgia, there was a potential decline in abundance, with more small fish being found offshore, and there were some thoughts of maybe that was a potential strong year class, and then comments about higher abundance being on natural reefs, rather than artificial reefs, and so this is a place where I will go ahead and pause, and, if there are any of these

things that should be removed from the next iteration of this report, we can go ahead and kind of note those, and, if there any changes to some of these things, those can be noted as well.

MR. HULL: Mike, can you go back to the slide prior to this one? What about it, guys? For me, most of this holds true to today, and this was in 2017, and, you know, it's been this way for us for a while, and it's just even worse now, and the only thing that I would add to it -- Not take away, but I would add to it the discussion that we just had about the red snapper population that has completely overwhelmed the bottom, and, I mean, there is -- They are eating everything, probably including small black sea bass, but they're certainly eating the worms and the scallops and all of the other things that all of these fish eat, because they've got to eat, and there's a lot of them, and so I think it's having a drastic effect on bass, and so I would like to add that, and then everybody else needs to see if we need to take anything out of here or if you would like to add something. Robert.

MR. FREEMAN: I just wonder, for some of you that have been using cameras and looking at your traps and that sort of thing, what impact have you seen lately in a change in what the lionfish are doing to our fisheries, and I know they're very aggressive, and, to my knowledge, they don't really have a natural enemy that is reducing their population, and so there's only so many fish out there, and, if the ones we don't want are eating the ones we do want, then that's not a good situation.

MR. HULL: Well, as a trap fisherman that has put cameras on there, we have never caught a lionfish in a sea bass pot, in my years of doing it, nor have I seen -- Maybe once I saw a lionfish, back off in the distance, hanging on a sea fan or something, but never really up around the pot or anything like that, and they don't really come to a baited pot for the bait. They go to habitat that holds smaller -- Because they feed -- Lionfish, from what I know, feed on really small, live prey, and so -- Which would be the little recruits, right, and so probably -- I don't have the answer to that, as a pot fisherman, and I don't know that the agency has an answer to lionfish predation on anything, other than to say it might be a high probability.

MR. FREEMAN: In my opinion, that might be a good focus on some of these surveys, where we're trying to determine what's out there and how many of those are actually being seen and what's the potential that that's part of our problem.

MR. HULL: I would -- If I was asking that question, I would ask it of some divers that are on this AP, as to whether the lionfish -- In your opinion, has the lionfish population continued to be increasing, or decreasing, or do you think they're eating their way out of house and home? I believe that Andy had his hand up first, and then Cameron, or vice versa, however you want to do it.

MR. FISH: I'm a commercial diver, by trade, and I guess it was probably ten years ago is when the lionfish first started getting crazy, and the market started. In my opinion, we wiped them out, between all these lionfish derbies -- Not wiped them out, but we made a huge impact on what we see, and we see a hundred -- In a little stretch of reef like this, there would be a hundred or more, and you put a price tag on something that has zero chance of getting away from you, and you make it worth six-dollars a pound, and they disappear real quick.

We do see them in deeper water, up to the north, and I dive off of North Carolina, and it's not really feasible, when we're out there in 130 or 140, for the lionfish, but we do still take them. We do see more the deeper we go, and we do see more, but they are definitely not what they were ten or eleven years ago. I mean, there's a huge reduction in what it was, but that could climb back real easy, because we lay off them and that kind of stuff, and that's my opinion.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. That's good information. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: First, with lionfish, I will agree that we've seen the lionfish sort of decline, because they have a value to it, and so they get wiped out and taken off. I mean, there were some shipwrecks where you could close your eyes and put your finger in any direction and hit a lionfish, and those have all been like pretty much cleaned off, and so, as the time goes on, as he said, if the price dips, and the population could increase again, and then, you know, some of the guys aren't the smartest that get stung by them a lot, and those guys sort of lay off, once they get stung once or twice.

Now, getting back to the black sea bass in the Carolinas, I mean, our charter/headboat, in Myrtle Beach, Little River, Calabash, has been great this year. I mean, we're telling people that, hey, if you want to catch sea bass and bring back keepers, between now and the middle to end of May is the time you want to go, and we're catching plenty of nice bass in the eight to eighteen-mile range out of there right now.

MR. HULL: Boy, that's good news. I want to see that up there. That's good for North Carolina. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: On your comment, where we made a post about the negative effect of snapper to sea bass, I would like to add red porgy to that, because I see the same thing happening. Along with Cameron's, off of Edisto, we've had really good catches of sea bass, in amongst -- You might release thirty snapper, but you will catch a dozen good-sized, three-pound or better, sea bass.

MR. HULL: I think you guys' observations reflect what the bar graph showed, as far as where, spatially, where the fish are being caught, and Florida and Georgia is out of the picture, and you guys are in the meat right now. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. FISH: Also, I believe, in November 1 in the trap fishery, you have to be outside of 100 feet, and I believe that's correct, and you're not going to see a lot of traps, especially in North Carolina and South Carolina, and even the Georgia area, because they're going to be so far offshore that you're not going to see them, and they might not even fish for them, because all of them sea bass are going to be inshore, and so there really is a big number of decrease on that, I would imagine.

MR. HULL: Yes, and that's true. The protected species for whales, we have a closure along the beach, where we traditionally fish for bass in sixty to seventy feet of water, and we have to stay offshore of ninety feet, and that's starting to go away right now in Florida, in my area, and in the Carolinas, in believe.

The end of next month, possibly, it goes away, and that's had an effect on effort overall, but there's just -- Even inshore, where I'm at -- We were able to fish inshore, with this experimental ropeless gear, and there is some juvenile fish in there, but nothing like it should be, but, yes, I agree, and

that's another bias, as to the data that you're seeing. How we're managed biases the fisheries-dependent data, and that's why we're here, to help clarify it, and so thank you. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: When the traps get bumped offshore, to a hundred feet, I mean, for recreational charter/headboat, that's huge for us, because now we've got a chance to catch some pretty decent-sized fish, and so, if that's getting ready to go away, then I would say our bass fishery will start to decline, since I believe they can keep them inshore, the recreational can keep them, and so, if the traps are getting ready to be back inshore during the offseason -- It's two inches shorter, and so they're all getting caught up, and it really, really, really negatively impacts the charter, the charter/headboat, like immensely.

MR. HULL: Sector competition. Yes, sir. I have always been an advocate for the same size limit for both sectors, and I don't think they should be kicking back those big fish and discarding them, but that's another story. Harvest your limit and get done with it. Some more? Thomas.

MR. MEEKS: Just kind of, from talking to some guys around us, we're catching a lot of big sea bass at some nearshore reefs, but you're mostly just catching red snapper. Where you used to go in these winter months, and you would really load up on sea bass, you're just not catching many small ones anymore, and you're catching some big ones, and they have really kind of moved off of those artificial reefs, and that's just kind of what some of the guys around us are saying and what we've seen, but that's just kind of what we're looking at around the Savannah area.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Thomas. I can say one thing, anecdotally. Talking to some of the really old-timers around my inlet about black sea bass and other species, they've seen -- As you would imagine, they've seen huge increases and huge declines. I mean, these are guys in their nineties, and they're still viable and talkative, and they say, you know, there was times when you couldn't catch a bass for years off of northeast Florida, and they ran not just commercial boats, but these were headboat fishermen, and they said there have been big peaks and big declines, and so it's a short-lived species, and it's capable of reproducing at a young age, and so, you know, it can come back quick, and we certainly hope it does. Staff.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so I will move on down to the next section here, and this is looking at the commercial fishery, observations about that sector. First, in North Carolina, there was commentary, during the last report, that the price had been impacted by the increased ACL for the Greater Atlantic Region trawl fishery.

There was a decline in the price per pound for large fish, but there was an increase in the price for medium fish, and so trawl fishermen -- It was commented that they can -- That trawls can be size selective, based on the size of the nets, the mesh, and there was a lack of medium fish in the market that had benefitted the North Carolina commercial fishery at the time.

In Florida, demand and price for black sea bass was increasing, and there was a sharp decline in the average catch per trip for the pot fishermen in 2013 and 2014, and that was when the fishing year changed, and there was the area closure to the pot fishery for the whales, which you all were kind of just talking about. From about 2009, the black sea bass pot effort had increased in response to high abundance, and there was an area closure that was being considered to protect red snapper at the time, and that ultimately was not implemented, and so there was -- Some of the comments were kind of focused and related towards that.

Fishermen's behavior may have been affected during that time period, because of that, because of the Amendment 17A, and the movement to pot fishing that kind of led to that increase, and they thought that that was going to be one of the only ways to continue fishing, if the proposed closure took effect.

Then some of the general commercial observations were that restaurant price for black sea bass had increased at the time, and a lot of pot endorsements had been transferred, but some of the new endorsement holders were not using them in the winter, due to targeting other species during that time of year, and so I will pause here for any edits or changes to the commercial observations from the last round.

MR. HULL: Since that talked about Florida, I will speak to it, and I agree with all of it. The one thing I would say is that the demand and price for black sea bass has increased, but we're not getting any black sea bass from our area, and we're having to bring it in from the Mid-Atlantic and above, which there's plenty of abundance there, and so we're able to -- We have black sea bass on our menu, in the restaurant and in the market, all the time, and thank goodness we're able to obtain some from the Mid-Atlantic, and so it's not coming from off of our local beaches, and it's from the north, but, obviously, it's a great fish, and it's in high demand, if you can get it, and the customers like it, and it's more valuable all the time. Jack.

MR. COX: I would just throw in there that a lot of our pot fishermen are doing some bluefin fishing in November and December, and that's when we used to catch a lot of our fish, and so we've had a transition from effort, from one fishery to another.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. I'm looking around the room here. Is there anything else on what you just saw up there? What we're doing here is we're kind of editing what we've already said and either -- If you see something that's not correct at this time, and I know some of you all have indicated, on that one slash that says, "lack of medium fish in the market has benefitted the North Carolina commercial fishery", and so that's kind of like what I kind of said, but that's North Carolina. Is there still a lack of medium fish on the market in North Carolina? I mean, is that something that is still true right there, to the North Carolina guys? Is there still a decline in price per pound for large fish, but an increase in the price for medium fish? I don't know about North Carolina. Jack and then Selby.

MR. COX: You know, the price per pound for fish has come down a little bit, because of the efforts on the trawlers north of us, and so it fluctuates so bad, and so, when those guys get frozen in up in the Northeast, when we get those real cold winters up there, it helps us tremendously on our bass, but the price has pretty much stayed the same for the last two or three years on sea bass. I can look at my computer now and tell you what the bass prices are doing up north today, because of the auction, but the medium bass today, to the boat, is about \$2.25 a pound.

MR. HULL: Selby.

MR. LEWIS: That's the same thing that I was going to say. I haven't seen a lot of difference, and, when the fish are caught up north, it does seem to be plenty of medium fish on the market too, and, I mean, just straight across the board, all our fish drop, or they all go up at one time, every size, and it doesn't matter, and so I don't think a medium fish is any different than large.

MR. HULL: Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I think one thing, also, and it's important in North Carolina, when you're talking to fishermen, is to pay a little attention to where they are fishing, because the sea bass regulations change at Hatteras, north and south, and so you're talking one state, but we have different regulations for recreational, and I believe there's been different regulations for commercial from Hatteras north to Hatteras south.

MR. HULL: Good comments, guys. That's helpful. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Before I just put kind of like the cross through this, this -- I guess the decline in price -- There's not really any difference between the large and the medium fish at this point, and that's what I'm hearing?

MR. HULL: Jack or Selby, or both of you?

MR. COX: Yes, that's what you're hearing. I mean, today, I'm looking at the auction prices today, and medium sea bass today are \$2.25 to the boat, and large bass is about three-and-a-quarter, and jumbos is in the neighborhood of \$4.00.

MR. LEWIS: It all goes up and down the same, per size. I mean, you keep a certain amount, seventy-five to fifty-cents difference, and it stays about like that on every size of the fish.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so I think we're hearing that we should strike that, and the price has pretty much been stable. Yes, it has its variations, like you would expect when there is a large hit of fish, but, overall, you really haven't recently seen, since this, a decline in the price, and so we'll strike that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Next, we'll move to the recreational sector and observations about that fishery, and so, first, for North Carolina, there was a comment that landings numbers may indicate a decline in abundance, but the water temperatures have contributed to fish staying offshore longer, and so that may affect the landings for that sector.

Charter clients do not book specifically to go after black sea bass, but they are part of the grab-bag that attracts people, and they're one part of kind of the portfolio of fish that would bring people there. There was also a comment that, for every legal-sized black sea bass, four to five are released, and these are often around twelve inches, which was frustrating, at that time, to many customers.

In Florida, the demand for black sea bass charters had decreased, due to the minimum size limit being too large, and, in Georgia, there was a comment that the demand for black sea bass had not changed, but charters had shifted to targeting sheepshead instead of black sea bass, and, finally, some general recreational comments, and there was a decline in South Atlantic landings since about 2011, due to the decline in abundance and a recreational minimum size limit that is too large, and then a decline in some charter demand happened, because people were not able to keep as many fish as they would have liked, and so I will pause here and see if there is any change to the recreational comments.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: Well, I'm not recreational, and I'm commercial, and so I don't want to get ahead of anybody, but I wanted to add in there that a lot of boats that commercially catch sea bass during the winter, January and February and March, and it gives us something to do, and the weather has gotten so bad, and so back to the climate thing, and we just don't get the days to fish that we used to with the small boats.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. I would say, guys, let's start back up with the North Carolina recreational. If you look this over, is there anything here that you would disagree with that this AP stated previously? Is there something that you would like to add to that? Do you agree with what's being said there? Robert and then Cameron.

MR. LORENZ: Just I know some of this came from a charter captain, and I can't find any fault with what's there, and it probably still exists today, and the only thing that I'm going to want to bring up in the next assessment is that, if you back-test landings, or reports, or MRIP, for the recreational sector, to please keep in mind when the seasons were in North Carolina, if you want to be accurate, because there was that period of time that, besides the closed season, where it didn't open until June, and, of course, by June, you went to the snapper -- Your snapper grouper season opened, and, during some of those years, I believe the red grouper were pretty good, 2014 to 2017, and so many fishermen that would have fished those larger sea bass that everybody talks about -- They were going to go further offshore and go into the grouper fishery, and so keep an eye on when those seasons were, and I think it's going to be a little tricky, with the data, to compare apples-to-apples and oranges-to-oranges.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: From the recreational charter side, as far as people being upset that they've got to throw stuff back, it's all about communication. We just tell people, on the half and three-quarter days, you're going to catch a lot of throwbacks, and it's a good fun, entertaining trip, and, really, nobody gives a damn.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so there's nothing up there that you guys would consider striking, and we'll leave it where it is, and then the additional bullet. Andy and then Cameron.

MR. PILAND: In my area, off of Hatteras, the four to five released for one kept is a little bit of a stretch, and it's maybe one or two, but the problem that I have on my boat is the darned red snappers. I really don't want to go fishing for a sea bass, because I'm going to catch so darned many red snappers, and I've got to explain to the customer when they watched it on TV, the guys in the Gulf, catching snapper after snapper after snapper, and keeping them, but we've got to throw them back. I try not to fish for black sea bass, when I can get by with it, but, when I do, I catch keepers, with probably one throwback, or two at the most, per kept, but I can see where you could get into an area and throw back four or five, and I don't know, and that's just my experience on Hatteras.

MR. HULL: Andy, thank you for that. That's great comments. Cameron, go ahead, and then Chris.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Back to the comment where you were typing in “may be frustrated”, and so the reality for the headboats and charters in our area is, as long as they’re able to keep something -- As long as they’re able to keep something, and so, if the sea bass is shut down, it’s the worst thing possibly that could ever happen imaginable, but, even if they could keep one or two, they’re good with that, because most of them, on the shorter trips, are going out for fun and entertainment, and they’re taking their kids or their grandkids out and stuff like that, and so the keeping the fishery open for the charter/headboat is absolutely paramount. If not, it’s devastating. I mean, it’s just devastating.

MR. HULL: So you may want to add that in there, and I think he is now, and it may be frustrating to some, but not for others, if expectations are managed. You need to be able to keep something, and keeping an open fishery is very important. That’s vital to the sale of that headboat ticket. If I have the opportunity to maybe catch a keeper -- Okay. Got it. I think he’s got that there. Chris.

MR. KIMREY: I raised my hand, and I just wanted to chime-in, since this directly affects my area. I know that the gentleman fishing Hatteras said that four to five seemed a stretch for him, but it’s very realistic where we are, in the areas we fish, and I had a question about the bass pots. Are they doing away with that inshore of ninety feet permanently, or has that got to do with the time of the year?

MR. HULL: It has to do with the time of the year when the right whales are migrating down to calf, down the beach, from North Carolina all the way to me, all the way to Cape Canaveral and below, and so it’s strictly the winter months, when we traditionally -- That’s when we bass pot fish, you know, and so they drove us offshore, but hopefully that answers that question, and I think Andy agrees with you that there are spots when, yes, you’re going to have throwbacks at that same proportion.

MR. KIMREY: You know, Hatteras -- North of Hatteras, the limits are much more liberal for a reason, I’m assuming, and it’s twenty-five at twelve-and-a-half, where we’re seven at thirteen, and, as far as the bass pot thing, I asked that question because I thought somebody had mentioned that they thought was a permanent thing, and I have always understood it to be just season -- The time of the season, because of the right whale migration, and then, lastly, and the gentleman before me filled it in, but the sea bass are very important to charter operations like mine. Most of the fishing that I do, especially in the spring and cooler, windier months, is going to be inshore of that twenty fathoms, and sea bass are pretty much, you know, 50 percent of our take, most times, but he already added that in there, and that pretty much covers it, for me.

MR. HULL: It sounds like it’s some bread-and-butter for you guys there. Anybody else want to chime-in on these recreational observations that we stated in the past and the addition? Anything additional to it? There was a lot of comment about the twelve-inches frustrating customers, and, you know, I see both sides of it, from what like Cameron said, and they don’t want to -- If you lower the size limit, maybe the fishery will get shut down quicker, and I don’t know, but, if not -- I mean, there is a lot of discarding to get that legal-sized fish on the -- I know, in Florida, it’s -- What few bass they’re catching, they’re throwing back all of it, but occasionally they will catch a big one. Anybody else on this one right here? Then I will hand it back to staff.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so the next section has to do with comments on the management measures. There was a comment that the eleven-inch is an appropriate minimum size limit for the

commercial fishery. If the commercial catches continue to increase, then there may need to be some consideration about reallocation, based on the gear and how the commercial ACL is divided within the pot versus the hook-and-line fishery.

There were comments that the thirteen-inch rec minimum size is not appropriate, citing comments about the warmer weather and the large fish being more prone to the colder water and being offshore and how that has impacted the fishery. There were comments that the ACLs were appropriate, but there was comments along the lines that black sea bass fluctuate heavily, and it's not necessarily related to whether the ACLs are being met, and so changing the ACLs in response to these fluctuations may not be advised.

There were comments related to the current mesh size for the pot fishery, and you all said that that was appropriate, as long as the minimum size limit does not change, and then there was the comment about the pot area restriction for the migrating whales and how that has pushed Florida fishermen off of their prime fishing grounds, and this is -- I believe this is the only slide for the management measures, and so I will pause once again.

MR. HULL: All right. I will start it out, and I agree with the first bullet, from my perspective. The reallocation of the different gear types on the commercial, I think Selby spoke to that, and he may want to say something about that, and this is back -- Remember this was in 2017, when we made these comments, and there is a bullet about the recreational minimum size limit, and maybe somebody wants to speak to that and see if they agree with it or disagree. The ACLs are appropriate, but responding to abundance fluctuations by changing the ACL is not advised.

More stability is needed. I agree with stability. I like stability and certainty, and we can have it. You know, every time you get a new stock status -- In the past, you would get huge increases in the ACL, and so then, all of a sudden, something changes environmentally, and the population disappears, and now you're stuck with all this again, and so I kind of like the idea of stability, and I would agree with that, but talking about, for the pot fishery, the mesh size we use, what we're using now is a two-inch-square mesh, and there is really no discards involved. Just about everything gets out of there, if you soak it long enough, that's under eleven inches, and so, for us, that works. I agree with they pushed me off my prime fishing grounds for the whale restrictions, and so I wouldn't change any of that, and I would have to turn to the recreational guys to comment. Cameron, go ahead.

MR. SEBASTIAN: In regard to the thirteen-inch recreational minimum, my whole thing is that we absolutely, under no circumstances, can we ever meet our quota and be shut down, and so, if it has to stay at thirteen, we're good with it, as long as we can keep rolling with it, because, if it drops, and we meet our allocation and have paybacks -- The headboat fleet has gone from like -- It's a 40 percent reduction in the last twenty years, and you will see it zero. If we all go out of business, then the oceans will be gentrified, and we're the only guys who can go out, or the guys who own their own boats, and the average middle-income, or low-income, person would never have the opportunity to go out, ever.

MR. HULL: So, obviously, you say leave that there, or it says that is not appropriate, and so you are saying that -- You're countering that and saying maybe it is appropriate, and I haven't seen the analysis to confirm all of that, but, if it would close the fishery by decreasing it, you would be against changing it.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Absolutely. Anything that could jeopardize the fishery as a whole is no good for the charter/headboats.

MR. HULL: Keep it open. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I agree with Cameron that the closures just kill the charter business. Back in the original closures for both black sea bass and red snapper, it about decimated my charter business, as well as the tackle store, and then, when the charter/for-hire couldn't sell a bag-limit dolphin, that kind of put a dagger in it. I think you've got to keep everything open. If you don't, it's just going to really put everybody back on the docks, and then you're going to sell your boat, and then it's just going to go downhill from there. I agree with him that a thirteen-inch fish on the recreational side -- I'm not going to keep anything that small anyway, and I'm not selling anything, and I'm taking it home for dinner, and so, on the recreational side, I think it's probably all right, especially if it doesn't close it.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that, Tony. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. I've got a question. We don't fish for these down by me. We don't really get them, but my question is, down by me, there is -- With the boats and technology, there is no such thing as like an inaccessible day, and so I'm just curious if you guys are seeing more and more pressure on these fish, especially up north, because it's almost like there's nothing that is inaccessible anymore, with these, you know, forty-foot center consoles with triple 350s and all that stuff, and your average, everyday person can get out there so quickly and easily, and they're recreational anglers, and so I'm curious, with some of you people that fish for them up this way, if you're seeing a lot more pressure on them. I know it shows that releases are way down, but I'm just curious if there is more and more pressure on these fish up here.

MR. HULL: Robert.

MR. LORENZ: Dave, I think, with respect to the folks with the technology and the big boats, I don't think it would give much more up here, and I don't think it's going to affect it. It really affects the snapper grouper, the more offshore boats, where everybody is going, and these fish, at least in that thirteen-inch minimum size limit, it's a lot in that eight to twenty-mile range, and so I don't think that group has changed at all.

One thing I would to say is, with this fish, I would also advocate that a thirteen minimum size limit is -- This can be a classic catch-and-release fish, to let them grow up, because -- I don't know, and my experience, and this may be one of the toughest fish in the ocean, and, with circle hook regs, I'm releasing the little guys and just giving them a chance to grow again, and it will be really nice to get back to when these things -- When we get thirteen-inch fish in the wintertime inshore, in that three to six-mile zone, for the everyday fisherman, the guy that can't afford that thirty-eight-foot boat with four 350s on it that I saw the other day.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I mean, our area is -- You can't find a place to keep a boat. I mean, if you've got a boat, you're going to keep it on a trailer. Every place is full, and every place has gone through

the roof, but the sea bass -- You know, sea bass is a fishery where, if you have the right season in the spring, you'll see some pressure, but a lot of the normal recreational guys -- They're not going to get out there until it's a little bit warmer, and a little bit nicer, because they don't have interior cabins, and so this is why we have a swing.

It's good up until about May, when everybody can get out to it, and we've been out there already for two or three months, and it comes down to pretty much a catch-and-release fishery, which I'm good with. I don't care, as long as we can catch them and as long as we can say there's that chance that you might catch the fish.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Cameron. I just want to point out that, in northeast Florida, north of the Cape, it's much more like Georgia or South Carolina, the way we operate and the type of bottom and reef structure we have, and, you know, where my boats are, I'm full of recreational anglers and private boats, and they fish on the weekends, if the weather is good during the winter, if there's a really good winter day, because we have weather in northeast Florida, and so they will fish on the weekends some, but not during the week so much.

Now, in the summertime, from June, July, and August, I mean, they will fish, and then these quads and trips and all of these catamaran boats, and we're starting to see a lot more of them show up, but those guys aren't fishing for sea bass, and they're running for tuna. They're running offshore, to the other side of the stream, for wahoo and tuna and dolphin, and they might start hitting some deep-dropping, I would imagine, too, but not for bass so much. Generally, the bass fishery has been smaller outboard, single-engine outboards, and the headboats, and the half-day charter boats have tried to hit them, but, on the private recreational side, I can't see where bass have taken any more effort, and, in our area, less, because there is no production for them. Someone else? Mike. I'm sorry. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Just as a quick -- You know, I have never fished for this species, but, from what I understand, the discard mortality is very -- There's a very low mortality rate for this species, and maybe that should be added in there, when we're talking about this, that it's a very hardy species.

MR. HULL: Good point. Let's get that in there. This species has been studied a lot, a lot, and tagged, and there's lots of literature on it. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Scrolling down to the next slide here, for the black sea bass FPR, it's looking at the environmental and ecological observations, and so there were quite a few from Florida, and there was comments about the lack of cold water in the years surrounding that year, and a lack of black sea bass, because of a lack of cold water in the inshore in Florida. Spawning off of Florida, it was commented to occur primarily in January to March. Off of North Carolina, it's between March and April.

There were comments, for Florida, of a large habitat range, including inshore crab traps out to 600 feet of water, with fishing mortality being a small factor in the overall abundance, being heavily impacted by the environment. Management actions, like size limits, had been commented to be relatively ineffective, as far as keeping the population healthy, or having little effect on keeping the population healthy. There were comments that black sea bass are short-lived, with early maturity and the ability to adapt to changing conditions, and so there are more environmental

factors sort of driving the abundance for that species, and so I will pause there, and I don't think these were specifically for Florida, and I think it was noted when they were Florida, but it was more general, for some of these comments.

MR. HULL: Okay, guys. Environmental and ecological observations from you, and we've talked about some of the ecological observations we've had with other species interacting with this, i.e., red snapper. Environmental, we talked about the warmer water. Typically, we used to have a lot colder water off my area in the wintertime, when we would get a migration of spawning fish that would move inshore that we would be able to harvest. We're not seeing that, and so I would have to agree with most everything that I see there, as far as my area. How about someone else from another area on environmental and ecological factors that you've seen affecting -- Or have we got it all covered there? Let's give it a minute and see if somebody has -- Robert.

MR. FREEMAN: My experience, when we were, you know, doing some of the bass fishing, most of the time, we would go out looking for triggers and beeliners, but the bass would be intermingled with them, and, with that thirteen-inch size limit, we were probably seeing -- For each fish we were able to keep, there might be two or three that would float off and maybe not go back down, and this was five or six years ago that I was running, and the release mechanisms weren't that popular, and so I think that is hurting the fishery in a severe manner, and I'm not sure that I understand the biological reason for the commercial fish size to be one thing and the recreational to be something else. It just has an impact on the number of fish out there, and there are just too many releases that just don't go down, and, typically, you're anchored up, and so it's not like you could go get him and force him back down or something, after you've thrown it back.

MR. HULL: Okay, Robert. Thank you for that. Jack.

MR. COX: We used to do some crabbing in the fall of the year, and catch a lot of juvenile sea bass and gag groupers and stuff, and we've lost half of our saltmarshes and estuaries, due to the construction of new homes and bulkheads and marinas, and I don't know, and I'm not a scientist, but I feel like that takes a toll on some of these species.

MR. HULL: I think that's some good comment, Jack, that maybe we can get something up here where the degradation of our inshore habitat is having a negative effect on bass, and is that something -- Is that what you're trying to say? I know, up your way, you get a lot of gags, or you used to get a lot of gags, inshore there.

MR. COX: We used to catch a lot of them in our pinfish traps and in our crab pots, but it's not really an inshore habitat, and I would say an inshore -- Our estuaries, and I would like to change that wording to our saltmarshes and our estuaries that are being taken over by the condos and boat slips that are popping up all up and down the coast.

MR. HULL: I think we can all agree with that one, I believe. Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I would just like to make one kind of a comment with respect to this species, and it will be an interesting one to follow. Some of the other councils -- The Mid-Atlantic Council and the Atlantic States Commission are currently, right now -- In fact, I believe you can sign-up, even for this council, for your discussion and your thoughts on the climate change on the effects of fish stocks and what should be done if climate change is affecting fish stocks.

In other words, we could be bringing down some stocks, just strictly due to the climate, and, well, how do you really want to manage that, because it's not fishing's fault, and this one will be -- This is a great species to look at, and I would like the South Atlantic to keep an eye on that, with respect to the northern population, because I believe I've been told that one of the reasons that, in North Carolina, where we have a line at Hatteras, is I believe they're saying the populations of the sea bass are two -- They may be two different populations north of Hatteras and south of Hatteras, and I'm not 100 percent sure whether I'm correct on that.

There's a few species like that, but that would be an interesting swag in this, if our sea bass populations are going down for environmental reasons, but the ocean as a whole, going clear up to Maine -- You can read, in *National Fishermen*, how they have reported in the Gulf of Maine some guys having a sea bass fishery, and how this is just changing, and it's, you know, no fault of fishermen, and it's just the way the world is evolving, and it will be interesting how we manage the fisheries with respect to that, and I those of us on things like these committees should keep an eye on that and what's going to be reasonable regulations when it's not fishing's fault.

MR. HULL: Good comment, Robert. Thank you. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. The next slide had to do with research recommendations, and there were comments that there should be research towards recruitment monitoring with small-mesh traps, looking the importance of offshore habitats as nurseries, conducting analyses to establish an appropriate minimum size limit that could achieve MSY before considering any changes to the minimum size limit. Fishery-independent sampling, having it expanded, so that it can include winter months, to inform more of the year-round aspect of the fishery, and then looking at interannual water temperature variability and how that can affect black sea bass abundance.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike. We made these research recommendations, and I'm pretty sure that I made that first one, and I can tell you that recruitment is pretty much everything, what's coming and are we having successful recruitment into the population of different age classes, and, at one time, back in 2009, I took the federal government out with eel pots, and I don't know if you all are familiar with the mesh on an eel pot, and it's very tiny, and we set eel pots out, and we caught baggies full of little black sea bass, the size of your thumb nail, and so it was pretty interesting, and I saw what a success that was, and that would be a really good way to, you know, monitor the recruitment of black sea bass, because, I mean, you can catch them -- They will go in a trap. They like to trap. What about someone else?

We talked about the offshore habitat as nurseries, and Jack brought that up, and obviously, we want to keep that in there, and it's very important. I don't know what's going to be done about it, but we want to keep mouthing off about it. To establish appropriate minimum size limit, and we achieve maximum sustainable yield before considering minimum size limit changes. Is that something that we -- Conduct analysis to establish the appropriate minimum size limit that would achieve maximum sustainable yield before considering minimum size limit changes, and I think that's going back to kind of like let's keep the fishery open, but let's harvest maximum sustainable yield without closing -- You know, without opening it up so much that you close it, and does somebody want to add to that? Cameron, go ahead.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I would just say that you have the gist of it, and whatever the wording would be that -- If we get to the maximum sustainable, all it takes is going over that, and then we're totally screwed, and so, you know, we need to have a big enough buffer in there that the size limit keeps the fisheries open. Closure is the death nail.

MR. HULL: Yes, and, at the time, you were here, and that may be your recommendation. We were all talking about size limits heavily, I remember, and so that fell in there, and so we can change that, if you would like. I will wait until Mike finishes there, and you can be reading it. Go ahead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I am just making sure that I'm stating this for the record, and for kind of the AP's kind of consent to that edit, but changing MSY to optimum yield, and I will add a note underneath that optimum yield, in this case, is incorporating the need to keep the recreational fishery open, and it's not necessarily MSY, but it's MSY and then account for whatever the needs of the fishery are, and that's what we're looking at, as far as optimum yield.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that, Cameron and Mike. From my perspective as a commercial fisherman, it's just -- I would just as soon catch my ACL in the wintertime, and, if you want to close it up -- As a pot fisherman, that's fine, and that's why we have the hook-and-line fishery with a whole different quota, so that, when they're hook-and-line fishing, they can continue to do that year-round, but, for us, it was always a wintertime fishery. In the summertime, we're just, you know, getting beat for nothing, and so that would be a different situation and the way that the two different sectors are managed separately, and rightly so.

Fisheries-independent sampling should be expanded to include the winter months to inform year-round fisheries, and so what are we talking about there? We're talking about the chevron trap, and that's the fisheries-independent primary survey. As you all probably know, they fish in the summertime. They do not set traps in the winter, and so, you know, this is a particular species where the wintertime makes a big difference, and so it could make a big difference in that survey, in my opinion, and so I like that. I like that being in there, and I think that they need to be setting chevron traps in the wintertime and not just the summer. Things change with the seasons.

It may be useful to look at interannual water temperature variability and how it may affect black sea bass abundance. Yes, and that's what we've been talking about. The water temperatures doesn't seem to be doing what it used to do, at least in the south, in Florida, and we're seeing really warm temperatures down there, but we're also seeing a lot of cold-water inversion too, and so we're getting a lot of that, and the guys south of me -- Some of you guys down south may be seeing that too, and I don't know, but I have some guys that fish out of Port Salerno that they're telling me that they're seeing more cold water, especially in the summertime, with an inversion, which has its own effect, you know, and so there's a lot of different things that we're up against there environmentally. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I agree with what you're saying, and it goes right along with the previous sentence that Cameron was saying. If we had more year-round sampling, that would take care of sampling of if the fish are being overfished, or are reaching that ACL. Something, and I'm not sure if it belongs in this category, that I am seeing more and more of is simple education on -- It goes with deeper-water fish, but it does apply to the sea bass, and venting these fish and releasing them correctly.

I believe that, you know, if you're deep enough -- If you're a hundred feet, you need to descending device and a vent and keep these guys alive, so that we can eliminate these floaters, and they're going to be directly affecting these numbers that we're getting from the pots. I think it's education, and I see that the council, at some time, is going to have to fund the education side of it a lot more, of how to use that, use these tools.

MR. HULL: Well, I think they know that, and I believe I've seen a lot of outreach, and the council members are counting on everyone using descending devices and venting tools, so that we can have higher ACLs, because, if we're not using them, and they can't quantify that to the SSC, then we're going to be in big trouble, and so I agree with you that it needs to be something that is embedded in everyone. From what we do, again, inshore, smaller animals like bass, we vent them, and I don't use a descending device on an undersized bass. I vent it, but as long as you're doing something to get them back down to the bottom is the way to go.

I think that's a good addition that we made there, that the outreach needs to continue, because you can never have too much outreach on that subject right there, and everybody needs to be using these tools, and especially with a species like bass sea bass, because it responds well to this, and they generally -- As quick as they can swim back down, bam, they're gone, you know, and it's a nice sight to see them swim back down. I don't know as far as on the headboat side, and what do you guys -- Captain Paul, what are you guys doing when you're running the headboat? Are they venting the bass or descending them or what?

MR. NELSON: When we catch one, yes, but it's not really a fishery they depend on, in my area, and it hasn't been for years, but, when we catch one, they get vented and released.

MR. HULL: Cameron, I will ask you that question, too.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Usually, with the headboats, we're doing like forty-five to sixty-five feet, and so pretty much I would say 99 percent of what we put back in the water goes back down, unless there are a bunch of hungry seagulls around.

MR. HULL: Okay. I don't see any other comments to make right now, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and then the last slide was just kind of some other observations that were noted, and some of these things have been touched on earlier in this discussion, but lionfish were expected to be caught in pots, but they seem to be more attracted to traps. Lionfish, at that time, were noted to be very abundant and problematic in the South Atlantic. The chevron trap index was noted as being informative of the status for black sea bass, and it was noted though, following the large recruitment event in 2011, that a decline in abundance may have indicated that recruitment had slowed in that area, but not necessarily that the stock was in trouble, because it was following a large upswing. Then, finally, that red snapper and lionfish may be impacting recruitment for black sea bass.

MR. HULL: Okay, AP. We've got this last slide here, and we're doing good. Other observations, and I think we spoke to the fact that lionfish are just basically attracted to traps, and they do catch them in the Keys, I know, in those long-soak lobster traps, and I do know they've been successful

with that, and it's not because of the bait, I don't believe, but it's just what they call -- It's a home for them to hang around, and they go in it.

We just talked about lionfish, and Andy and others had mentioned that you think that, in some localized areas, where it's easier to dive, that we've kind of knocked them back, and is that something that we want to put in there? Andy.

MR. FISH: I don't know what you're asking, but, I mean, they're not what they were, if that's what you're asking, and I can -- I don't see them as -- I mean, nobody really catches them hook-and-line, and I know everybody is up in arms about the lionfish, and I'm just not so sure that have as big of an impact on the reefs as everybody thinks, but that's just my opinion. They're really good for a diver, if you're a diver, and lionfish was a real good year that year, but they're definitely way back from what they were.

MR. HULL: I think you just said it, that some areas are not seeing as much in shallow water now, because of the -- They've been harvested, and --

MR. FISH: They're definitely a deeper-water fish, as far as like they don't like the groundswell, and so they're generally in deeper water, like ninety or deeper, and we seem to see much more of them, and they're always on like the lee side of the wrecks and stuff. They've got a lot of drag on them.

MR. HULL: I think that's good input right there, as you stated it. Not as bad as it was back in 2017, and the problem has been solved, at least in a localized way. Anybody see anything there that they want to change or they disagree with or they want to embellish or add to? I think pretty much the addition that we just made there, from a commercial diver that sees what's going on there, and is involved in that fishery, is a good addition. That's good news, that we're starting to kill some lionfish, enough to where you can say there's less of them, and that's a good thing. Okay, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so the next portion of this is just kind of wrapping up and making sure that we didn't miss anything that's in kind of the standard questions, and that's a little bit of a separate document, and so, if it's okay with you, Jimmy, this might be a good time to take a break and then come back to this after the break. Christina has something.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Now that you guys are wrapping up the fishery performance report, I just wanted to jump in real quick, and you had mentioned the importance of education and outreach related to best fishing practices, like descending devices, and so I was just going to have her sort of meet you guys casually this week, but now I'm going to embarrass her in front of you.

This is Ashley Oliver, and she is the Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellow, and so her work is primarily going to be focused on doing just that, going to tackle shops up and down the coast, North Carolina all the way down to the Keys, to talk with fishermen, host seminars, and hopefully collaborate maybe with some of you all, to help spread the word on best fishing practices, and so, since you brought it up, I wanted to go ahead and mention it formally to you now.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Christina. With that, I would say, to all of us here, if we can think of a way to help Ashley spread that word, and they've mentioned tackle shops, but, if you have a way that will help her spread the word, let's tell Ashley about it, okay, and I think that would be a really good thing, because I'm telling you this is highly important that we have everybody using discarding techniques and best fishing practices, because all our management is counting on it, because the science is counting on it too, and so let's do that. With that, let's take a ten-minute break. It's 3:25, and so 3:35-ish, if everybody will come back and we can keep on moving. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. HULL: We still have another maybe ten or fifteen minutes here to finish up this fisheries performance report, and so I'm going to hand it back to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Jimmy. The remaining parts of the fishery performance report are just going through the questions here, and we're not going to go through them line-by-line, and I'm more or less going to just put them on the screen and ask you all, is this information covered already by your previous comments, and, if it is, then great, and we can keep moving on through. If it's not, then we can add to what you have already given comments on in the previous presentation. Just kind of, first, the overall question of have there been substantial changes that have not already been noted to the black sea bass fishery? If so, when did you notice these, and what do you think may have caused that change?

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. PILAND: Do you have the increased abundance of predatory fish, such as the red snapper, the lionfish, the sharks? Are those already listed? You said stuff that was not listed, and are they listed?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and so, if it's something that you already commented on, kind of in the last session before the break, then we have that recorded, and it's in there. This is more if there's anything that hasn't been hit yet, any substantial changes, especially since the last performance report, since 2017, that you have noticed something very, very recent.

MR. HULL: I think, Andy, you hit on -- We've talked about the red snapper and the lionfish, but we didn't mention sharks, but I think that's a good addition to that, because they're obviously having an impact too, and so go ahead, Andy.

MR. PILAND: It's just a little bit off topic, but, this past week, I was bottom fishing, and I could not get a fish off the bottom for the sharks, zero.

MR. HULL: Yes, and so you've included the sharks, and that's an addition to our previous fisheries performance report, and so that's a good addition there, and we talked about environmental and ecological factors pretty heavily already, and that hasn't changed much, and is there anything else that you guys can think of that has been a substantial change? Paul Nelson.

MR. NELSON: The headboat and charter boat fishing in Florida, in my area, has gotten a lot better since the last -- They said that had affected the charter fishing in our areas, but the charters

have gotten better over the years, and they've adjusted to not catching the sea bass and being okay with catching other fisheries and releasing red snapper, and so our charter fishing has gone up in the last couple of years, as far as the amount of trips we run, and the black sea bass hasn't affected it all lately. I noticed, on one of your other prior lists, it said it affected, in Florida, the charter boat fishery.

MR. HULL: So, on the board, it says the headboat and charter fishing have adjusted to not catching black sea bass and releasing red snapper in Florida, and you're fishing for amberines and grunts and --

MR. NELSON: Anything that will bite. The charters have adjusted. They have adjusted for the black sea bass, and it's not affecting it. The charter fishing has gotten better in the last two years, due to COVID, I'm sure, is what the problem is on that one.

MR. HULL: I don't see any other hands, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Then, moving down, and, again, I'm not going to read through these questions, but have you noticed anything related to fishing behavior or the catch levels? These questions are in your briefing materials, if you want to view them a bit more individually.

The only ones that I will specifically note are these highlighted ones, and these came from the SEDAR 74 analytical team, and these are pieces of information that they would like to have a little bit more knowledge about, and so have there been any recent changes to the level of discards for black sea bass, considering sector-specific or component-specific, within a sector? How attentive are each sector's participants to accurate discard reporting for black sea bass? Do you think discard records are accurate for black sea bass, noting sector-specific impacts, and then, finally, how well is each sector adhering to its size, bag, and trip limits, from you all's observations on the water?

MR. HULL: Robert.

MR. LORENZ: Just one comment that I would like to make, to get us started, is, for the second bullet, at the time we did this, we had not had the mandatory use of circle hooks, and so that is a new gear that we're using, and we're required to use, and even the states inshore, because initially North Carolina did not require it, and you could use a j-hook in three miles or in, but, with this harmonizing of the state regulations with our federal regulations for the circle hooks, that has to be having a positive effect on the discard mortality for this fish, and it should be studied and taken into consideration.

MR. HULL: Good comment, Robert. I think I saw Chris Kimrey's hand.

MR. KIMREY: On reporting, and I am speaking for my area alone, there's a huge number of for-hire operations that fish state waters and inland, and so they don't have federal permits, and so they're not required to report, and, in a lot of those areas, there is -- I mean, even inside, there is times that we have keeper-sized sea bass, but there's lots of these guys that don't have federal permits that are fishing as many days as I am. I mean, I fish almost 200 days a year, and so they're not reporting at all.

They're not even being picked up on MRIP, because they're leaving to and from places that they don't get intercepted by MRIP, and they're fishing more than a lot of people, and so there's a huge gap in our area on reporting from the for-hire sector, especially on sea bass, because of the way our coast is and where they hang out, with all the artificial reefs. We've got -- Within just a few miles of our inlet, we have two artificial reefs and several pieces of bottom and a couple of other areas that hold good numbers of sea bass, especially this time of year, and there's a big gap in the reporting, and so, I mean, that might be something they should mention, especially from the for-hire sector, because you get -- You know, you're getting guys that are fishing more, and they're probably catching more, than the average angler, and there is absolutely no reporting from them at all.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chris, and, over the years, I've heard them talk about this, and in other APs they talk about this, about the charter boats in state waters don't have to have federal permits, and they don't have to fish under the same bag limits, oftentimes, and then you're mentioning the reporting for the charter/for-hire industry, that they're not required to report, because they don't have a federal permit, and it doesn't make them report. The states don't make them report, and so I think that's good input, and so I think that's good input, and so they may be missing some information that could be valuable to them. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: From the charter/headboat and the North and South Carolina, our discard level has really remained about the same, and, you know, if anything, as to how accurate, for at least the charter/headboat, we probably underreport how many throwbacks. If you've got a hundred people on a boat, and they catch five to eight fish apiece, on black sea bass, and so that's 700 or 800 fish, and so they're ballparking, but they're doing a decent job of it.

As far as the last one, how well are the sectors adhering to size and bag limits, I know, on the charter/headboat, most of the guys play by the rules. As I said already, the pot guys -- That's why they got fined so heavily, because they were soaking pots, and they were fishing inside the twenty-mile line and dropping traps everywhere, and they got severely penalized for that, for doing that, and that has ultimately increased the charter/headboat fishery inside of twenty miles, because they pretty much -- They don't trap as much anymore, because they just can't seem to follow the rules.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: Both of my boats get selected every year to do the discard reports, and we do it accurately, because we're hoping, at some point in time, it will help the assessment, just knowing what's going on, and it's good fishery-dependent data, and so we have been doing it for a long time. We've been doing this for twenty years, and it's good information, and I don't understand why these other sectors, like Chris is talking about -- We're losing all that information that could answer a lot of questions and help us.

MR. HULL: Okay. These are specifically highlighted questions from the SEDAR staff, and we talked about the -- Has there been any recent changes in the level of discards, and we've talked about that, and you just described how many -- Was it 700 or 800 discards off the headboat? I mean, that's something important to know.

How attentive are each sector's participants to accurate discard reporting? Obviously, in the headboat survey, it's been going on forever, and the captain is going to have to report that. How

well is each sector adhering to the size and bag limits and trip limits? I think we haven't really said -- As far as you were saying, everybody on the recreational side up there, the headboats, are adhering to the size, bag, and trip limits, but it sounded like the commercial guys weren't adhering to the area closure, but I think we kind of answered it. Has somebody else got some more to add to that? Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Just checking back in, anything else to add as far as like the higher questions that were put up there that has not already been covered?

MR. HULL: I don't see any hands, Mike. I think we've covered most of it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Next, moving down to social and economic influences, and, again, I will just put the social and economic questions up here on the board, and, if there's anything that you all would like to respond to that has not already been said, then we can do that right now.

MR. HULL: I am just reading those bullet points quickly, and I can see where we've addressed, pretty much addressed, all of that. Everybody is dependent on the black sea bass fishery, if they can catch some, and we talked about how -- Paul talked about the community has adapted to the changes off of northeast Florida and there not being any bass and how they've adapted to that.

Has the demand for charter/headboat trips targeting black sea bass changed? I think we addressed that. As long as the fishery is open, there is demand, and they can sell charter/headboat trips, as long as there's an opportunity to keep one, catch one and keep one, and I think, for me -- Does anybody else see anything they want to add to this or anything different that we haven't already talked about? I don't see anything, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Next, scrolling down to management measures, this one is a similar type of thing, and there's been some discussion, but are there any new management measures that the council should consider, or are there any changes that should be considered to existing management measures, or are there certain parts of management that you all find are not working well, or should be considered for change, including current ACL and allocations and things of that nature?

MR. HULL: I see Selby's hand.

MR. LEWIS: I just want to be sure that, when we're doing the historic landings, that we are taking how many people are fishing, how many trips, and what laws are in effect, like going to 350 from 1,200, and all that has got to be put in there, so we actually have how many people are fishing, how many days, so we can look at the decline. There's no way to tell from that data right now.

MR. HULL: Mike is putting some stuff up there now. Effort and management history needs to be taken into -- It should be considered in both science and management.

MR. LEWIS: And the regulations that were in place at the time.

MR. HULL: Does that work for you, Selby? Good. Good input.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Selby, I am not sure how familiar you are with like the SEDAR process and all the information that they gather, but I'm familiar with this part of it, just because it's the part that they ask me to do, but one of the things that we do, in the beginning of the assessment, is we compile -- Like they get a table, and they say, this year, this was the ACL, and this was any regulatory change that went into effect this year, all those things, and they do have effort data that goes along with the commercial and the recreational data, and so they have access to that information, and that is being provided to the analytical team.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike. It's a history of management, and you can dig into it on the SEDAR website and go to any SEDAR stock assessment, and you can find the history of management, which they give due consideration, but it's good to mention it here and how important it is. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. The next section is -- I will give a little bit more space down, and it's the environmental and ecological questions. I will leave these up, and, if there's anything that we haven't already covered, then please let me know.

MR. HULL: Does anybody -- After reading those, do you see anything that you want to add to that or disagree with, or that we haven't already addressed or talked about, because we've talked about most of this. In fact, probably all of it. I don't see any hands.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and then just kind of any -- The last catch-all question is what else is important for the council to know about black sea bass, if there's anything else. I did get an email, earlier today, from Harry Morales, and he wasn't able to attend this meeting, but he did want to send in some comments related to the topic of black sea bass for the fishery performance report, and so I'll just note those right now.

He said that, prior to the red snapper closure, there was a tremendous abundance of black sea bass. Catching twenty-plus per fisherman was common, with sizes from six inches to seventeen inches, and there is a direct correlation between black sea bass catch and the red snapper closure, with each year reducing. In the past, when targeting red snapper with live bait, you had to get past the black sea bass first, and now that's no longer an issue, because there are so few black sea bass caught, and, today, black sea bass caught are barely legal, some being so small that you can put them in a fish tank, and so these were comments from AP Member Harry Morales, and I will just note those and tie those into what's been mentioned here at the table.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. FISH: This is just another point to note, but, when the sea bass were real thick out of Canaveral, and I don't remember the years, but we also had a real -- We had a whole bunch of flounder. We had a huge flounder fishery on our offshore wrecks, 120 foot to ninety foot, and that's when the sea bass were real thick. Then, when the flounder -- The flounder and the sea bass seem to have left all at the same time, and I don't know if that's something to note, but they're nonexistent on both sides anymore, compared to -- I mean, we would get -- We would do really well on flounder, and they have disappeared, and it wasn't that we got them all. We got a bunch, but they went -- They trickled down a low catch, and then they disappeared, and it wasn't like we got them all down to nothing, and so that's just a point.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Andy. I would comment that, from my experience fishing for bass, and what I believe happens, and it would maybe correlate with the flounder situation, is, further offshore, these fish are -- There was a huge migration south offshore, and then inshore, and I still believe that these fish are offshore of us, inshore, and that they are -- When we had this huge recruitment spike, and all those animals for those years, I think it probably came from the Mid-Atlantic and came down this way and, for whatever reason, came inshore to us, and, I mean, that's just my impression of it, but I think that there is a definite link, they say on the bass, and the scientists say that it's two separate stocks from north of Hatteras and south of Hatteras, and they have done DNA sampling on them, and so they have determined that, and I do believe definitively that there is, but I still think that, from my perspective, that those fish came from the north.

MR. FISH: There could be something about the scallop fishery too being not what it was.

MR. HULL: Yes, and why they haven't continued to come back is the question, and migrate inshore from the north, but hopefully they will. Did I see another hand or comment? Anything else on black sea bass that the council needs to hear from us? Go ahead, Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I would just like to ask Chris or Cameron -- I tend to note that, with black sea bass, I tend to catch a lot of nice white grunts also, and do you agree with that, fishing more than I do?

MR. SEBASTIAN: I mean, with the bass, you're catching like grunts and porgies and some flounder, some sharks, and it is a whole huge mixed bag that we end up catching with the bass, especially in the shallow water, between eight and twelve miles. When you get from ten to eighteen, now you're going to start throwing in a bunch of snapper, American reds in there, too. When you get out to twenty or twenty-five miles, you get a ton of American reds, and so it just sort of depends on exactly what bottom we're fishing on.

MR. HULL: Since I can, I'm going to have one more thing to say about it. I think that it would be something to tell the council, at least in my opinion, and I don't know if you all agree or not, but that there's not much they can do with management of black sea bass that's probably going to make much difference as to the overall abundance of them.

They've already got lots of management in place, and, I mean, there's obviously things they can do with management to keep the season open, and this and that and the other, but, as far as the overall population, I just don't know that there is much -- It's kind of like what they're saying with red porgy, and, it's like the only thing they could do, and you don't have to put this, is open up red snapper and let everybody go catch snapper and say you guys don't get to catch bass anymore, and, okay, we'll just take the snapper, because that's what is there, and so I retract my statement, because, as I think further about it, there is something they can do.

Anything else, before we move on? I think that's it, isn't it, Mike? Last chance to affect the black sea bass fishery performance report, this time. Okay. We are now going to move into the next agenda item, which is Amendment 46, recreational permitting and reporting, and so council staff, John Hadley, is going to present this to us.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, everyone. As an introduction, my name is John Hadley, and I'm council staff, and I'm currently heading up Snapper Grouper Amendment 46, and so the

reboot thereof. Just as a general orientation, and this is going to be more of an in-depth update for the AP at this point, and this is something that has -- It's really been a reboot, overall, and so some of the nitty-gritty details, so to speak, are going to be figured out in the coming months, and we'll come back to the AP with some very specific discussion questions, but I know that the private recreational permitting and reporting has been sort of a key item and a recommendation of the Snapper Grouper AP over the years, and so I wanted to give you a little bit of a background on what work has been done and where this amendment stands at the moment.

As a little bit of background, this amendment was developed in early 2018, but work was halted. The amendment was actually approved for scoping, I believe in June of 2018, but, at that time, essentially, through a little bit of triage with the council's workload, the amendment did not continue to be developed after that meeting, and, in the meantime, there has been ongoing efforts to improve recreational data collection, and really to kind of lay the groundwork for Amendment 46, moving forward, and so, in the meantime, the MyFishCount app and web portal was developed, and so sort of a proof of concept.

If you are going to have a private recreational permit, and there is going to be required recreational reporting to go along with that, the MyFishCount app was developed sort of as a more tangible aspect and proof that it can be done, and, should that reporting requirement go into place, there is an app that is currently developed.

Also, to go along with this, there was the private recreational reporting workgroup, which was made up of council members and technical experts, and this group met multiple times throughout 2021 and into early 2022, and, through these meetings, this group was really kind of operating outside of the council meeting framework and council meeting schedule, to really take the time to dive into what examples are in place for other recreational reporting and permit programs, and so what has been developed, really nationwide, and, also, gather information on, if the council is going to move forward with a private recreational permit, what kind of information would be needed to develop that permit and sort of the details of what would go along with that.

Then sort of the final deliverable, if you will, of this recreational reporting workgroup was a set of recommendations, which I will go over in just a second, and, before I do, I'm going to give a brief overview of the workgroup recommendations. I will mention that Council Member Spud Woodward is online, and he was the chair of this workgroup, and so, if we have any questions at the end, specifically to the workgroup recommendations, he's online, and he mentioned that he would be happy to help answer any questions on how the workgroup developed some of the recommendations and the details of that.

Overall, the workgroup came up with five general recommendations. Number 1 is to move forward with developing a federal permit for the snapper grouper recreational fishery and to examine options that would apply to vessels and individuals, really and/or individuals, and so look at both avenues and decide which would be the best and most appropriate. To go along with that, develop a data collection program that uses the universe of anglers identified through the permit to support improvements in recreational data that are necessary for developing improved catch and effort estimates, and, so really, that's the goal of developing the permit, is improving recreational data in general.

Then also to create a snapper grouper permit and reporting technical advisory panel, and so a little bit more on this, but the idea here is that this would be an advisory panel that would be put together as Amendment 46 is -- Well, ahead of Amendment 46 continuing to be developed, and this would help the council on some of the technical aspects of permitting and potentially getting the most bang for your buck, if you will, out of the permit and making sure it's as useful as it possibly can be.

The group also came up with a set of other recommendations and considerations. Overall, this was a set of recommendations that were important to keep in mind for the success of the permit, such as setting realistic expectations, clear goals for this process, and cooperation with existing surveys, and then, for the research recommendations, there were several, but, generally speaking, the idea was to identify methods to collect discard information and monitor impacts on sampling, and so essentially ongoing efforts, such as MRIP, and also explore a census versus random survey options, particularly when it comes to discard information.

With that, the council last discussed -- They really kind of had the reboot of Amendment 46 and discussed the amendment at their March meeting, and they came up with three sort of directions to staff for moving forward. Overall, they wanted to establish a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for, harvest, or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region, and so essentially move forward with development of the permit, and then really take some time and look into options of whether this permit should apply to a vessel or to an individual, and, also, there will be an upcoming discussion of whether there would be a fee associated with the permit.

The next step is looking at implementing reporting requirements for private recreational fishermen or vessels and develop options that would potentially phase-in reporting at a later date, and that could cover all species, or maybe a subset of species, such as say the deepwater species, and what needs to be targeted upon for reporting, or kind of go -- Excuse me. With the other side of the coin sort of covering everything all at once, and so that's going to -- Those are going to be some of the discussions that the council is going to have on how targeted that reporting will be, if there is a requirement to go along with the permit.

Then, also, convening the ad hoc advisory panel, and so this is that technical panel that I mentioned that was part of the workgroup recommendations, and, really, this is going to be a group of technical experts and members of state agencies to develop an ad hoc advisory panel for the permit. Initial membership will be reviewed at the council's upcoming June meeting, and so they will be essentially assigning members to this advisory panel, and it will provide recommendations on the technical aspects of permitting and reporting, and so the reason I bring this up is it's not intended to be a replacement for the Snapper Grouper AP.

The Snapper Grouper AP, I think, will be very much involved as Amendment 46 moves forward, but this technical advisory panel really will focus and drill-down on the nitty-gritty details and technical aspects of the permitting and reporting, to go along with the recommendations of the Snapper Grouper AP, again, later in the development process.

Looking at general amendment timelines, this is really up in the air at the moment. The timeline for when anything will go into place will kind of depend on how in-depth or any sort of -- Well, whether or not there will be a reporting requirement and how in-depth that will be, and that may take some time to develop in the amendment. If it's just move forward with a permit, and maybe

a reporting requirement at a later date, the amendment may move faster, but, potentially, the council will be working on this amendment through the latter half of this year and throughout 2023, potentially with regulations effective sometime in 2024. There again, it's early in the process, and so that's sort of a very draft timeline, at the moment.

That's all I had for this update on the amendment, and I'm happy to answer any questions, and, as I mentioned, Spud Woodward is on the line to answer any of the -- If you have any questions about the private recreational reporting workgroup.

MR. HULL: Thank you, John. Let's give it a -- I see one. James, go ahead.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jimmy. I just wanted to find out if it might be prudent to ask state management agencies -- I mean, I know it was touched on in maybe an ad hoc situation, but would it be prudent to ask state management agencies to kind of parallel what it is that we're trying to do on a state level? Maybe, if it is an individual fishing permit, instead of a vessel permit, that we can do it all in one fell swoop, to where we don't have to, you know, wait ten years for states to follow for a reporting process, for those who don't fish in the federal zones.

MR. HADLEY: I think a lot of that is to be determined, overall, and I think that's duly noted on that aspect of it. I mean, part of this discussion that the council will have, and the private recreational reporting workgroup has had, is how to integrate with existing programs, and so, on the federal level, integrating with MRIP, and then also integrating with the Florida Reef Fish Survey, and so that state program is in place, and presumably will be in place going forward, and so that's kind of one of the goals of the ad hoc advisory panel, is having state members on there, and so the idea is that, whatever comes out of this amendment, it will integrate, as much as possible, with the existing state efforts, particularly on the part of Florida. However, get something in place to cover the whole South Atlantic, so you're covering the whole snapper grouper fishery.

MR. HULL: John, I have kind of a question and a comment. I know, in the past AP meetings, we've talked about this at-length, and now the council has a committee that's actually digging into the nuts-and-bolts and making recommendations of how this could actually be done, and so we're making progress. As slow as it is, we're making progress, but I know, in the past, we had talked, as an AP, that, in our minds, it seems pretty easy, and we know nothing is easy at the federal level, but, you know, all of the states require at least an individual private recreational fishing license, I assume, and so everybody made the example of, well, in wild game, you have a hunting license, and then you get a federal duck stamp, or you get some type of federal authorization to prosecute a federally-managed stock, working with the states.

I mean, for us, that was one of the easy solutions that always stuck in my mind that says, I mean, this is a no-brainer, and you've already got the existing state requirements to have a private recreational license, and now all you've got to do is set up a site where they can purchase a stamp to prosecute the snapper grouper fishery, and so, I mean, for us, it seems simple, and I know Spud is going to have a to-be-determined, and a lot more information, and nothing is ever as simple as it seems, but I think we all agree that we're glad to see that it's moving in that direction, because it's much needed. That's all I wanted to say, and, Jack, go ahead.

MR. COX: John, thank you for the presentation, and, to me, this is one of the most important things before the council and this whole fishery, and, when I was on the council in 2013, we started

talking about it during our visioning process, of some type of way to identify the participants in the fishery, because we realized that everything we do is science-based, and the council can only do as much as science will allow us to do, and so we're at a point that we have to have checks and balances. Man, that was eight years ago that we were talking about this, and now I'm looking at this screen here, and it might be six more years before this is implemented. Wow.

That blows me away, that we are that far down the road, and that there's no light in sight, and, I mean, I commend the council for finally recognizing how important this is, and, of course, you've got to understand, in the commercial industry, we went through reductions big time, and there were 1,400 permits when I started, when I first got a commercial permit, and now we're down to five-hundred-and-something. It's very small, and we realized that we didn't have enough permits for the fishery, and we couldn't put that much demand on the fishery, but this super important.

This amendment, to me, is the most important amendment before us today, and I have some suggestions, and I would like to go down the list here, but I would -- Some colleagues of mine that are -- You know, we've been discussing this, and we think that it's the time for a federal report for the private recreational anglers, just like we have for all of our permits, and it would be tied to the vessel, and it wouldn't be tied to an individual, and, you know, we need to find out, from the Science Center, what we need to be reporting, but, you know, we would start with a few species.

Let's say we start with three deepwater species and a couple of inshore species, and we would do something like blueline tilefish for the deep water, the golden tilefish and snowy grouper, and then, on the inshore side, maybe we would do sea bass, and gag grouper is certainly important, and red grouper, to start collecting some good data, but, you know, the thing that concerns me the most about what we're talking about here is looking at this thing, and it may be six years from now before this is implemented, and we just don't have that kind of time.

I mean, this fishery is not as healthy as it should be, and we've got to figure out what's going on overall, but, anyway, I am happy to see that the council is considering this, but I think it's time to move forward with it and get it on a fast track. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Robert and then Selby.

MR. LORENZ: Maybe it's time for me just to, having been involved in NGOs on the recreational fishing side, just to kind of maybe inform some of my commercial fishing colleagues just to keep a lookout for something that I might call unintended consequences, or moral hazard, and I am all for this, and I have advocated, like Jack, since day-one when I've been on this AP, and I want it for good management of the fishery, so we know what we are using, but I think, as Jack has stated, to have this permit come through, but not have reporting attached to it almost immediately, could introduce a moral hazard that's going to be tough on those of you that are commercial fishermen.

One of the things that may happen out of this is the NGOs may take this ball and run with it. The first thing that might happen would be to use the number of fishermen as an argument on why maybe that sector needs many more fish, and so we're going to get into a whole set of other management issues, once this comes up, and that's going to be related to fairness. If you have one group that shows such a huge population, and will have a demand for fish, it's going to hurt another one, and so I don't know where we will go, and we'll probably have a lot of arguments with things

like allocations and all in the future, when this goes through and when you see the number of recreational anglers that must be out there.

I think one of the best ways to do it is to try not maybe to have the permit ahead of some kind of reporting characteristics. In other words, have the pain with the pleasure, and we'll know how many of us there are, but we'll also have to be responsible in telling you what we're taking, and then, from there, we're going to have to figure out some fair ways to allocate these fish, because I can tell you that those arguments are going to come up, and that's why you have the issues you have with red snapper in the Gulf, is it's all about showing just how much pressure there is to provide fish to the people like me, the private recreational fishing sector.

This is going to be more serious than you really think, if you keep an eye on all the aspects, globally, on where this is going, because we're going to have to have conversations on fairness and allocations and value added, and you won't -- One sector can blow you out of the water just because anybody, doctor or lawyer, can be spending the money, and that's going to be up against those of you that provide this resource for restaurants and your docks in your local area, the bait you use, et cetera, and so I think it's about time to just bring that up and just at least -- I would love for this committee to just think about it, because I think we're going to have a lot of hot discussions in the future, once this goes through.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: You confused me a little bit. It's almost like you're saying we don't want to identify the players on the field, because we're afraid of what might become of it, and is that what you're saying?

MR. LORENZ: No, and I'm for doing it, but I'm just saying that you're going to have to look at this from a big, global perspective, and, I mean, there's going to be other issues that you will have to resolve besides just knowing how many recreational anglers there are, and that may be used for clout against your interests.

MR. COX: Well, we're not worried about that. What we're most concerned about is finding out how many participants and how much stress is put on the fishery at this point. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that discussion. Selby.

MR. LEWIS: What I was going to say -- The young lady was talking about how to do education for fishermen, as far as venting and stuff, and this is the easiest way to do education for people participating in this fishery, is by getting them to purchase or get a permit and give them the data when they get that, so they know how to take care of the fishery.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Selby. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. Speaking to Bob's comment about, you know, kind of identifying how many recreational fishermen there might be, and then talking about future allocation issues, I would like to point out that the commercial sector identified when they had too many participants in the fishery, and the recreational sector was allowed to kind of grow

unchecked, and so maybe there was a number of participants that there should have been allowed to participate in the recreational fishery and not have it have been an absolute free-for-all.

We need to ask that question as well, if we're going to be fair, and so do we go for a two-for-one situation, where we're going to knock out recreational permits. Yes, we're going to have a lot of discussion on this in the future, but when did the threshold get met from the other sector, is going to be the main question.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. FISH: I would also like to add that the commercial fishermen are fishing for the people that don't have boats and that don't know how to fish, and I think that number is huge, worldwide, or United-States-wide.

MR. HULL: David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. I agree with a lot of what Jack said, and I'm all for starting this with a few -- We would call them rare-event species, and they're not so rare anymore, because everybody can access them now, it seems, and the one thing that I will caution, and I'm probably not telling you anything that you don't know, is I think it's important for us to not just get data for data's sake, and make sure that some of the pitfalls that we're seeing elsewhere -- That we can validate this data and that it can actually be used, for lack of a better term, for good instead of evil, but really that it can be used and that we can get what we want out of this, which is having something productive for everybody, whether it's -- Well, I should say more for the fish than anybody, or anything, but make sure, like I said, that we get data, that we get information, that we can actually use and put forward.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, John, and then Tony.

MR. HADLEY: That's certainly appreciated, and I think, you know, some of the future discussions will be along the lines of how this can be -- If there is a reporting requirement say for a group of species, how this could be also implemented -- Once you identify the universe of anglers, how you could calibrate MRIP sampling to improve estimates of discards and catches, and so that's certainly duly noted, and I think that's going to be a large part of the discussion on the council level, and also on the AP level, in making sure that -- There are examples where, once the universe of anglers have been identified, MRIP can -- The MRIP program can take that and better calibrate their sampling and estimation of catches and whatnot, and so I think there will be a lot more of that coming in the next several months and year or so.

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Selby hit on something that I never really thought about, and that is one of the best ideas I've heard about how to get the education out there, and I would be in favor of a test, but I know that would be too hard to implement, but what you guys have -- I have always been in favor of per-angler recreational reporting, but, if you go per boat, and then have some kind of acknowledgement of this education, and I know a test is not realistic, but at least a video to watch, at least a box to check, at least to acknowledge that you saw somebody physically vent a snapper in the correct spot and so forth, but, yes, to go along with the permits is a fantastic idea.

MR. HULL: Jack, you were first, and then Cameron.

MR. COX: David, I just want to say thank you, because you're right. I mean, at the end of this, we need to realize that we're all here to try to enhance the fishery and collect data and do the best we can to build a fishery strong enough to support as many people that can fish as we -- I would love to see us get away from the two-for-one commercial permits as well as recreational fishermen be able to continue fishing the way they are, but, you know, if we don't start really collecting that good data and giving it to the science, all of us are just not going to be able to do what we want to do, and so thank you for that.

MR. HULL: Cameron and then Andrew.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I mean, moving forward -- At the end of the day, everybody is going to have to work together, and the pure recreational guys who do it for fun, and guys like me, who do it for charter, for the public, and the commercial guys, and it's just going to be something that we're going to have to negotiate and work through as we move forward. As far as the testing, I mean, we're already doing that for the federal permits for sharks, and so we have to pass the test for seven boats at a time, if you want to pass the shark permit, and so it can be done relatively easily, and you just have to adapt it, right?

MR. HULL: Thanks for bringing that up. Andrew.

MR. FISH: I like the testing thing, and I know everybody laughed about that, but having educated fishermen out there already makes them a lot easier to manage, and knowledge is just going to breed more knowledge, and I think that a permit issued through earning it, based upon what you've learned, is going to be a lot more beneficial than something that you can just purchase. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andrew. Good comments. I mean, it's baby steps with this process. It's been a long haul, and it looks like it's still going to be, but, if we can start with identifying the universe, and then we can develop it from there, but there's a lot that we don't know that we don't know, because they're working on it, and so we're going to hear about, probably at the -- At the June council meeting, is Spud going to deliver a report to the council?

MR. HADLEY: Spud delivered the report for the workgroup in March. In June, the council -- Well, basically, in March, the council said we do want to move forward with the technical advisory panel, and so the idea is, in June, go ahead and assign who will be on that advisory panel and then have them meet between the June and September meeting, and then further develop the amendment, and so the idea is, in September, the council will be sort of going over the amendment in detail, hopefully with some input from the technical advisory panel.

Then I imagine this will probably be coming back to the Snapper Grouper AP this fall, and that's when we'll have a little bit more information for you and some more in-depth discussion points to try to ask and gather a little bit more guidance on which way to move forward.

MR. HULL: Chris, go ahead.

MR. MILITELLO: Why did it go away? Why do we have to revisit it? What happened to it, and, like Jack said, he talked about it years ago, and now, all of a sudden, it's here again.

MR. HADLEY: The amendment went away in June of 2018, largely because the council really needed additional information, and so they kind of hit the pause button on developing the amendment, and then they had this private recreational reporting workgroup that met and got everyone together that could really talk about the technical aspects of it and some examples from the Mid-Atlantic region and from highly migratory species, and they said, okay, how does this work, and so that's been kind of operating in the background.

It's essentially a information-gathering effort and then coming up with recommendations for the council, and then, also, the council to develop the MyFishCount reporting app, and so have sort of a proof-of-concept in-hand, and so, rather than moving forward with -- If there is going to be a reporting aspect to the permit, you know, there is now a proof-of-concept, the MyFishCount reporting app, where it can be done, and it has been done, and so we needed some more time, in a nutshell, to gather more information and kind of get things a little bit -- The ground a little bit steadier before moving forward, and so now this is when the council is coming back to it. They have that information, and they have that additional steady ground, if you will, to move forward at this time.

MR. HULL: Thank you, John. Jack.

MR. COX: So the council, to do a really good job, has got to know how much effort is in the fishery, and, you know, when I was on the council, our snowy grouper, prior to 2013, weren't looking so good, and the assessment came out with snowies and said they were really good, and they looked very healthy, and we started, every year, adding 10,000 pounds of snowies to the ACL, and now we're in a situation that we've got to take a step back, and a lot of that kind of stuff comes up because we're just not getting the good data we need to really go into the assessment.

When you have a bad assessment, man, you're years and years behind rebuilding that fishery, and so the council has really got to be able to identify how much effort is in the fishery, and that's what we're talking about with this amendment, and it's got to be -- You know, we've got these open-access fisheries that just cannot stand to continue to stay open access. At some point, you have to have a permit -- You need a private recreational permit, and the cost is just administrative costs or whatever NOAA charges, like twenty-five dollars for the dolphin wahoo, but, to me, this is just -- I don't see how we can even get close to having really good assessments without knowing how much effort is in these fisheries.

MR. HULL: I don't see any other hands. Never mind. Vincent.

MR. BONURA: There's a lot of good info here that I've heard today, a lot that I like and don't like, and I just wanted to add that HMS has a recreational permit for the vessel, and our permit here could be like the HMS recreational permit, and I agree with Jack and everyone here that it's a good thing for us. I think, for the past eight AP meetings now, have we put a motion in for this, and it's been a good four or five years, and it's a good thing, and hopefully we can get it going here. How can you count the fish if you can't count the fishermen?

MR. HULL: Anybody else? We're getting ready to wrap this up, I think. Back to you, Mike, and then I wanted to say one other thing.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Nothing else for me, and I think we're at the point that we had planned to break for today. We did want to bring up Julia Byrd to talk about RELEASE.

MS. BYRD: Hi, guys. For the folks that I haven't met yet, I'm Julia Byrd, and I run the council's Citizen Science Program, and so I just wanted to take a second to tell you all about one of our projects, SAFMC RELEASE, and I know we've talked about it at past meetings, but there's some new folks here, and so I just wanted to share a little bit of information, and then I'll be sitting in the room for the rest of the week, and so, if anybody has any questions about this project, or kind of citizen science in general and what the council is doing with it, just kind of grab me during one of the breaks, and I would be happy to chat about it with you guys.

The SAFMC RELEASE project is really focused on getting better information on the fish that are being released, and you guys have talked a lot about a lot of different species that are being released, and so it's becoming increasingly important for us to learn more about the fish that are going back in the water, and so, for the RELEASE project, we're collecting better data, and we're trying to get more information on particularly the size of the fish that are being released, and then information that will help us better understand how many of those released fish survive, and so did you use a descending device, did you vent the fish before it was released, what depth were you fishing at, that kind of thing.

The project is collecting information on shallow-water grouper releases, and we just added red snapper into the app last week, and so we're trying to get more kind of commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishermen to help us kind of get your knowledge on the water. You guys are the ones who are seeing those released fish, and information on those fish aren't being collected back at the dock, and so I know some of you are already participating in the project, which is awesome.

If anybody is interested in kind of joining the project, or learning more about it, come see me during the break, and then I know we've also had a couple of people -- Tony has helped kind of hand out some materials about the project to tackle shops in his area, and so, if anyone is willing or interested to help spread the word about the project, we have stickers, and we have kind of rack cards that have a little bit more information, and I would love to chat with you guys about it.

We're really trying to kind of fill a data gap, and there's not much information about released fish that are available, and you all are the ones that have that on-the-water knowledge to try to fill it, and so I just wanted to share a little bit of information about RELEASE. We just added red snapper in, which is going to be kind of huge, and we can collect some really great information, and so I would love to chat with you all more about it during the week. Thanks.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Julia. We appreciate what you're doing. Tomorrow, when we have a little bit more time -- Tomorrow, when we start out, we're going to be on Regulatory Amendment 35, which is the snapper grouper release mortality and red snapper, and I just wanted to ask a question. How many of you on the AP have viewed the council's YouTube video produced by John Carmichael on the assessment of red snapper and where we're at with red snapper?

If you haven't, I would highly suggest that you look at that. He's going to email it to everybody, and it's -- You need to listen to the whole thing, and it will pretty much tell you where the agency is on red snapper and their interpretation of what the stock looks like and what the stock is going to look like in the future and what's going on in the discard situation that you're in, we're in, and so I highly advise that, and it will really be good education for you on where we're at, most recently where we're at, and their interpretation of what the stock is, and so I appreciate you, Mike, sending that out, and, with that, if staff doesn't have anything else at this time, you guys did a great job. We did great.

We're ahead of schedule, and I think 9:00, and so it's late for us, but we're going to start at 9:00, and you'll get a chance to get some breakfast and talk a bit, and, by the way, there is adult refreshments not far from here to help you loosen your tongues up a little bit and discuss other issues that are coming up at this meeting, and then you guys need to elect a new Chair and a Vice Chair, and nominate them and all that stuff, and so that's the kind of things that we've been waiting to have an in-person meeting about, and so you guys need to socialize a little bit, and I sure appreciate you guys, and we'll see you at 9:00 in the morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on April 18, 2022.)

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APRIL 19, 2022

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, North Charleston, South Carolina, on April 19, 2022, and was called to order by Mr. Jimmy Hull.

MR. HULL: Good morning, everyone. It's good to see you this morning. Before we get into the first item, from yesterday, the discussion on lionfish, James had something that he wanted to add to that discussion. Go ahead, James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jimmy. I reached out a commercial spiny lobster fisherman in the middle Keys area, Gary Nichols, yesterday, and he fishes outside the deep reef, 105 to 230 feet of water, on trawls, a longer-soak-type lobster trap situation, and I asked him what the catch rate from like 2015 to 2017 was, compared to what he was seeing now, and what he had to say was that now he's seeing at least a 75 percent reduction in harvest rate than compared to that timeframe, and so I thought that was a nice little nugget to add, when we're talking about the numbers of lionfish that we're seeing, and maybe, if their population is doing down, and so I think that's a pretty good indicator.

Along with that, there was a couple other commercial fishermen, and charter fishermen, that are good friends of mine, and they've had mutton snappers, red groupers, and nurse sharks vomit whole lionfish, and so we kind of think that they are starting to be on the food chain as a food

source for some of these other species, and so really all good news, when it comes to the lionfish really not taking over an ecosystem. Thank you, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: No, thank you for reaching out and providing that information. That's the kind of stuff that the AP is for, to dig that stuff up, and so thank you. That's such good news. Thank you. All right, and so we've got three big amendments to try to get through today, and we've got a full day, and we'll definitely take lunch, but we're going to dig right into Item Number 4, which is Regulatory Amendment 35, Snapper Grouper Release Mortality and Red Snapper, and it's very early in this process, but it's something that's on the move, and so, with that, I will hand it over to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Jimmy. We're going to get started with Regulatory Amendment 35, and this is something that was recently started up by the council officially, but it's something that there's been a lot of work going into the beginning of it, and so I'll just give a little bit of background first, before we dig into some of the discussion questions for you all.

Red snapper, as you all know, have been in a rebuilding plan since 2011, and they recently had a stock assessment for South Atlantic red snapper, SEDAR 73, that determined that the stock was still overfished and still undergoing overfishing, and so that assessment went through, and it went to the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and they recommended new ABCs for red snapper, based on the results of that assessment, and the implementation of these recommended ABCs -- The initial years would be an approximately one-third reduction from the current ABC, which would really limit a fishery that is already very limited.

One of the things that has been noted in the assessment, and has been commented around the table here, is a lot has been the releases of red snapper, and there's only a very short amount of time when people can keep red snapper, and there are a lot that are being caught, and so there are a lot of fish that are thrown back.

This was looked at within the assessment, the increased usage of best practices, descending devices, venting, increased outreach and education on that, and that was taken into account with the assessment, and so the discard mortality rate, and so the probability, the percentage, of fish that would die after being caught and released, and that is lower in more recent timeframes, but there is still a huge number of fish that are estimated as dead releases, based on just the large number of fish that are released, and so you think about 20 percent of a hundred, versus 10 percent of a thousand, and there's going to be a difference in those numbers, and that's kind of how that is framed and what that information looks like.

With that being a primary issue, and, really, there would still be overfishing occurring in the fishery even with an ACL change, and that's estimated to be the case, and so the primary issue for that is addressing those released fish and how to reduce the number of fish that are going into that dead release category, and so the council initiated Reg Amendment 35, and there are two initial objectives here.

We haven't fully ironed out official objective language, but the direction that staff has been given at this point is that this would do two things. Number one is it would put in some form of measure that would reduce the number of fish that dying from release, and we have already -- There is already management in place, through the descending device requirement, that would address the

percentage, the probability, that a fish, after being released, would die, and so this is going to be something that would reduce the number of releases, which would also mean there would need to be a reduction in the encounters of these fish, something of that nature, and so that is one objective.

Then the other objective of this is that the council is required, because they do have a new ABC recommendation, and they are required to put in a new ABC, based on the most recent scientific information for red snapper, and so there would need to be a change to the catch levels. What the council is hoping to do is, in putting in this new management measure that's going to reduce the dead releases, is that there would be more fish that could potentially be considered to go into the catchable fish, if you will, and there would be more fish that would be taken out of that, and we're assuming they would die after release, and they would move into the catchable pot, and that would potentially increase the ABC.

There needs to be data and information to support that, to bring before the SSC, because the SSC would need to change their recommendation in order for that to happen. Right now, the council is capped at what the SSC's recommendation is, and so there would need to be a change of the assumptions. When the catch is projected forward, they assume that management is more or less similar to what it was at the end of the assessment, and there would need to be some convincing evidence for the SSC that management is going to have some type of a significant effect on those release numbers that would potentially make them reconsider their recommendation.

That's the place where we are right now, and the council, in their initial discussions about this, they looked at some of the measures that you all had recommended in the past, and then we've had some discussions about some gear regulations and how you all felt about those, and one of the big difficulties with putting in a gear regulation for this purpose is trying to get that numeric estimate of how many fish you would be removing from release by changing say the size of a hook or changing leader length or something of that sort, and that's very difficult to actually get a numeric estimate with that.

The council, at the last meeting in March, was talking a bit more, and they requested a lot of information from staff, and we're doing a lot of data gathering, as fast as we can, to keep this process moving, but the information they requested is along the lines of a timed or spatial closure, spatial either by area or based on depth, and so that's what has been discussed here, and that would need to be something that is not simply red snapper, and that would need to be snapper grouper, multiple species, within the management plan, and so that's what is being talked about here, and there are some discussion questions that we're putting out for you all, to kind of generate your discussion and what you all would like to see from this, moving forward, and I think that's about it for the introduction, and we can incorporate your feedback from here. I guess, before we go into these questions, are there any questions that you all have about what has happened in the process so far?

MR. HULL: Jack and then Cameron.

MR. COX: It seems to me that you guys are putting the cart before the horse a little bit on this one, because, when you're regulating a group of people, and you're looking at gears, you've got to know who you're regulating, and we do that through permits, and we know who the participants are, but, if you've got a group of participants that you're trying to regulate, and you don't know who they are, and you know what I'm talking about, then how does this work? If I'm an

enforcement officer, and I stop a vessel, and I see that he has a permit for fishing for these species, and they're the species on the boat, then I look for these gears that he is required to have, and so you see what I'm saying? It's like it just doesn't make sense.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think the -- It seems, at this point, that the discussions along the lines of gears -- That may not be the best route for this amendment, and so that's what I'm saying, and it's leaning more in the direction of the timed or an area closure, rather than gears, or a time or area like season-type of thing, and so, yes, the gear discussion -- That doesn't seem to be the primary direction right now for this amendment, and the other part, talking about the group of people -- These are kind of side-by-side efforts, and, you know, there is definitely a want, right now, and movement on the permit amendment, as you all saw yesterday, but we also -- The council has an obligation to respond to the red snapper assessment, and so both of these things need to be done, and there is work being done at the same time on both.

MR. HULL: Go ahead.

MR. COX: How much credit did the assessment get for using the tools? In other words, how much fish did we get back, for poundage?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't know as -- In terms of a number of fish, I don't -- I haven't seen it quantified in that way, and I can give a quick look to the assessment and see what the change in the rate was, because that's really where it comes in, and it changes -- If it's estimated that a fish had a certain percentage of dying after being caught and released, and now it's a lower percentage in more recent times, and there's a difference there, and they have it blocked off in the assessment in these time blocks, as the best practices, as the technology, as the education and outreach, has advanced into more recent times, and so I think there are four time blocks, and the most recent one is the lowest of the four, but I can put some actual numbers to that for you, maybe at a break, when I can look that up.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Jack. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So it sounds like the council is leaning much more towards closures of the entire ocean to save the American reds, and is that what I am sort of hearing, is the way it's leaning, in which case it would be absolutely devastating. You know, we've got millions of dollars invested in boats and land and docks, and I'm really not going to be too happy if any of that gets wiped out to save a fish that we can't keep anyway.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Certainly not a closure of the entire ocean, and I think this process is trying to identify what is an area, what is a specific area, or a specific depth range, or a specific time of year, and the way -- At least the way that I thought of it, when looking at these discussion questions, and when we were coming up with these things, is, is there a timeframe when there is a significant estimate of discards, releases, that are being counted in this fishery where, from the fishermen's perspective, that if you all -- Where you all would say, if I didn't have that, and it meant more red snapper, then I would give that up to get more red snapper.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I would pretty much say the hell with red snapper and keep it open, because anything else is going to kill us.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. PILAND: What they're effectively asking us to do is to travel further for the reward of a fish that we can't keep, a fish that is decimating, possibly decimating, your sea bass and your grouper, and, I mean, we're ignoring so much of our ocean, and we can't afford to run past it. He can't afford to run past it, and you can't afford to run past it, and it's not economically feasible to close the ocean to save a fish that we need to be catching to save other species. We think we need to catch more snappers, so we have more sea bass, and we have more groupers, if I'm not mistaken. Thank you.

MR. HULL: I agree with that, Andy. I see Chris first, and then back to James.

MR. KIMREY: I really think -- I mean, I'm just coming behind Jack and these other guys on this closure, for closing bottom, and it seems to me, and I think it's evident to everybody, that the release mortality is holding this fish hostage for everybody, and we get that, right, and so take into account the number of recreational anglers, like Jack said, that have no permitting and nothing, and many of them have no education on releasing snappers properly.

I think, before you start closing bottom, you need to figure out a way to have accountability on the recreational side, and that's -- The number of anglers, you've got people like myself, that is a charter boat and headboat guy, and I do everything in my power to stay away from red snapper, and, when I do catch them, to release them properly. You could just randomly pick people off of my list of clients and call them and say, hey, you grouper fished with Mount Maker Charters out of Atlantic Beach, and did he release his snappers properly, and the answer is going to be yes.

In the recreational sector, that's not the case, and I see it. I just recently moved my boats to a different location, but, for the past twelve years, I ran out of two of the bigger tackle shops in our area, and I see a ton of recreational anglers come through there, and I talk to them, and most of them don't have a clue how to properly release a snapper.

They might have a venting tool, but they don't know how to use it, and the number of recreational anglers is exponentially higher than the very small number of snapper grouper permit holders, and a little bit larger number of charter boat guys, and that, in itself, is like you're going to cater this amendment to ultimately protect the snapper for the recreational guy, when they're the true element of the problem, because the release mortality on their side has got to be exponentially higher than the people like myself, that are doing their part, that are required to have the right gear, that have taken time to use it and that have gotten involved in stuff like this.

I just -- There needs to be accountability on the recreational side, absolutely, before you start talking about closing bottom, and, if you can't figure out a way to do that, this isn't going to matter, in my opinion. I mean, does anybody want to agree with that? I mean, come on now. I mean, it just seems so basic.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chris. I think James is next and then David.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jimmy. In the middle Keys, I don't really have a lot of interaction with red snapper while I harvest yellowtail snapper, and it's zero, but, from what I'm hearing, and what I've heard over the last three years or more, is that the overall geography where

red snapper are being caught is expanding, and let's say that we did, as a panel, decide that there was some areas that we were willing to give up, and this is a hypothetical situation, but that there were some areas that we were willing to give up and really say, okay, we won't fish this area, because the red snapper are -- They're too prolific there, and we'll go to another area.

Well, who is to say that that overall expanding geography of where the red snapper are congregating doesn't spread into that area, and then, all of a sudden, there is nowhere where you can effectively go to avoid this species, and it seems, to me, like that's a real problem. Kind of following-up with what Chris was saying, Chris, you do represent the recreational sector on a charter/headboat, a charter capacity, and is that correct?

MR. KIMREY: I would assume so, yes. I mean, you know, I try to stay middle-of-the-road, but, ultimately, yes, I am representing the rec on the charter boat and headboat side.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So, when we hear that, I just don't want to think that we're not working together between the sectors here. You know, we all want to go fishing, and we all want to harvest fish, and we don't want to be, quote, unquote, held hostage by dead discards, and so we need to find a real solution here to get past what's being technically harvested for the red snapper species and what we might possibly be doing for the shark population, inadvertently, and other species that might be predated upon these discards. I know that it's a slippery slope, and I know that it's a lot to chew on, when we start talking about sharks, but we are basically chumming for sharks when we're discarding red snapper, and so let's -- I mean, let's -- Really, we've got to crunch the numbers here and see what we need to do. Thank you.

MR. HULL: David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Chris and Jack and James, I agree with everything that you guys said. However, comma, there is not much that anybody can do about that just yet, because we don't have that information, and I understand that we're trying to work through that, with reporting and all this other stuff, but it's important to remember that, according to the law, according to Magnuson, if the data says that there's an issue, we have to do something, and so we have to kind of bang our heads against the wall and figure it out, and, like I said, I completely agree with you guys. I completely agree with everything that you said. However, we have to look at the options that we have on the table, because that's what the law says, right?

The other thing that I will tell you, and, James, this kind of goes to what you were just asking of Chris, of him representing the recreational community, and he does to a point. However, I can tell you -- Like I was just on a radio show, not too long ago, down in south Florida, a fishing radio show that does, you know, weekly fishing reports and the whole nine yards and stuff, and the host of the show had no idea that there was a regulation in place.

The host of the show had no idea that there was a regulation in place, and that's not because of any fault of the council, and it's not because of the fault of anything that they've done, and they're doing everything they can with outreach and whatnot, and it's just the nature of the recreational community. You know, like in Florida alone, there is four-million license recreational anglers, I believe, plus or minus a couple, and, now, obviously that encompasses both coasts, and we know that, right, and that's just saltwater as well, by the way, and that's not people that are just going bass fishing in the Okeechobee.

It's very difficult to reach them all, especially from a management council, and this is -- These are people who see us, in some aspects, as kind of the bad guys, because we're telling them what they can and can't do, and there is only so much that a lot of recreational anglers are going to listen to. I often hold my brother-in-law as kind of the case point of this, and he's somebody who goes out maybe once a month, if the weather is right, as the vast majority of recreational anglers do, and they just don't have their ears constantly glued to the ground of what's going on.

I realize that I'm stating a huge problem without an answer, and I get that, and it's incumbent upon all of us to work through that and figure it out, and everybody is kind of doing what they can, and I'm just saying that it's important to remember all these aspects, as we talk about this, and it's very different, and, Cameron, to what you were saying, we're not doing all this just to protect one fish.

The unfortunate truth is this is what we have to do, and this is what we're tasked with doing, because that's what Magnuson says, and it's just important to remember all this stuff as we talk through this, and trust me, and I get everybody's frustrations. I get it. I'm out there as well, and, like James, I don't encounter them that much, and, I mean, I have to travel north or south to encounter them, and so I don't have the issues that a lot of these guys do, but I get it, and we've just got to remember all these things.

MR. HULL: Okay. I've got Richard, and then I've got Chris, and then I've got Jack. Go ahead, Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: Mike, just a question. Are there any specific areas that we're speaking of, and, if so, are there some in the Keys, and where would they be?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So that's what we're trying to, I guess, get options for right now. Right now, we're trying to get data that would say, well, if you did this, then this is potentially what the benefit could be, and that's what staff is working on right now, and we got this directive in March, and so we're trying to get as much information back to the council by June as we can, but that's what we're working towards, and so nothing has been defined. We don't have a set of options set up, and, we're trying to figure out, okay, if we went down this line, and we developed some options of area, or timing, or a combination of the two, what could those be.

MR. HULL: Chris.

MR. KIMREY: So my question, to whomever, the council, and, David, obviously, we get your point, you know, and I understand what you're saying, but your comments, in itself, sort of proved my question about accountability. You said that not everybody fishes every day, and not everybody keeps up with regulations, and they're not in the know. Well, that, in itself, proves their lack of accountability, and, with that said, if you're going to close bottom, somebody like me, I'm going to know what bottom is closed, and I don't want to get in trouble and jeopardize my livelihood, and so I'm going to stay out of it.

The guy that fishes once a month, like you said, if he hasn't taken time to enrich his knowledge about fishing enough to know how to properly release a red snapper, what's the chances that he is even going to know that there's closed bottom? That's accountability right there, that in itself, and

so it would seem more productive, to me, to spend your efforts educating people than closing bottom, because you're going to have to use some sort of outreach to spread the word either way.

You can use enforcement, and we all know that enforcement -- The enforcement we have does a great job with the resources that they're given, but we also know that enforcement is very thin, in general, for the number of anglers that there are, and so, unless you're going to camp somebody out, a NOAA officer, on this closed bottom, and write everybody that stumbles through it with a circle hook and a piece of squid a ticket, how are you going to enforce it? You would be better off to take those resources, that effort, all that stuff, and train the general public, the sector that is lacking the knowledge, that is creating the release mortality problem, largely, and educate them and use the efforts for that, and that was my point, accountability.

MR. HULL: Before we go to the next AP member, staff wants to chime in.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Jimmy, and, Chris, along those lines, I just want to remind the AP in general that, yes, outreach and education -- That's a priority for the council, and that's something that the council will continue to work towards. Within the context of this amendment and the response to red snapper and addressing the issue of a potential one-third reduction to the ABC for red snapper, an education and outreach effort wouldn't be able to get a quantifiable change to that ABC. That would be -- By trying to estimate what the change would be, from an education and outreach effort, and putting it in terms of numbers of fish, that's something that wouldn't be able to happen, as far as this short-term action is concerned.

If you're talking about long-term changes to the fishery, then, yes, absolutely that's part of it, and that's part of the long-term plans that are in motion right now, that are being put into place, but, in terms of a short-term response for the next fishing year, or two fishing years from now, whenever this would actually be finished up and go into place, that's not something that would be able to be put in at that time.

MR. KIMREY: When is the council and the fish managers making a decision on Amendment 35? When is that going to go down, because I'm going to make sure I don't miss it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: This timeline is being developed right now, and so we are at the beginning of it. I guess the -- I don't even know that we have a firmed-up timeline for this, for when the end of it will happen, but, generally, for these types of amendments, it takes one to two years, and so this is something that will definitely come in front of you all again in the fall, and we hope that it will be more developed at that point, with more direction from the council and further work from staff and the IPT and such, but I don't have a firm timeline, just because that hasn't been created yet.

MR. HULL: Okay. Look, I've got a lot of hands in the queue, and I think -- David, did you want to respond back to that? Then we're going over to Jack, and then we're going over to Ritchie, and then we're coming back to Andrew, and so help me with that, and then over to Tony.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Chris, just for the record, I completely agree with you, and I wasn't trying to counter anything that you were saying, but I was just trying to make sure that everybody is aware of what it is that we're battling with this. As you were using the example of at the tackle shop and how many anglers you encounter that maybe they have a descending device, and, if they

do, what are the chances that they even know how to properly use it, and, trust me, I get all that, and I completely agree with you.

I am not for -- Everybody, I think, probably silently laughed, and some didn't so silently laugh, when we were talking about, you know, what are the prime closed areas, because we're talking from Daytona to Hatteras and everything in between, I'm assuming, for most of you guys, and, again, that doesn't affect my area a ton, but, yes, I completely agree with you, and that's where, you know, if we had our druthers, we probably should focus our efforts there.

MR. HULL: Okay. I believe it was Jack next.

MR. COX: Thank you, Jimmy. Mike, would you scroll back up to page 1, the very bottom of page 1? I am reading, in September of last year, that the SSC recommended a new ABC for red snapper, and has the council -- When are they going to get an opportunity to choose whether they're going to pick that new ABC?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess this is the -- I mean, this is the response to that. This is where they would be choosing what the ABC would be, moving forward, and the council, right now, is trying to see if there is an option where they wouldn't have to put in that one-third reduction to the ABC, and the route that they would have to go, in doing that, would be change the management that is associated with those projections, moving forward, to change what those dead releases would be, moving forward.

MR. COX: You might have to help me a little bit, because you're an expert on this, Jimmy, and so what I'm trying to understand is, if the council chooses that ABC, then we don't have to look at a bottom closure, and is that correct?

MR. HULL: No, from what I understand, and Jessica can chime-in, but you're looking at basically a one-third reduction in the ABC coming from the SSC at this time, because of the dead discarding that's going on, and so they are now scrambling to try to come up with some way, as quickly as they can, to save the season coming up and to figure a way to have a season, with an ABC that's large enough to have a season to account for all the dead discarding the private rec sector.

Right now, they're trying to come up with some way to have a red snapper season for the private recreational sector, and it looks like they want to include everybody else in that remedy, but that's kind of where it is. There is not enough ABC, potentially coming, to have a season, unless something happens, and is that correct? I think you would have to turn to --

MR. COX: But do you see why I'm hot under the collar, because here I am a commercial guy, that's been doing what I'm supposed to be doing for all these years, and another sector is going to pull me into some crap like this, and where I'm going to have a bottom closure because they're not being accountable, and is that what I'm hearing?

MR. HULL: Jack, I'm right -- I have kept quiet, and now you're bringing it up. Now we're talking about including other sectors, including the charter/for-hire, into a problem that isn't ours, and we may not even have -- You know, I don't know the answers, but I just know that I'm not going there yet, because this could go on for a long, long time, but there's a problem about having a season, because of the high amount of private recreational dead discards, and we know that, and so now

they're looking at, and here are the exact words from Mike, some form of measure to reduce releases by reducing encounters.

I mean, that's where they're at, some form of measure. They're looking for -- The gear, the different gear requirements that we have recommended, are not quantifiable. The SSC can't quantify a number that matters enough from the gear to make a big enough change that they can yield enough from the dead discards from that to have enough -- They can't get it, and so now it's like, well, we can certainly quantify, maybe, if we close down seasonally, time-wise, bottom fishing, for all bottom fishing, and now the question, for you and me, is it including me?

What are you talking about? I don't have dead discards of red snapper that amount to anything, but, anyway, that's another subject, and let's stick with what the council is asking for, and they have just included everybody by saying some measure somewhere, and we're looking for relief, so that we can have a season, and I think that's where they're at.

MR. COX: This is so simple to fix, and this is not that big of a problem. The way you fix this is you require those guys to have a daggone permit. That's how you do it. This is easy. They told us, in the 1980s, that you will have a permit to go fishing, and that's what we did, and they realized there were too many fishermen, and, you know what, they took some of us out of it, a bunch of us out of it, and that's what they did.

We didn't sit around and decide, well, this isn't right, and we can't do this or that, and, listen, you require them to have a permit, and then they have to watch the release videos that are all over the place that we have now, the red snapper release videos, and, when you do that, and when you can pass the test, then you get the permit, and that's how you educate people, but you can't take the commercial guys and say we're going to cut some bottom out because this other sector has a problem, and it's not right.

MR. HULL: Mike wants to respond.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: In relation to some of Jack's comments, as well as some of the other comments around here, and so I just wanted to provide some reminders of things, and so one of the findings of the assessment was that overfishing is still occurring, in the context of red snapper. Now, we know it's a bit more nuanced than that, and it's not necessarily overfishing from harvest, and it's overfishing from dead releases, but overfishing is still occurring, and so, by requirements of Magnuson, there is a response that the council has to have, and the council has to end overfishing in response to this assessment.

That is one of the reasons why this regulatory amendment exists, certainly acknowledging all of the other ways that the fishery can be improved, through education and outreach, through the permitting, through all the things that you all are talking about, but there also is a legal obligation that the council has to respond to the overfishing status and to end overfishing, and, most of the time, when that happens, when overfishing is occurring, the council responds by changing the ACL.

In the case of red snapper, the council recognizes that, number one, changing the ACL would be a huge change to the fishery, and reducing the fishery drastically. Number two, changing the ACL very likely is not going to change the occurrence of overfishing. Even if the council reduces the

ACL to the recommended ABC from the SSC, there is a very good chance that overfishing is still going to be occurring, and it's going to be occurring due to the mortality coming from the releasing, and so that's the place that the council is in, and the council does have that legal obligation to respond to the overfishing status, and that's why there is the response of that quantifiable aspect that we're talking about here in changing the ABC.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Jack.

MR. COX: The council also has a responsibility to keep the fishery fair and equitable, and, by doing that, that everybody is treated the same, and we're not being treated the same.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: In the context of commercial or not commercial, what area, what sector, all of that, that is being -- That is what is being discussed right now, and so, if there is a statement that the AP wants to make, in the context of what sector should be included or excluded, or what area should be -- You know, don't touch this or whatever, and that's some of the information that the council -- That's some of the feedback that the council is looking to the AP for, and that's some of the commentary that would help guide the council as they form these options of what is being considered, because, right now, everything is on the table, and the council is trying to cut certain things out. If there are options that are non-starters, that they shouldn't go down that track, they're looking to the AP to give feedback to that effect.

MR. HULL: Well, before we keep going along here, Jack, you're opening up all the things that I haven't begun to even open the can of worms on, because this is so disturbing to me, for me personally, and so, I mean, everyone here that has a stake in this, the private recreational guys, the charter/for-hire guys, the commercial guys, you know, this is a wide-open amendment, taking in anything they can possibly right now think of. They're waiting on analysis, they're waiting on data, they're waiting on things that would get results for them, to try to save the red snapper private recreational season and our season commercially and everything else, and so, I mean, is there something -- Would you like to make a motion at this time to do something or say something else? Go ahead, and then we can move on.

MR. COX: Well, I would just say, if I was a charter boat captain, I would be wanting to remove myself from that private recreational angler category as far as I could, because they're so much more accountable than that sector. I would say, hey, separate me out of that deal, because they're creating a huge problem here for the fishery.

MR. KIMREY: By permit, we're already separated, Jack. We're already separated, just like the commercial guys. We're required to have the same release gear that you guys have, and all this stuff, and we're already separated, and most of us are doing a dang good job trying to do the right thing, when it comes to red snapper, and this amendment right here, depending on which way it goes, could potentially be a black hole for just about every fisherman in this room at some point.

MR. HULL: I want everybody to get a chance to chime-in. We haven't -- I mean, we're not even going through these questions, and we're just talking about what we see coming, and we need to be heard, and the council needs to hear us, and so I want to keep moving around the room, because we can get deep into this, and we're probably doing to. I am trying to remember which way to go. Let me go to Richard, and then come back to Cameron and back to Andrew, and then back to Tony.

MR. GOMEZ: This is very much shades of yesterday. As a fisherman that's been fishing around the same fishermen for all of his career, and it falls in the boundaries of the National Marine Sanctuary, and I can tell you that losing ground is something we've been dealing with for a long time, and the problem with losing ground is it's never been given back, and one of the things that has happened to the lower Keys fishermen, and I'm sure possibly the middle Keys and all throughout the National Marine Sanctuary, is it creates a hostility and a lack of cooperation from fishermen that have had to deal with the unfair practice of losing ground and watching other groups able to be in that same ground that we've lost. The lower Keys fishermen have always been against losing ground, and we've always never gotten a piece of it back, and so that's how we feel about it.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Everybody has got a massive dog in this fight, and, just so I understand correctly, the reason for this knee-jerk reaction is because they are trying to save the season, and is that correct?

DR SCHMIDTKE: That's part of it, and part of it is that there would be -- The ABC that is currently recommended by the SSC is -- I am going to say it's the same, if not a little bit less, than what the recreational ACL is, and so it's a big cut to what is in place right now, and what is in place right now gets about a three-day season, most years, and so, yes, part of it would be to have some form of a season in place, but that's also -- You know, take into account that that's an ABC that's for the entire fishery, and so, if they set total ACL equals ABC, then you're looking at a total ACL, commercial plus recreational, that's about the size of the recreational ACL right now.

If the currently-recommended ABC goes into place, there are effects for both sides, and then there are likely to be allocation discussions and things of that nature, and the council is trying to address the problem by removing the problem of a lower ABC, or at lessening it, by considering some other response that would allow the ABC to be a bit higher, and then there wouldn't necessarily need to be those discussions of, you know, everybody is lower and how are we allocating and things of that nature, and so, yes, but a little bit more than that.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I think it would come down to the commercial sector, headboat, and private sectors would need to see what we were willing to sacrifice, and it seems readily apparent that nobody, I mean nobody, wants to have bottom areas shut down, period, and so, you know, what are we willing to sacrifice to make sure that doesn't happen, and then, getting deeper into the weeds than that, does a new sector need to be created for headboat and charter, where there is an allocation just specifically for headboat and charter as well, and so that's another thing to look at, going down the road. I can only imagine the gerrymandering that would go on with any types of maps on closed areas and how that would even work.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. FISH: I'm in the Canaveral area, and, to the questions, I actually fish in a fleet, for commercial king mackerel, of approximately a hundred boats from Daytona Beach, Canaveral, and Sebastian, and it's probably where we would have the majority of the fleet, the majority of the time, and there is a fleet in Fort Pierce as well.

I think most of the red snapper are Sebastian and north, and I don't think they get much interaction, but that -- If that type of closure would affect a fleet of a hundred boats, that would be a tremendous impact to them, and most of that is from November, Thanksgiving, to approximately this time of year, is when those fish start disappearing and going back to where they come from.

MR. HULL: Tony and then back to James and then Jack.

MR. CONSTANT: What I am hearing is -- For instance, the three-day season, and let's eliminate it, and would that change the ABC, or would it affect it?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: You're asking if like there was like a zero recreational ACL?

MR. CONSTANT: Not the ACL, but the bycatch, and we're talking about a three-day snapper season, and how is that going to affect the bycatch, if we do away with it? I mean, I don't think it's going to hurt anybody's feelings.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and so you're saying there would be no recreational season for red snapper.

MR. CONSTANT: Right, and do we change anything by doing that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It wouldn't change the ABC, but, I mean, there would be -- There would have to be an ACL that is not allocated to the recreational sector, and so all of the ACL would then potentially be allocated to the commercial sector.

MR. CONSTANT: So now how do we get that number? I've been working with Julia on the SciFish, and we've been working with the SciFish, and it almost seems like it's a drop-back-and-punt situation now, and so let's get that -- If that data comes across, and let's say that 80 percent of the recreational anglers use SciFish, which is not going to happen, but, if they all took a picture of that fish, and took the length, and gave them the data, is that going to change the data? It's like a hail Mary, and it's not even getting off the ground, and we're not even going to have a down.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So that information -- It's not going to change it in the terms of short-term response to an overfishing status. That information would go into probably the next stock assessment, is where it could be considered in trying to characterize that, okay, we have this number of fish that are thrown back and counted as loss after they are released, and what are the characteristics of these fish, and what size range are they? Are they a specific size range, and are they contributing to the spawning population, things like that, and that's where that information would come into play, but that wouldn't be included in a response to the current overfishing status. It would be in a future assessment.

MR. CONSTANT: So the best-case scenario out of SciFish will not change our bycatch data?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not in the short-term, no.

MR. CONSTANT: I agree with what Chris was saying. When I was a charter captain, I pushed for getting that sector separate from the recreational, and I still don't see the problem with that,

and I agree with recreational fishing needs a permit, and some education, and so now let's say that, tomorrow, we all have a permit for recreational fishing, and then we educate them within a year, and we still haven't got to this yet.

Then the best-case scenario, with SciFish, is not going to change the bycatch, and so, if we just did everything we just talked about, we didn't change this at all. We're still closing the bottom, and so everything we just discussed, if it's happens, it's not going to change anything, and so what will change? What can we do that will change that number, because that's the only number that we're dealing with.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: With what's been -- I mean, with what's been discussed, what's been looked at to this point, what would change the number -- Because, right now, there's already been a change in the number of fish that are surviving after they're caught and released. The best practices, descending devices, things like that, that has lowered that rate, but the thing that's going to potentially affect future overfishing, as far as it's been put forward right now, has been to reduce the encounters, reduce the number of fish that are being caught, and how to make that happen, and how to show that this is what is likely to happen going forward, the things that the council has discussed, they've looked at, you know, trying to change the times that they bite the hook.

The information that we've gotten, a lot of it from you all, has been, you know, red snapper are aggressive. If the hook and the bait is in the area, then they're going to bite it, and, I mean, that's about it, and so it doesn't seem like there would be a huge impact from changing the gear, really, and it's difficult to quantify what that would be, in terms of the number of fish saved, and so that has kind of led the council in the path that they've gone, to looking at, okay, well, if you change the amount of time, or change the amount of area, being fished, then that's a place where you could potentially see a reduction in the number of red snapper that are being caught and having to be thrown back.

Trying to identify, okay, how do you get your best bang for your buck, how do you reduce the encounters with red snapper, while also trying to preserve other parts of the fishery that are really important, that's where the council is trying to get the information to find that balance.

MR. CONSTANT: After being a charter/for-hire for twenty years, and owning a tackle shop and dealing with the uneducated, I really feel like, if the recreational side had a permit required, and a little bit of education to get that permit, you would probably reduce the number of recreational guys offshore by as much as 30 or 40 percent.

Let's say that happens, and, if we reduce that recreational boater by 30 to 40 percent, and then they still use SciFish, I still don't see us coming up with a number from that data, because what you're saying is, if this thing works, and you take a picture and you catch that data, it's not telling us that that fish went down there and swam off, and I don't know anything, short of a diver, that's going to tell us that, and so, if we cannot achieve that goal, what are we trying to achieve?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: With SciFish you mean?

MR. CONSTANT: Well, with SciFish and a permit.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: With the SciFish, it tells you about that fish, and it tells you size of that fish, estimated age, and stuff like that, and, if we're able to -- One of the things that SciFish is able to potentially do, and this is not something it's currently doing, but it is a potential capability, is, if there is a difference in the survival rate by size, say, and we have size information, and we have something that can show there is a difference in rate by size, and say larger fish are better off to survive, and you're releasing, you know, a bunch of larger fish, and you're not releasing a whole bunch of smaller fish, SciFish informs that these are the fish that are being released, and we can get a bit more definition to that data, as opposed to, right now, there is more or less a rate that is being applied, mostly across-the-board.

That helps improve the estimate, but, no, it does not address the current overfishing status, and that is correct. That statement that you made is correct that SciFish, or the outreach, that does not address the current overfishing status, and that is something that the council is legally obligated to address.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that, Tony. I am trying to keep track of hands that came up, and the only one I see -- Jack, and then we'll come back to Robert, and he's been waiting.

MR. COX: This may not be the most popular, but I will tell you that, in the 1990s, when I was fishing hard, there was an area around the Knuckle Buoy off of Morehead City, that's in about forty to fifty feet of water, and it's about a three-by-three-square-mile area, and, when I was fishing, and I've got these videos on my phone from the 1990s, and we were pulling eighteen to twenty-five-pound groupers, 500 or 600 pounds a day, this time of year out of there.

I was diving, and there were thousands and thousands of groupers under the ledges, and it was very shallow, and, over time, that area got picked off, and got beat up, and we went through that fishery, when we found it, for about ten years, and we made a bunch of money off of that shallow bottom, but then I started realizing what made that area so special, and it was because it was an area where these fish were going in from the deep water to spawn.

Then, when I was on the council, we did an amendment, Amendment 36, and we were doing that amendment to protect warsaw groupers, and we were protecting the strawberry -- I can't remember the other one, the rock hind, or -- But, before we went into a whole area closure, would it be justifiable if people could identify, professional fishermen, like we are at the table here, of areas that we think where red snapper are going and rebuilding, and would it be a small MPA area, like a one-by-one-square-mile area, that we could protect, to enhance the fishery for all of us, but yet not go into a total closure?

I am just throwing it out there, because I can tell you that, if we were to protect that area that I just described to you off of the Knuckle, I think it would be a total enhancement of our gag grouper fishery that has been destroyed over time, and it's just food for thought, because I'm looking for any opportunity I can to not go into a whole area closure.

MR. HULL: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Something of that nature is something that could be on the table, and that's been talked about. The council is not set in a direction of entire ocean, of entire depth range for the entire region, or for the year or anything like that. Right now, the council is trying to define,

if there were an area like that, like are there are areas where there are a whole lot of red snapper, and you pull up there, and you're catch red snapper and throwing them back, throwing them back, throwing them back, and you're not catching anything else, and you're going to avoid those areas anyway.

Are there areas like that, where the council could say we're going to close that off, because, that way, people aren't just pulling up and throwing back a whole bunch of red snapper and upping the discard numbers, and it wouldn't really affect folks, in terms of other fisheries, if that area were closed, because they're trying to avoid red snapper, and they're avoiding that area anyway, but there is an impact that they can take, that can be numerically calculated, from that area being taken out of the fishery that can say, you know, there aren't going to be red snapper discards coming from this set area anymore, and that's a question that's out there right now.

I mean, it's kind of -- It's kind of in line with the questions that are being thrown here, or not necessarily by area, but also time of year. Is there a time of year when you're not fishing in a certain depth range of water where red snapper might be found, or something like that, and is it okay to close that time of year in that area, something like that? It doesn't need to be all year, and it doesn't need to be everywhere in the ocean, but are there places where there's a whole bunch of red snapper, and people are throwing them back, and that's having huge numbers, where, if you took that out, the fishery wouldn't miss it a whole lot, because you're avoiding that area anyway, and that's kind of in line with the questions that the council is asking here.

MR. HULL: Okay. I've got Robert, and then I've got Paul.

MR. LORENZ: I just want to follow-up with something, and thank you to what Jack said, and I'm going to be more in line with where he just brought our thinking and the fact that I, you know, personally am a little distressed that Amendment 35 has gone so quickly to the main focus being a complete bottom closure, when there may be other ways, but what stands in our way are these numeric estimates for what the results will be when we implement other management measures.

Jack just presented potential, and I guess I would call them hotspots, that we could turn into MPAs, and I'm a little -- I would like to see us spend a little more time, or I would certainly like the staff, the council, the scientific folks, to consider other things besides bottom closures, which could all add up to a reduction in mortality rate, and I would kind of be more of a fan -- I think we need to look a little closer at things like gear modifications, and they might work.

I know you say the numeric estimate is difficult, and so I don't know what the legal ramifications are, but isn't there something -- We all do it in other aspects of life, and I know you do it as an investor, where you look at something that worked here, and you think and apply it over here, and so we know that gear modifications have worked on some other species, and, if you look at like the red drum in North Carolina, they were able to reduce dead discards on trophy drum almost down to nothing by the drum rig, a little six-inch leader, and so things like that are one.

I thought what if we went into a season that's open, let's say for recreational fishing, and you're only allowed metal jigs? Hey, they're quite effective, and quite a lot of us love them and use them, and they came from the Japanese commercial fishing industry, and so there are some other methods to use, and I think gear modifications -- There could be some things, if we're innovative about it.

Now, how I would get around this aspect of numerically proving it quickly, I don't know, and that involves a research study, but I might say what about studies that exist in other fisheries, where certain gear modifications have reduced the dead discards of the fish and applying them here, and let's go with that risk for a little while, until we analyze it, rather than close down the bottom, and I think that's a much better way to go, and I would like to see more innovation in that aspect, and I would kind of like an answer, because I'm going to keep following-up on that. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: When we looked into the different gear modifications, and I guess there are kind of two responses. Number one, when the council came back to you at your -- I think it was the October meeting, the last meeting, and the council was talking about the gear modifications, and the council asked you all for a bit more definition of what those gear modifications could be to reduce the releases, or to reduce the encounters rather, with red snapper, and the response that the AP gave to the council was that those things are better put in through outreach and education, but not as requirements, and also that there would be a lot of difficulty in enforcing those things, and that was supported by the Law Enforcement AP.

Law enforcement said that enforcement of a gear change would be difficult, because it's one of those things that you can't see what's on the boat, as opposed to seeing where a boat is, and that's much easier for law enforcement to see, and so the enforcement aspect, and you all's recommendation, that those things be put in as outreach and education, as opposed to requirements, those are two things that were in play.

Then, when staff followed-up and looked at some of the research surrounding those gear requirements, there is kind of scant hit-and-miss things here and there and one of the things that would need to be done, and it would take quite a bit of time, which I don't know that there would be the time to do that within this response, would need to be quantifying what is the current gear usage, what's being used in the fishery now, if we're going to be able to say, well, if the fishery changes from where it is at Point A, and goes to Point B, what is the change in the fish going to be, the encounters, the releases, that type of thing.

We do have some information, and I did -- I mean, we have some level of information for some pieces of gear, and not all of them are necessarily used in the South Atlantic currently, and there was one study for the Pacific groundfish fishery, where they have a long leader gear that they're trying to avoid fish on the bottom, and so they're fishing higher in the water column, and they did a comparison study of catch rates for those bottom species, versus the more mid-water, off-the-bottom species, and so we do have kind of a quantified difference for that type of gear, but, as far as I know -- I don't know how prominent that type of gear is, that usage and practice, is in the South Atlantic.

That's a place where we need to get information for a before and after scenario, and that would take time to do, time for surveys and then trying to figure out what the actual gear effect is from a change, and so those are some of the things that stand in the way of the gear being the response here, but those are the things that we've looked at to this point.

MR. HULL: Okay. Paul, you were up.

MR. NELSON: In our area, even if you have bottom closures, you're not going to have less encounters with the recreational fishermen. They're just going to go from one area to the next. With these go-fast boats, and bigger boats that we're using nowadays, they have no problem running fifty miles in the other direction to go cover a different area that's open, and so you're not going to have less encounters.

Commercial-fishing-wise, we don't have very many discards commercial-fishing-wise, and we pretty much keep everything we catch on the commercial season, and then, when the snapper are closed, in commercial fishing, we avoid the red snapper. We go to areas where they don't even live, and we try to stay away from them, but I don't think the commercial fishing should be punished for somebody that's not regulated, and reduce the catch for them, for that reason. Thank you.

MR. HULL: I think James was first, and then I'll come back to Jack.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mike, I wanted to ask a question. Do we have a known and accepted number of dead discards that are being counted toward harvested red snapper?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: As far as like do we -- When we are projecting what the future catch would be, do we have like a number that's projected, like these are the dead discards based on previous information, and is that kind of what you're asking?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and how many of those projected dead discards are counting against the ABC, and what total can be harvested, and so why are we not discussing an actual harvest situation of these discards, instead of just assuming that fishing for them and discarding them is the end of the line for that fish? Like why can't we turn this into a situation where we're not actually discarding them, but we're keeping them, and it's still counting against the ACL, or the ABC, and do you know what I mean? It's just they're not going back in the water, and why are we not talking about that, if we have known and accepted numbers?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: For the numbers, as far as the ABC goes, what happens is the projections go forward, and they say there is this amount of fish that can be taken out from fishing activities, in general, in order to have this population moving forward, and then, after they look at this amount of fish from fishing activities, they look at, okay, how frequently is this species being discarded, compared to previous years, discarded versus harvested, and how does that break down within the sectors, and so they look at those differences, and then they have -- Then they have a number of discards, and, from that, they reduce that these are the fish that are surviving, these are the fish that are being discarded and are dying.

As far as converting the discards to harvest, that is -- I guess that is what is trying to be accomplished here, because, if you reduce that number of dead releases, then you would be able to increase the number of fish available for harvest, and that's what is trying to be accomplished within this context. In changing the ABC, that's what the council is trying to do.

A difficulty of simply saying this number of fish that are discarded dead, that are counted as dead discards by the assessment, we're going to just take this number and we're going to say that we can keep this number, and they're going to be kept, is that there needs to be support to say are the discarding practices -- Like, if the discarding practices are not required to change, what is the

reasoning that they would have a difference, that you wouldn't just be keeping this extra 20,000 fish and the same number of fish wouldn't still be discarded, and that's the question that would need to be answered in support of something like that, but the overall direction that you're talking about of converting dead discards to harvest is what the council is trying to do overall with this fishery.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: When we're looking at why the interaction goes up, I mean, I didn't hear why is the overall interaction with red snapper escalating at such a quick rate, and is it -- We're not really addressing the abundance of the fish and/or the area which we're getting those interactions, and so we're having a much higher interaction rate in many different areas, and so, with that higher interaction, we're going to have higher discards, and it seems that the only option on the table is to start to pull back and -- I mean, I hear Robert saying gear modification, and I think it's a great idea, but, ultimately, I think that the council has gotten a foothold on the only option, is to start shutting down fishing areas.

I think that that's a pretty narrow-minded stance to take, when, really, these fish are dying, and nobody is getting the benefit of harvesting these fish, and I totally understand that people are going to take advantage. If we did open it up for a certain period of time, we would have bag limit issues, and we would have all sorts of issues, and I get that, but when do we start to take advantage of what most of us in this room seem to feel like is an abundance of red snapper? When do humans get to take advantage of that? Thank you.

MR. HULL: I see Jessica wants to speak.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Jimmy. Kerry and I are trying to think of ways that we could help with this discussion, without kind of seeding you with the ideas that we've already talked about, and so, just because the council kind of pulled gear modifications off the table, I don't think they're really off the table, and so I think, if you guys have specific suggestions, then I would make them, because we were just having trouble coming up with something that could be done that was quantifiable, but you heard, both from Mike and from you, that there are other fisheries where there have been these gear modifications that could get us some reduction.

We would just be asking the SSC to quantify it, and so I think gear reductions are a good way to go, and I think -- Let me also just say that the council doesn't really want these closures. This is not something that we're looking to do, and I also don't think that stopping these data streams is really helpful for us either, you know if we were to close big areas, but I heard Jack mention hotspots, and so I think that's another good way to go.

It's trying to figure out ways to really reduce these encounters, and I think that you guys already know some of that, and you're hearing people talk about, well, I really don't want to catch red snapper, and so I avoid them, and I go to these other areas, and, okay, that's great. That's great information, and is there a way that the council could put something in place to avoid hotspots, or something like that, so that we're reducing these encounters?

MR. HULL: Thanks, Jessica. There's a couple more hands here, and I thought I saw Jack first, and then I saw David.

MR. COX: Thank you, Jessica, because we're just trying to brainstorm here, and we want to increase our fish, but nobody wants a reduction in fishermen, and that's the ultimately goal here, and we don't want to cut anybody out. You know, I made my living, and I saw the gag fishery, in my area, the best it's ever been, in the 1980s and 1990s, and I know we will never see that fishery rebound where it is, but, when I talk about those spatial closures, or protecting spawning aggregations, I think of ways that we could do it to enhance the red snapper and the gag at the same time, and, to me, it seems like a win-win for everybody and the fish.

They would have to be a very small area, because we don't have a whole lot of inshore bottom, but, other than that, I really -- **I feel like I want to make a motion, and my motion would be, in this amendment, to exclude the commercial permits, federal permit, permitted fishermen, and the charter/headboat fishermen, from this, because I don't feel like this is fair to pull them into this, and I want to talk about my rationale.**

The rationale being the accountability measures that we're taking, and those are weekly reporting on our VTR reports, and we have to -- My boats have to carry observers fishing, and I'm required by law to take observers. We have in-season closures, and we have discard logbook forms that we have to fill out. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I second that.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so your motion is seconded by James, and so let's have some discussion. We've already discussed it, and now we're going to discuss this motion, before we vote on it, and so let's concentrate on -- Well, whatever. This is too important to exclude any conversation, and so I think we're back to David. We can let this motion sit, and, if you want to talk about something else, we'll come back to it.

MR. MOSS: Thanks, and so I'm not against this, Jack, but the problem, and somebody that's way smarter than me, which is probably most people here, can correct me, but the difficulty with separating the charter/headboat fleet is that they share with the recreational ACL, and so, while I don't disagree with what you put up there, I don't know how that would work, as far as excluding them from the recreational sector with this.

They are separated sector-wise, and I know it's complicated, because -- Well, it can't be that complicated if I don't understand it, but so they are separated sector-wise, but they share an ACL, or an ABC, with the recreational sector, with the private recreational sector, and so I don't think that that would be able to happen, to separate them. If you want to separate commercial, that's up to you.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Jack.

MR. COX: David, that's what I was talking about earlier, was, if I were in that position, I would want a separate ACL, so my fishery would look a little bit more professional than -- Because those guys are held to a higher accountability than private recs, and, Chris, you could speak more on that than I can, because I'm pretty much in-tune to what we're doing commercially, but I don't know exactly what you guys do, as far as your reporting and so forth, and maybe you will speak on that for just a second, if we could, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HULL: Let me go back to David first, because he wanted to respond, quickly, to something, and then we can go back to Chris, and he can talk about the charter/headboat accountability. Go ahead, David.

MR. MOSS: Again, Jack, I don't disagree with what you're saying, but I just think that the feasibility of that -- I mean, you basically wouldn't be able to separate anybody from this, because they share the ACL with -- Now, that would have to be a separate motion for something else, to have a sector separation from an ACL point of view, but, as far as that goes, they're still lumped in with the private rec ACL, and so nothing would change, with what you have up there, and I'm just making sure that you understand, and, really, make sure that I understand it correctly, and I see Kerry and Jessica nodding, and so at least I have a cursory understanding.

MR. HULL: Okay. Then, Chris, did you want to answer to Jack?

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and, real quick, from the charter boat and headboat, and there's some people here that carry the same permits that I do, and I'm required to have a snapper grouper charter boat/headboat permit. Because I have that permit, once they implemented electronic reporting, I am required to report, and that's been going on for a couple of years, and that doesn't separate me from the recreational angler in the ACL, but that goes give me a couple of years of historic data that the SSC could take and develop a separate ACL.

In addition to that, our accountability is much higher. Like Jack asked me to do, we're carrying turtle release kits, and I have commercial safety gear on my boat. I'm not required to have it, like he is, but pretty much everything else, you know, is very similar to the commercial side, and so we've got accountability and a couple of years of electronic-reported data, and you know what I'm saying?

The few days that I've been fortunate enough to fish my center-console boat, when snapper season is open, I always catch my limit, every single time, and that's been reported, right here, and there's a lot of people that have done that, and so, you know, if you're looking for a short-term answer, it seems like this is plausible. All the parts are there, but you've just got to put them together.

MR. MOSS: No, and I completely understand what you're saying, and, like I said, I don't disagree. However, the facts remain that, despite the fact that you are more accountable, because you have to carry release gear, and because you have to report all that stuff, you still share the same ACL with the recreational sector, and so you can't -- Like that is not going to change anything, the way it's written up there, is all that I'm saying.

MR. KIMREY: Right, but it's a step towards -- I mean, you have to start somewhere, right? I understand ACL. I mean, I get that. It's split in half, but there's a little bit of data, from the past few years, that whoever determines, the SSC or whoever -- If they decided to separate charter boat and headboat, they could come up with a number for our ACL, and I think that's the point that I'm trying to make.

MR. HULL: David, let me jump in, real quick. Jack, the motion maker, with the discussion -- I mean, this is advice that we're giving the council of what we think we should recommend that they do, and so you may want to change this to say, "and consider sector separation for the

charter/headboat sector in the future”, or something like that. I mean, that’s something you may want to do, because, as he said, it’s pretty much impossible to separate them, since they share the ACL, and you may want to say, “and consider, in the future, sector separation and separate ACLs”, and I don’t know. That’s up to you.

MR. COX: I don’t know, and I’m just an expert in my fishery, and so it’s hard, just dealing with what I deal with, to try to keep up with everybody else’s, but, yes, I would certainly be wanting to change my motion, please. My motion would now read -- **I would amend the motion to read: Recommend to the council to exclude the commercial federally-permitted fishermen and look at an ACL separation between the charter/headboat from the private recreational anglers, because they are held to a higher accountability**”. They’re doing a good job, and I was so happy to see that, when they started doing it, because, like I said before, you know, the SSC is getting good information, when you start requiring these things, but that’s how I would like for it to read.

MR. HULL: When he finishes, I’m going to read it, and then we’ll see if we get a second, because it has changed, and then we’ll go back to discussion. **Recommend the council exclude the commercial federally-permitted fishermen from Regulatory Amendment 35 and consider a separate ACL for the recreational for-hire component.** Is there a second? Do you agree with the second?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No. As the person that seconded that motion, I need some clarification, because, initially, I thought that any changes coming from Amendment 35 -- Jack was asking that the commercial and for-hire sectors were both excluded from those changes to the fishery, and, beyond that, kind of speaking to what David was saying, was that, if you didn’t have commercial clout, or you didn’t pay to be in the areas that are potentially closed, or gear modification, and, if you didn’t pay, you had to adhere to those new rules, or, if you weren’t charter or commercial, you had to adhere to those rules, and no changes in allocation or -- Everybody that harvested through the charter/headboat and commercial, all of that would stay the same, except for, if you were strictly the recreational private sector, you had to adhere to a different set of rules.

That’s kind of how I felt that motion was designed, and I kind of feel that, if we’re going to start talk about different sectors being formed, that maybe this isn’t the same place for that, that maybe we should have another motion saying, okay, the charter/headboat needs their own ACL, and not necessarily within this Amendment 35, and so can I get some clarity there?

MR. HULL: Jack, do you want to change this again?

MR. COX: There is a lot there, and that is --

MR. HULL: Do you want to simplify it?

MR. COX: **Yes, and let’s take that out.** I would think that would be a place, maybe, for somebody who is more in that sector to make that motion, and let me steer clear of that, being that I’m a commercial guy here, and so I would just like to take the part that says -- **Yes, the second part of that motion, and take the recreational for-hire component from Regulatory Amendment 35, and let’s just exclude the commercial federally-permitted fishermen in the motion. The motion now would read: Recommend the council to exclude the commercial**

federal snapper grouper, because we have a lot of commercial federal permits, commercial federal snapper grouper permitted fishermen from this amendment.

MR. HULL: Wouldn't you still want to take out the recreational for-hire component, to simplify it at this time, and just make it -- Then somebody else can make another motion on that.

MR. COX: Correct.

MR. HULL: **So just get rid of the recreational for-hire component also, I think is what he wants to do, and just stop at the "snapper grouper federally-permitted sector". Then "from Regulatory Amendment 35".** Is that what you're looking at?

MR. COX: That's what I'm looking for. Thank you, James.

MR. HULL: Now is there a second to that?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I will second it.

MR. HULL: Now you will second the changes? All right, and so we've got that on the board. I've got two hands that I see. Cameron, I thought I saw first, and then Robert.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I would like to make a motion to recommend the council exclude federally-permitted charter/headboat fishing from Regulatory Amendment 35. If you don't have a permit, and the amendment goes through, then you're affected.

MR. HULL: Cameron, that's fine, and you can make that motion, but we need to finish this one before we start another one. It would be cleaner, unless you're asking to substitute that one for this one. I believe it's a second motion that's separate. It's separate from this motion. Okay. So, after we get done with this one, then we can move on to more. Let me go to back to Robert's hand, and then, Jack, we'll come back to you.

MR. LORENZ: I just want to do a little pulse check here on compartmentalizing these things in the right place. As a recreational fishing representative, I have no trouble with this motion, as I never would have, based on the accountability that's come from the various groups that are suggesting that they be excluded from this Regulatory Amendment 35.

This, as written, I think is okay, If you want to be excluded from Regulatory Amendment 35, as currently written and presented to us, which is talking about bottom closure, but, if you take this thing on a totally global basis, I honestly think a lot of this discussion with sector separation, or because you have the accountability, not being lumped into management measures that are needed, just because of the private recreational sector, I think almost it should be split out in a separate motion, or a separate approach, because, as I was talking here about the Regulatory Amendment 35, things like gear modifications would work.

That doesn't apply to all of you, and so this is a little messy to me, and I think the fact of trying to exclude you from bottom closures is okay, but, the way this is listed, it says, "snapper grouper release mortality reduction in red snapper catch levels", and that's what it is, and I think this kind of thing, under this amendment, as presented to us right now, could be a big legal challenge, to

me. I think this -- I think we're mixing stuff together that doesn't quite mix. There's a little oil in water here. I see where you all want to go, and why, but I just think it's going to be messy.

MR. HULL: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks for bringing that up, Robert, and that's something that I can maybe wordsmith and nuance, because the commercial sector would still be included in whatever red snapper ABC and ACL is set, whatever that comes out of, because the commercial would get an allocation of that, and so it wouldn't be completely removed from all of the amendment, but maybe we can say something along the lines of discard mortality reduction measures, or something like that, and would that be in line with what you're thinking, Jack, as far as that? Would that be an okay change?

MR. COX: I mean, it would, but, Robert, to what you're saying, with all due respect, we are not being treated fair and equitable, and you're saying that this could get into a legal situation. Well, it should already be a legal problem, because we're not being treated like you guys. You guys are -- It's a free-for-all. It's a free-for-all, and you've got us in a situation to where we're looking at a closure on our sector that's not fair, and that's why we have to be doing a motion like this, because why are you going to pull us down in a sinking ship, when it's your ship sinking?

MR. LORENZ: Jack, if I may respond, what I would like -- What I am saying is the messiness of this -- If we're looking at snapper grouper release mortality reduction, that could be a lot of methods, and not just not bottom closure, and so where I was trying to come from is I would appreciate if this was limited at this time. If it's sticking in here, where I think it would be challenged, but I may be outside here, is this closure component, that you be exempted from that. There may be other reduction methods that you may not be, and they will be different.

What this is stating is you would be released from anything that comes under Amendment 35, any kind of way that we want to reduce red snapper catch levels, and what you are really talking about is you don't want the bottom closed.

MR. COX: Well, no, and what I'm really talking about is we want you guys to do what we're doing. That's what I'm really talking about, if you want to know the truth of it, but, to that point, I think there is some validity in the fact that we should have -- We should look at some small MPA areas, because I'm really passionate about the gag fishery, and I think they could go hand-in-hand, and they could maybe get us out of some of this that we're looking at, but, until we come up with some things that you're talking about, Robert, with this gear and different methods that may help, then I want to leave this up there like it is, because, at the end of the day, I'm just -- I have never been happy about the way that we've been treated and the way that -- We don't know how many private recreational anglers are in the fishery.

We've got a fishery that started in the 1980s, a snapper grouper fishery, in the South Atlantic, because of the commercial fishery, and, over time, more and more and more private recreational anglers started getting into this fishery, and so now we have a fishery that's overcapitalized by the private recreational anglers.

In my fishery, we're still doing permit reductions. We're still doing the two-for-one reductions, but we cannot have an open-access fishery that can be sustainable, going down the road that we're

going down, and it just can't happen. I mean, to me, we're going to keep putting out these little fires until we figure out a way to constrain the fishery that can handle an amount of fish that it can support, and that's just what we have to do, but we're not there, and we're not there because of the private recreational anglers.

MR. HULL: All those are great -- I mean, everything we're all talking about here is great. Mike has come up with some language which might satisfy us for the next minute or two, and so you change it from reducing us -- Or taking the commercial sector out of the amendment totally, which would mean everything in the amendment, which is the ABCs and the this and the that, and just saying from the discard mortality reduction measures implemented through Regulatory Amendment 35, which would mean bottom closures, which would mean things like that, and so does that -- Mike seems to think this would solve the problem that was brought up. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I was just making sure that that wording change is okay with the motion maker and the second. If so, I can take the highlight off.

MR. COX: Okay. Can I read the motion again? **The motion is we're looking at recommend the council to exclude the commercial snapper grouper federally-permitted fishermen from discard mortality reduction measures implemented through Regulatory Amendment 35. I'm fine with that.**

MR. HULL: James?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and, I mean, looking at it, I would be okay with this, and I would just maybe ask for a little -- Or add a little. As a commercial fisherman, a lot of what we do is fear-based reaction, and, you know, we're just afraid that we're not going to be able to retain what we've been -- What we've become accustomed to catching, and, when you talk about bottom closures, and I'm sure that the for-hire sector can really identify this, but, when we talk about all these closures, and all these limitations, and it really takes away from our ability to do our job, and, initially, we react in a fear-type reaction..

As a commercial fisherman, what I would be looking for is some sort of trust from science, and from lawmakers, that, when we make these sacrifices, and we make these gear changes, and we go along with these bottom closures, that the sacrifice that we put forward is meaningful, that we are going to achieve the goal, and we're going to have the support from the science, to say, okay, well, you did this, and we believe that this is going to work, and we are now going to make changes to fisheries management that fall in line with everybody's objective.

I think, in the past, that hasn't been exactly what we get, and I feel like we're still afraid that, when we make concessions, that the science does not fall in line with that, and I feel like that is something that can be achieved, overall, if we're all working to the same goal, and we need to get support from what people believe, and that's the science that is known and accepted, and so that's kind of where a lot of this comes from, is we're afraid.

MR. HULL: Okay. On this motion -- I see a couple more hands, and I think, Tony, was your hand up? In reference to this motion, so we can dispense with this, Chris and then Andy.

MR. KIMREY: As the motion is written now, does anybody see a reason not to add charter boat and for-hire back in there, because it has nothing to do with ABC or ACL, and this just has to do with more -- I mean, I'm not trying to be that guy, but I am.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I'm going to do another motion.

MR. KIMREY: You're going to do another one? Okay, Cameron. Never mind.

MR. HULL: Okay. Andrew.

MR. MAHONEY: I want to support this, but I feel like the council, in the last meeting, already had this motion, and only four people voted in favor of it, and so I want to make sure that we address their reason behind not supporting it, and so, when it goes from us to them, they will be ready to support it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy. I would chime-in on all of this, and I think that we've got a long way to go in this amendment, and this is going back to the council, and the council is just about in the same position we are of trying to figure out what's going on and how they're going to handle it, and so they're looking for some type of recommendations from us, and I think that we need to go ahead and vote on this recommendation, and then, Andrew, we can get back to the finding out why they didn't, and I think it's because, at this point, they're not ready to exclude anything, and they're trying to just figure out where they're at, what is possible, what isn't possible, and get analysis from staff, which they are trying to provide them. Is it to the motion, Robert, or another thought?

MR. LORENZ: Yes.

MR. HULL: Okay. Then, after Robert, I would like to have a vote on this motion.

MR LORENZ: I would just like to ask Jack -- Because I have an issue with this being in a global amendment like Amendment 35, and what else could be added in there? For instance, if your MPA idea got added in there, you would be exempt from that and all, and so I'm wondering -- Is there the hot item that you specifically want to exclude and not everything? For instance, when we get into the charter captains, if we go to some kind of gear modifications, I would want to see them under that, also.

I do see your -- I see your point, but could you put in the -- I think what you want is the bottom closures, and so I'm a little bothered, and could you put a couple of bullet points on specifically what you don't want to be included on, in case all kinds of things get thrown in Amendment 35? I would find it a little easier to vote for it, that way.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: I don't want to change my motion, but I think, as we get further into this document, because we have places to go in this document where I could add a suggestion of things that the council could look at, and I was hoping to do it then. Am I right, Mike? Aren't we going to get to a place in this document, as we scroll down, and I haven't looked through the whole thing, but where we can interject ideas for the council, because I don't really feel like that should be put in a

motion, my suggestion of a spawning management zone for red snapper, and that was just an idea that I was throwing out there.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, as far as the document is concerned, you all have kind of taken the discussion in a different direction, which is fine, and your feedback is valued, and, yes, what you're talking about, as far as recommendations for things that you think that the council should do with this -- There can be a place for that, and we can include that feedback here, and it doesn't need to be within this motion, and it can be in a separate part, if you would prefer it that way.

MR. COX: Well, I just wanted to capture the council's attention of this was a discussion to mitigate what we're trying to do here, as Robert was talking about, and gear modifications, and I want to say that I think a spawning management zone area for gag/red snapper may help alleviate some pain, but I don't know where to put it. I don't know where it should go, but I don't want to put it actually in that motion, but somewhere in the document.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think it's -- I think, within the discussion that we have here, within the minutes, within the record, I think it's well captured, and, I mean, we have Jessica and Kerry here, and so they're listening to the discussion, and so I think it's -- I think the nuance is captured, even if it's not spelled out all the way in the wording of the motion, and the motion is, of course, a recommendation to the council, but the council has kind of heard a bit more of the intent here that you all have said.

MR. HULL: I would agree with that, and where Robert comes in is, if this was the final word on this, which it isn't, and this is a recommendation to the council of our thoughts of something to carry forward, and, as far as reduction measures implemented through say time and spatial closure, which is really the big deal for me, as a commercial fisherman, because it isn't going to make a bit of difference for red snapper discards if you shut me out of an area where I'm not producing discards, as a commercial fisherman, and so you're just hurting me, when I shouldn't be hurt.

I think what Robert is saying is, well, if you take us out of the reduction measures implemented through the whole amendment, which may be gear reduction, or which may be something else, that doesn't really affect the time or spatial closure for me, and then maybe I should be included in that part of it, and I think maybe that's what he was getting at, but I don't know that we need to get into all of that detail here.

This is a, look, you need to give the commercial sector consideration here of what we do, how we fish, how many red snapper discards we're producing, and why are you going to make us be part of this -- Why do we have to take this medicine, when we're not sick, when we're not the problem? It's not going to help a bit if they took all of our catch and gave it to the private rec, in my opinion, and they're going to get, what, another two or three hours to fish? I mean, it's just we don't need to be there.

MR. COX: Real quick, when our guys are on a three or four or five-day fishing trip, we interact with these species, and this is a great bycatch fishery for us, and that's all it is. It's not a targeted fishery, but, when we're out fishing, and we catch red snapper, most of the -- You know what I'm saying? It's nice to have a few of these fish added to our portfolio, which is just, what, seventy-five pounds a trip, a hundred-pound trip limit, when we have them, and so it works for us, and that's why I'm being so vocal on a lot of things on the commercial, because our fishery is set up

different from the guys like Chris, that makes his living where he can go out and catch a few of these fish, and it's huge. You know, he can make a whole charter off of catching two red snappers, or a red snapper, for his crew for the day. Thank you.

MR. HULL: I think we all understand that, and, in your area, it's important to you as a bycatch, and, in my area, it's a target. When we have a commercial season, I've got the numbers right here in front of me of what it meant to one of my boats, and it's different. I can go do it quickly, where I'm at. For you, it's further offshore, and so it's different, but is there any -- Can we vote on this motion and move on now? I mean, we've had good discussion, and we've brought out a lot of stuff that needs to be heard. Okay. Let's see if I can remember how to do this. Let's just do the object part. **Does anybody object to this motion? Raise your hand.**

MR. LORENZ: I don't object, but I am abstaining.

MR. HULL: **Okay, and so I see one abstaining, and, other than that, it's unanimous.** Thank you. Okay, and so we've got this done. Now the next hand up is David Moss.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. I wanted to -- Going back to, I don't know, three hours ago, before we had this motion, but to something that James had said that we kind of glossed over, but I think it's worth talking about and exploring, and I want to make sure that I understand it right, but, when you were talking about the potential of reducing discards, if we actually kept some fish, and so, if we turned those discards -- I shouldn't say turn them into kept fish, but, if we opened it up and allowed it, I think it's worth exploring how much that would reduce dead discards, and I'm curious, and I don't know if this is something we could even find out, how much that would reduce effort.

Most bottom fishermen that are going out there are -- They want something to bring home.

They want something to eat, and it's not just a sportfish fishery, and so, if you're going out there, and you want to get something to eat, and you have to weed through ten or twenty, however many, red snapper to get a couple of sea bass to bring home, or even a mangrove snapper or whatever, and, if we turn that into you catch two red snapper for your boat, and then you've got enough meat and you can go home, and you don't need to keep weeding through all these fish to keep something, how much does that reduce dead discards, or discards in general, which are then dead?

MR. HULL: I know a lot of people are pointing at me and saying we need a break, and so are you willing to hold off, Tony, and then we'll come back to this discussion? Let's see, and it's 10:45, and so let's take a ten-minute break, and so, at five minutes of eleven, we're going to be back in here. Ten minutes.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. HULL: Okay. welcome back, and so we're going to continue on, and Mike is going to give us a presentation, and so I'm going to hand it over to Mike, and then we'll just hold anything else that you want to do for now, and we'll just keep going, as soon as we get done with his presentation, and focusing back a little bit on some of these -- There is some questions that the council has asked us specifically, and we want to kind of go back to that too, but we're not going to stop anybody from talking here today, and everybody can be heard on this important subject, and so back to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Jimmy, and this isn't going to be a full presentation. This is something that was brought up in the March council meeting, and so I just wanted to kind of bring it back here for you all as well, because it's something relevant to this amendment, and it's something that frames it a bit more than the red snapper focus that it's naturally going to have.

John Carmichael talked through this presentation that was looking at the -- This is for the recreational sector specifically, but looking at the number of fish that have been released by the recreational sector over time and looking at species within the snapper grouper fishery, and so just kind of -- I just want to hit a couple of these slides, but one of them -- This figure shows the number of fish estimated by MRIP to have been caught and released alive, as well as harvested, and the percent that have been released of the total catch, and so the harvest is shown there in yellow, and the number of fish that have been released is shown in blue, and the percentage of those fish released is on the right axis and shown with that black line.

You can see that, over time, there's been a growing proportion, a growing portion, of the fishery that is caught is released, as opposed to being harvested, and it's changed over the past twenty years, and now we're at a point where the fish released are two to three-times -- Three-times. It's three-times the amount of fish that are being harvested within the recreational sector.

When we started looking, in kind of a species-by-species context, there were some criteria that were put forward to define a species as high impact, and that means it is highly impacted by the number of releases of that species, and so the criteria are shown up at the top. At least 50 percent of the catch is released, and the releases are greater than 500,000 fish over the last twenty years, and the harvest is greater than 500,000 fish.

These species that fit these criteria account for 93 percent of the snapper grouper harvest and 99 percent of the snapper grouper releases for the recreational sector, and so this group of species really covers a good chunk of these high-impact release species, and, as you can see, red snapper are on there, but you also have some of the other ones that have had recent overfished status, red grouper, and gag are in there as well, and the bold species are those that have been assessed, and the non-bold ones do not have stock assessments currently on the books. We have black sea bass, and we're just talking about that, gearing up for that assessment, and that's another species that is impacted by the releases.

MR. HULL: Mike, I'm sorry, but I'm having a hard time understanding what I see. Eighteen high-impact species are listed below, and then, under that, it says greater than 50 percent released, plus releases greater than 500,000 fish, plus harvest greater than 500,000 fish. 93 percent of harvest, 99 percent of the releases, and what does that mean?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The first line there, and I guess I can put a space in between those two, and so this first line is the criteria that defines a high-impact species in this case. High-impact fits all three of those things. At least 50 percent of the fish caught were released, and the releases, over the last twenty years, are greater than 500,000 fish, and the harvest, over the last twenty years, is greater than 500,000 fish, and so that's the criteria that defines a high-impact species. The species that meet these criteria account for 93 percent of the snapper grouper recreational harvest, and they account for 99 percent of the snapper grouper recreational releases. Does that make a little bit more sense?

MR. HULL: You explained the first part good, yes, and I got that. That makes them a high-impact species, if they have those qualifications. Now you go down to 93 percent of the harvest, 99 percent of the releases, and I'm still not quite sure about how that goes into it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so, if you take all of the fish that have been harvested from 2000 to 2020 from the snapper grouper fishery, all the snapper grouper species harvested, 93 percent of those fish, those snapper grouper fish, that were harvested fell into one of these species. They belong to one of these species. 99 percent of the snapper grouper that were caught and released were of one of these eighteen high-impact species, and so this is kind of the group -- If you were to address a smaller group than the fifty-plus snapper grouper that are managed within the FMP, this is kind of a smaller group that really accounts for a high amount of the harvest and a high amount of the release, and, within that, we have some that are assessed and some that are overfished. Is that a little bit clearer?

MR. HULL: That was helpful. Thanks.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. That was some of the information looked at on that scale, and then, when you kind of separate out the top-five of those high impact species, the top-five as far as those that have releases, you have black sea bass, gray snapper, yellowtail, red snapper, and tomate. We see kind of how those have played out over a twenty-year period. Harvest is shown in blue, and you can see how harvest compares to the orange released fish, and then the yellow is the percentage of release, and so we have -- Say, for species like black sea bass, of those black sea bass that are caught recreationally over the last twenty years, almost 90 percent of those fish were released.

For red snapper, over the last twenty years, of those caught, between 85 and 90 percent of those fish were released, and so the overall point of this, and there are more slides, and this is linked within that briefing material document, that Regulatory Amendment 35 document, and there's a link in there that you can see the whole presentation, and I'm not going to go through all of it, but the overall point of this presentation was, number one, to give an idea of the magnitude, the number of fish that have been released by the recreational fishery over the last twenty years, just to kind of frame that, and then, also, to note that, with what is being talked about, in terms of a time closure, a spatial closure, things of that nature for the snapper grouper fishery, and you could even include gear into that as well, what's being talked about, in terms of reducing the dead releases, is more than just a red snapper problem. It's something that affects other species within the snapper grouper fishery.

Going back to this one, Jack brought up gag, and this is something that could affect gag as well, and, for all of these species, all of them are in the same way. When you do the projections forward, you take out this is the estimated number of fish that are going to die from being caught and released, and that's that many fewer fish that are taken out and cannot go into the ABC, cannot go into that catchable pot, and so this issue of releases affects many different species beyond red snapper.

We're framing this release issue around red snapper, because it's something that the council needs to respond to in the right now, after that assessment, and it's something that, you know, there's been a very vocal outcry of something needs to be done with this fishery, but, in the measures that

are being talked about, they're in the context also of the snapper grouper fishery, and they will affect other species, and there is the potential that the benefits that are being sought for red snapper could also be seen, to some extent, for some of these other species, if they're in a similar area or caught on similar gear or something like that, if they fall into that envelope of whatever these discard-mortality-reducing measures are.

I just wanted to put that out there, and then I guess, when possible, I'm hoping that we can have some response to the discussion questions, just because these are some of the things that would help the council as they are forming ideas of what their response would potentially be, and so that's all I have, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike. I have one question, if you could go back to that graph. You have released fish, B2, and so what does that mean, the B2 number?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: B2 is how MRIP -- If you look on the MRIP site, B2 is how those fish would be characterized. It's a fish that was not observed by the dockside observer, but was reported as being caught and released. That would be called a B2. Harvest, for the recreational fishery through MRIP, includes A fish, and A fish are those that were caught, and they're brought back to the dock, and somebody saw that these fish were caught. B1 would have been fish that were caught and were not observed by the surveyor, and B2 would have been those that a person came back and said that I caught five red snapper and threw all five back, and those would be B2 fish.

MR. HULL: Okay. That's the MRIP setup and how they come up with all their discard and landing numbers, and there's observed data, and then there is expansion of observed data, or whatever rationale they do to come up with all these numbers that they come up with. Okay. I just wanted to make sure that I understood that, and then hopefully everyone else sees what they're seeing there, and all this is derived from MRIP, and so I believe we would like to -- He wants us to try to address some of these questions that the council has put before us, if we can address them in the state of mind that we're in, and so would you like me to go ahead and read them, and see if we can get something going here?

What time of year do you typically fish shallow water? What time of year do you typically fish deeper water, and then, generally speaking, what depth do you consider deeper water for your fishing practices? Please state reasoning, and so let's go around the room and see if anybody wants to chime-in about Item Number 1. I see David Moss first, and I see Andy, and then I see James.

MR. MOSS: Typically, in south Florida, we fish shallower water when it gets colder, which is certainly a relative term for us, and less and less lately, but, the colder it gets, the shallower we fish, to a point, and what we consider deeper water kind of depends on what we're going for, but probably I would say deeper water is anything beyond like 180-ish, for us. Somewhere in that range I would consider deeper, and it's, I'm sure, different throughout the state and the region.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. Andy and then James.

MR. PILAND: In my represented area, we start fishing in shallow water in April and stop around November, and the deeper water would be May through September, with the snowy opening, the snowy and blueline opening.

MR. HULL: James and then Jack.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. Exactly what David was saying. The colder it gets, the shallower we go. The water warms up a little quicker for some of the species that are more active in the warmer water, and I don't know if this is the place, but, when we talk about shallow versus deep, and then we start talking about Florida versus the Carolinas and all that, and if we were going to move into closures for different depths, I really think Florida would have to be managed a little differently overall. Just let's keep that in the back of our head, but, I mean, it varies from winter to winter. The colder it gets, the shallower we fish. Thanks.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: For North Carolina, maybe you want to say northern North Carolina, because I'm in more mid southern North Carolina, and so we're a little bit different. We will start our fishing for shallow fish when the shallow-water grouper season starts in May, and, in the winter, we do our deeper-water fishing for our snowies and stuff, and beeliners and triggers, and so -- We would consider deep water getting outside of 150 feet, in my area, because we drop off, and our slope is a lot more than say the Hatteras area, where Andy is from, but, yes, that would be kind of how we would do it, and so it just kind of shows the regional differences, even though Andy and I are -- By boat, we're only -- If you're on a fast boat, we're three hours apart.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. How about somebody else, for your area? Paul, what are you thinking for your fishery out of northeast Florida?

MR. NELSON: In the wintertime, we stay inshore more, because of the weather. In the summertime, we're fishing off in the deeper water quite a bit.

MR. HULL: What do you consider to be deep water?

MR. NELSON: Over 150 foot.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Wintertime, because of the weather, you're fishing inshore, and not so much because of the water temperature or the air temperature, but just because of the weather?

MR. NELSON: Right. We mackerel fish a lot in the wintertime, and so it's shallow water. When the weather allows it, we fish the deep in the winter.

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: In South Carolina, it's very similar. We do come in a little shallower in the winter, but I would say that a lot of our shallow reefs, or nearshore reefs, are hit starting in September and November through the summer months, but, then again, our wahoo run and our tuna run are deep, in January through March, and so we'll be out in the 300 or 400 or 500-foot range, and we'll hit that bottom out at 150 or so in the winter as well, and we typically get a bigger fish then, say gags and such, but not -- Obviously, you ain't going to get a gag in January through March, and it's closed, and I would consider deep at over 150.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Charter/headboat in South Carolina is a little bit different, and, when I say shallow, I'm talking inside of thirty nautical miles, and so we fish offshore year-round, and then we start backing it in ten to thirty nautical miles in March and April, and then inshore waters from pretty mid-March all the way through the end of the season in November, and so we're pretty much hitting the whole area with some types of boats, some types of trips, almost on a year-round basis, without a whole lot of change, except the headboats. The headboats are, because of the reduction in speed, are pretty much -- That fishery has been obliterated and nonexistent anymore for going offshore before May.

MR. HULL: The depth range?

MR. SEBASTIAN: The depth range is going to be in between here, like forty-five and seventy-five feet, and that's going to be between five nautical miles and thirty nautical miles, twenty-five nautical miles.

MR. HULL: What would you consider to be deep water?

MR. SEBASTIAN: For us, it's a totally different thing, and so, for us, for deep water, if we're getting out thirty-five or forty miles, ninety to a hundred-feet-plus, because we don't want to get past 120, where we've got a lot of current, because then it's a nightmare on a headboat, and so there's a lot of factors, and so we're usually staying inside of 120 feet, or 130 feet tops, just because the current starts to rip, and a hundred lines in the water with current is no good.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: For us in the lower Keys, especially with the bottom fishing, I would think that 140 feet would be considered deep for us, and, in the summer, we could be fishing offshore, into the thousands of feet, but, for bottom fishing, probably we would consider 140 deep water.

MR. HULL: Robert.

MR. FREEMAN: Mine would be a little bit different. Shallow, for us, would be 100 to 200, where you're focusing on sea bass and triggers, and then deep used to -- We wouldn't slow down until we hit sixty fathoms, targeting snowies and tilefish, but the current restrictions on that fishery has pretty well deemed that as an unrealistic boat ride, and so we don't fish that far out now.

MR. HULL: Thomas.

MR. MEEKS: As far as Georgia, we're pretty much staying nearshore in the winter months, less than 100 foot, and, after that, the summer months, we're getting off deeper than that.

MR. HULL: Does that give you what you need there for starters on that one, Mike? Okay. Then we'll go to the next question. Okay. Number 2 is consider species that are targeted in areas of your region where red snapper are frequently caught and released while out-of-season. Consider local and sector effects and responses to the following questions. What are these target species, and so consider species that are targeted in your region where red snapper are frequently caught and released while out-of-season, and consider local and sector effects in responses to the

following questions, and so, in response to the initial question of what are these target species, where you're frequently catching and releasing red snapper while you're targeting other species, such as bass or trigger or whatever? David.

MR. MOSS: Again, right off like Broward and Palm Beach, we don't interact with them, but I know, down in the Keys and off the Tortugas, a lot of the mutton spots have now become red snapper spots, especially the further west that you go, and so a lot of the mutton snapper spots, and I shouldn't say a lot, but some of the mutton snapper spots that used to be in that kind of 180 to 220 range, give or take, have become red snapper spots now.

MR. HULL: Okay. I saw Paul first and then Andy.

MR. NELSON: In the Daytona area, we target redeyes and mangos, and we interact with a lot of red snapper between seventy-five and a hundred foot, and we also catch them while we're amberine fishing and stuff like that, and so they're mixed in.

MR. HULL: We'll let Mike get that down, and then we'll go to Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: When we amberjack fish out on our cones, in years past, we didn't experience as many red snapper, but, in the last two years, they have kind of taken over that area, in the 220 and 180 bottom, and anything inside of 180 is kind of all red snappers, but they're definitely pushing farther out into the deep than they normally were, and I have a ReKon 345, and I can catch red snapper in 345 feet of water.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. PILAND: In northeast North Carolina, the northern part, we're targeting bass and triggers and vermilion and amberjacks and grunts in the same area that red snapper reside, and that's from sixty feet to 200-ish. It's sixty to 200 feet.

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: In South Carolina, it's pretty much dictated off of that. We do the same thing, the black sea bass, trigger, vermilion, amberjack, grunts, porgies, and it's basically from sixty to 200 feet.

MR. HULL: Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I was going to add that, down when I used to amberjack fish off of Key West, we would catch them from 180 to 400 feet, and you would catch them mutton fishing too, and also black grouper fishing, and then, lately, a couple of my bandit boats down there have been catching them deepwater grouper fishing, out to like over 550 feet of water, and this is all down west of Key West.

MR. HULL: Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: You might want to add in vermilion and margate, and it's in those deeper areas where we're fishing for reds, and you'll catch them, also.

MR. HULL: Cameron and then Jack.

MR. SEBASTIAN: For South Carolina, I mean, whenever we're fishing in those waters, we're always coming up with scamps, grays, puddingheads, and strawberries as well.

MR. FREEMAN: Just an area of experience, and what used to be sea bass and triggers in seventy to 110 foot, primarily east of the Cape, now you can't fish it, because of the reds, and there are sharks in there, too.

MR. HULL: Jack, did you have a hand up?

MR. COX: I was just going to add gags to what Andy was saying, but I pretty much would go along with him. Back when I first started fishing, in the 1980s, we saw a red snapper fishery kind of like what we're seeing today, and that fishery got depleted in the mid-1990s, and now we're back to seeing that fishery that we saw in the 1980s, but, for us, it was also -- We were gag fishing, and we would catch, in a day, fishing for 300 or 400 pounds of gags, and we would always 150 to 200 pounds of red snapper, back in the 1980s, and so we're back to that again.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Just a clarification. On South Carolina, it would be scamp, and I call them grays, but I guess a lot of people call them gags, and so you can go either way, and so that would be a grouper and not a snapper.

MR. HULL: Chris.

MR. MILITELLO: In the Palm Beach area, just going out for like muttons, mostly, and some triggerfish and stuff, from seventy maybe to 220, but we don't see any reds at all.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so you're saying that, while you're fishing for muttons and those other species that you just mentioned, you're not interacting with red snapper off of --

MR. MILITELLO: No, off of the Palm Beach area, Broward.

MR. HULL: Palm Beach, and in what depth of water?

MR. MILITELLO: Anywhere from seventy to -- There's another ledge at 220.

MR. HULL: Thomas.

MR. MEEKS: As far as Georgia, you're looking at triggerfish, black sea bass, and a lot of your gag groupers, too. We can't catch them, for snapper grabbing it before it gets to the bottom.

MR. HULL: Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I don't know if it's important, but I will focus on a time when we could fish a little bit and not interact with red snapper, and that is on the southeast coast of North Carolina,

when we're into the grouper closed season, during that time period of January through April, when the water is cool, you know fifties and low sixties, and we can get triggerfish, a lot of nice black sea bass fishing, and very large white grunts, and we pretty much never interact with the red snapper at that period, and I'm sorry, and that's the order from say seventy to 110 feet.

MR. HULL: From off of Ponce Inlet, I used to make my living bottom fishing from anywhere sixty feet to 120 feet, and there is nothing now that you can target on the bottom, any species, where you don't interact with red snapper, anywhere. Now, what we do to not interact with them, in those depths and what species we target in the commercial sector, the vermilion and triggerfish, is we can avoid going to the bottom, and we can fish with very light gear behind the boat, and you catch a good amount of vermilion and trigger that way, for a while.

Eventually, the red snapper will find you, and then you have to move and start all over again and try to get the vermilion bite going, but it didn't used to be that way. We used to be able to fish for vermilions on the bottom, and fish for triggerfish on the bottom, but, if you go to the bottom in those depths now, you don't have a chance. Those young, small fish are so aggressive that they eat it, and so we have adapted our technique to avoid them, to target vermilion and trigger off the bottom, but it only lasts for so long, and then you have to move, and so it makes it tougher, but we are able to pull it off. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Along those lines, I have noticed that we target grouper more, it seems like, in December and June, and one way of keeping the snapper off is going to a much larger circle hook on the grouper. We will use 9/0 and 10/0 hooks, with live bait, and we'll get less interactions with the reds.

MR. HULL: Okay. Go ahead, Chris.

MR. MILITELLO: The other big problem that we have is the shark problem in Palm Beach, and it's just insane. It's a tough one, even with bonito.

MR. HULL: So, if you did release a red snapper, it's just shark food.

MR. MILITELLO: Yes.

MR. HULL: That's everywhere. Does anybody want to add to -- We got a lot there, and so we probably can move on, and I think we've covered that pretty good. Next is what are the most critical times of year to retain access to these species, and are there times of year when fishing for these species could be closed if it meant a greater ACL and a longer season for the red snapper?

Let's think about that one for a minute. What are the most critical times of year to retain access to all those species that we just identified that we would like to target, and are there times of year when fishing for these species could be closed if it meant a greater ACL and a longer season for red snapper, and so who wants to start out? Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I will just nuance it that closed -- I am going to make an edit here of closed or reduced, restricted in some form, and it doesn't necessarily need to mean full closure, but, if there could be some reduction of some form that would affect that species in a time of year, and what would that time of year be? I don't want it to gravitate solely to full closure, because some

of the things that have been talked about have been specific areas, or also staggering seasons, staggering areas, for sectors, saying this area is available to commercial, and this area is available to recreational, in this time of year, things of that nature. What is the time of year when, you know, one of those target species -- Where you're interacting with red snapper, and, if you had to step back on it, at least some, what time of year, potentially, would that be?

MR. HULL: I think it's important that you put that in there, but, also, if it meant a greater ACL and a longer season for red snapper, and so that's going to change for everybody, but I see lots of hands, and I think I will just start right down here with Andrew, and then Richard, and then Cameron, and then Andy.

MR. MAHONEY: I mean, obviously, it's going to change up and down the coast, but black sea bass in December and January and February, and I would have to retain the ability to harvest then, in South Carolina, and, as far as beeliners go, it would be April and May and June and September and October. I think that's all that is the grouper that I fish for while red snapper is open, and so I think that's it. That's as far as it goes with me.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just make sure I didn't forget something, because I may have missed something in there.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I think you want to make sure, Andy.

MR. MAHONEY: December for black sea bass.

MR. HULL: Those are the times of year for you that it's critical to retain access to black sea bass, and so it's critical, from December to February, that you are able to access the black sea bass fishery, and also, on the vermilion, from April, May, June, September, and October. That's what you're saying, is you need to have access at those times.

MR. MAHONEY: Correct.

MR. HULL: Then the next part of the question is, if you want to respond, is are you saying that, other than those times, you could consider some type of reduction, if it meant a longer season for red snapper? I think that's what the rest of the question is asking.

MR. MAHONEY: Yes.

MR. HULL: So you're saying that, yes, you would consider some reductions to access, if it meant a longer red snapper season, other than what you've got to have for -- Okay. That's good. That's what I wanted to bring out. Let's see if we can -- Again, this is your South Carolina fishery, where you're at.

MR. MAHONEY: Yes, and that's the southeast.

MR. HULL: So you're southeast South Carolina, and what city or port?

MR. MAHONEY: Bluffton, South Carolina, out of Port Royal Sound, Hilton Head.

MR. HULL: I think it's important that you tell us, because it's different for everybody, obviously, so the council kind of sees the diversity of what we're dealing with. I think we were going up the line. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: Lower Keys, charter boat, and, for us, it's unfortunate to say, but, for the -- Hell, I am losing track of how many years our trolling has been declining, and so we don't catch as many dolphin and wahoo, and sailfish is doing pretty good, but tuna and all those other species, and so we're depending more and more on bottom fishing, to produce that catch for the tourists that come down to visit, and so I would say that we would not be willing to lose any part of our season for the red snapper, especially because, in the lower Keys, that's really not such a targeted or important species for us.

MR. HULL: I think we've got that for you. David.

MR. MOSS: Give me a second, because I may confuse myself with what I'm about to say, but so, in the summertime, that's when we typically fish deeper, which is when you would encounter more of these. However, that's also when groupers are finally open for us, and so that would be the difficulty -- Well, for everybody, I guess, but that would be the difficulty there. I don't know what the answer would be, because I don't know -- Like I was saying earlier, a lot of the times, guys go deeper for muttuns. In the summertime especially is when you're going to encounter more of the red snapper, especially the further south and west you go, down towards the Keys and stuff.

Closing that would -- While it may be necessary-ish, and I don't know how good it would be, because it's going to make bottom fishing, in general, almost off limits for a good portion of the year, because, with groupers closed from January to May, and then if we do more in the summertime, which is when we would fish deeper, that would not be good. I don't know how to word all of that, and I was just speaking it, and so good luck.

MR. HULL: You can't afford to lose any access, because of where you're at, the way your drop-off is, and where you fish and what's available at that time. I got it. Thomas.

MR. MEEKS: For Georgia, I pretty much just echo what Andrew said for South Carolina, and I'm in Savannah, but I don't know if we really want to give up any time to catch those, for a red snapper season that is probably not going to get any longer any time soon.

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: You know, I don't really like thinking about the way that's worded, and I just don't agree with that as a management tool, in my opinion. I will say something. On my last bullet, I kind of got that backwards, and I said we use circle hooks for -- I meant December and June, and not through June, and so it would probably be the other way, June through December, and it looks like we're targeting grouper when they're closed, but I, in general, don't agree with that as a management tool.

MR. HULL: Chris, anything else to add to what you already stated?

MR. MILITELLO: No, and I think I'm pretty clear on there's really no reds in our area, and I would have to go to Canaveral to target them.

MR. HULL: Okay. Since we're going around the room, I will chime-in. I'm from Ponce Inlet, Florida, and I'm looking at this from a commercial fishery, and what we have left, in the snapper grouper fishery, to target is vermilion, triggerfish, amberjack. I mean, that's pretty much where we're at, and we have a small commercial red snapper fishery, the last couple of years, which is very important in our portfolio of what we do to make a living, and so I can't --

You know, again, we're fishing anywhere from sixty to 120 feet of water, with those species, and a little bit deeper for jacks, and I can't be willing to give up access to them at any time to increase the red snapper harvest, which, for me, last year, on the boat that I run, was 1,800 pounds that I was able to harvest during the small opening we had, and, I mean, that turned into \$13,000 to the boat, and that paid my dockage, and it started paying my insurance, and it's one part of my portfolio, but, you know, if I had to get eliminated from the opportunities for vermilion and triggers and amberjacks, it's a lot bigger number than that, and so I can't see giving that up, and I'm talking commercially, to have more, a little bit more, of that, and so I'm not willing to increase that, and, if the bass ever come back, which I hope they do, of course, that would be another species that I could target, and I would have no interaction, relatively no interactions, of harvest with the pots, and so I think I've said what I need to say. Robert, do you want to chime-in on this?

MR. LORENZ: I didn't really have too much to say on this, because, as a recreational fisherman, I can move around inshore and that sort of a thing, and, you know, there is that period of the year, in the winter, in the shallower deeper water, the seventy to 120 feet, where we can fish for some fish and never interact with red snapper, but, once you start into the grouper season, and people go offshore, or even try for vermilion, then they're going to show up, and so we're like everybody else that is mentioning it here, and, for recreational fishermen, they want to fish all year, all the time, everywhere. They don't want to lose access to anything. I really don't have a good, strong, tight recommendation on when to give something up. You have heard me, and I would rather go with other methods, gears, et cetera.

MR. HULL: Okay. We'll keep going around the room, and just first off as it's your turn, if you have something to say, but state your name.

MR. BONURA: I would like to add that the amberjack fishermen in Florida, between March and July, is absolutely mandatory that our fishery is open for the amberjack in that time, and the muttons -- You could add the muttons into that. The grouper, our black grouper open on the first of May, and that's pretty mandatory as well, that that's open, and that's about it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I don't really interact with the red snapper too much, but it kind of seems like we're being asked to prop the door open for some sort of restriction, and that's fine. Again, I would just want to have the support, from the science, that, if these restrictions were made, that we do get to harvest more red snapper, and it's not, oh, well, you said we could do this, and then not get the benefit of it. Like I would really want the reassurance that we could vote on it and say, okay, well, in order to do this, we're going to get X amount as an ACL, and we need that from science, for this to even have any meaning. Thank you.

MR. FISH: In the Cape Canaveral area, as a commercial fisherman, the most important month that I see to keep open would have to be May. We really don't have a beeliner fishery for fishermen that actually go and target beeliners, and, with grouper being closed January, February, March,

and April, everybody is ready to go in May, and amberjack closes in April, and I think that would -- In my fishery, in my area, that would be the only month that's really not a big impact on a guy with a grouper snapper permit.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think I missed at least part of that.

MR. FISH: I would say that April is the amberjack is closed, and that May would be the most important month to have open, because all these guys with the bottom permits -- Everything has basically been closed, except for amberjack, and I'm not talking snowy grouper or stuff like that, but May is going to be the most important fishery, in my neck of the woods, for grouper and amberjack, being newly opened. Does that make sense?

MR. SEBASTIAN: For charter/headboat, in South Carolina and North Carolina, for me, it comes down to just the wording. We do not need to sacrifice anything for a greater ACL for a longer season for red snapper, period. We need to be able to fish our bottom grounds year-round. I just looked at my numbers, and I figured, well, maybe we could take a three-month hit in the offseason, and that's going to be between a \$90,000 and \$130,000 hit, if we had to stop fishing, and that means we have zero money to pay our staff, our crew, to do work over the wintertime, and so it's a massive, massive hit, if the bottom has to get shut down and we can't fish at all.

MR. PILAND: In northeastern North Carolina, the critical time for access is April through November, but, like Cameron said, we need access year-round. Access year-round is important.

MR. COX: Mr. Chairman, why are we even having this conversation? We rebuilt the red snapper fishery, and we're trying to figure out ways to take ourselves out of something that we have rebuilt, and why aren't we accessing this fishery more than we are? This makes no sense to me, and this is something we should be talking about with gags, but we have rebuilt a fishery here, and we're all trying to figure out and scratch on ways to take ourselves out of it, and this is time for us to say, hey, we've done something here, and let's go fish it.

MR. HULL: Well, Jack, we're trying to address questions that were put forth to us from our council, and, of course, what you bring up is the dilemma that we all look at, that the science says that the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring, and so that's what we're dealing with, and so we're just addressing questions that were put forth to us, and that's the only way that I can answer your question. I agree with you that it's rebuilt, but that's not what the Science Center is telling us, and that's why we're in the position we're in.

MR. COX: Yes, and I'm like Cameron on this one. I couldn't think of any time that we could give up.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Selby.

MR. LEWIS: In Wilmington, North Carolina, there's no time we could give up. We fish for something all the way around.

MR. NELSON: The headboat and charter boat fishery couldn't take any closure year-round. They need to stay open year-round. They have enough problems with the weather in the wintertime, and there is enough time off the water in the wintertime for them, and, as far as commercial goes,

May through January or February are a big time for us to keep things open, just to keep the fish flowing.

MR. HULL: Robert, do you have anything to add to that, Robert Freeman? Okay. Chris.

MR. KIMREY: I am not willing to give up year-round fishing, for a lot of reasons that all the guys before me have stated. You know, I'm fortunate, and I pretty much charter fish twelve months out of the year, and, obviously, there is times that it's slower and cooler, but I'm not willing to give up any bottom, especially under the context of this problem, because science is good at taking away, and science is not good at giving back.

MR. HULL: Okay. I see Robert wants to add something. Go ahead, Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I think Michael -- I think, just for the record, I think something at the bottom ought to be put, and Jack's comment I think ought to be there, because I think everybody else kind of -- As we all sat here, we were like, yeah, and he just changed the whole flow to like I don't want to say much, and I think the comment that this advisory committee, which is a group of people that go fishing, and fishing a lot, and are monitored, thinks the stock is rebuilt, period, and so continuing to hammer away at trying to get us to parse out some way to reduce fishing is of no interest to us whatsoever, and some word has got to get up to the Science and Statistical Committee and NOAA Fisheries that we're not in this game anymore to want to hang out any longer with a fishery that some folks think is totally rebuilt, and it's a technical reason why we're not onboard with whatever that science and conclusion is to that science at this time, and I think he made the point.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Robert. I think that was well stated and something that we all agree with. Moving on, considering decreased release survival at greater depths, increased barotrauma effects, if it meant a greater ACL and a longer season for red snapper, are there specific areas or depths of water that could be closed during non-critical times of year? Here is spatial, by depth, consider closing areas by depth, so that you can have a larger red snapper ACL, but, also, as Mike was trying to indicate earlier, obviously, this is a mixed-species fishery, and we're interacting with other species that have also been determined to be overfished, and some of them we agree with, and we don't agree with the red snapper, but some of them we do.

Is there an area -- Consider decreased release survival at greater depths, increased barotrauma effects, and, if it meant a greater ACL and a longer season for red snapper, are there specific areas or depths that could be closed during non-critical times of year? Does anybody -- Rather than going around the room, does anybody want to chime-in on that right off the bat that has something to say? Cameron, go ahead.

MR. SEBASTIAN: That would be real simple. A big NO. No. Done.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: I think most of us would be scared to answer that question, and I'm just going to leave it right there.

MR. HULL: Well, then we'll probably be answering that question after the council makes the answer to that question in their deliberations for us, based on some scientific information they get from people that aren't on the water and do what we do. Back to you, Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I mean, just, from hearing around the room, it sounds like the American reds are caught in all different kinds of depths, depending on your region, and so whatever they come back with to piece together as a potential whatever is going to be a -- It's going to be an absolute Frankenstein mix of things to each state, to each region, and then we'll have to just deal with it when they come back with something.

MR. HULL: Well, for the sake of time, and moving on here, I like your answer, no, I mean for me, but there may -- For you all -- It's not between me and Cameron, and, if you don't agree with that, say something. If you agree with it -- I agree with it, but I saw Andrew, and I saw David, and I saw Tony.

MR. MAHONEY: How would they enforce any of it anyway?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It depends on what the measure is. It depends on if it's the time or if it's the area, or are you thinking specifically for like an area, if it were defined? It would be enforced -- If it were an area, then it would probably be similar to the enforcement of like an MPA or something like that, where you have a set area, and, if law enforcement sees a boat in the area, then they would, you know, show up and say this area is off-limits for fishing.

MR. MAHONEY: Right, and so I heard them say that it was not enforceable without VMS, at the last meeting, and so --

MR. HULL: That's a whole other issue, is enforcement. I think the council, for me, to kind of cut to it, this is more about a private recreational angler, and is there any depth, or any time of year or depth, that you don't fish that you would be willing to give up access during that time, and not charter/for-hire, and not commercial, and I think, for me, that's what I would like to hear. Who is a private recreational angler that could speak to that and say, from say a hundred feet and deeper, would I be willing to --

Because of the barotrauma issues with discarding, is there a time of year that I would be willing to give up, or that depth, if I could still fish inshore, potentially, right, and so inside of ninety or a hundred feet, and I think that's where the barotrauma effects start to change, at that depth, and so you probably would still be able to fish inshore, but not offshore, and then, for me, it's going back to what James said, and what do I get for it, and tell me what I get for it before you -- I mean, it's kind of like the cart -- We need to see that, before you could really say, yes, I agree with that, and I think that's where the council is.

They're waiting on information, and so this, as has been stated, this is the cart before the horse here, and we need to know what is the data that says, if we give this up, what do you get for it, and how does it benefit not only red snapper, but potentially a rebuilding gag population and a rebuilding porgy population and all that stuff, which is what they're trying to tie into it, but they're using the red snapper as the spear, and so is there somebody -- I mean, I can't. I'm not a private recreational angler, and, commercially, I can't give up any depth for that, because I need all of it to survive, and so I will shut up now and go around the room. David, Tony, and then we'll go --

MR. MOSS: So two things. Number one, while I'm not necessarily willing to give up ground, per se, or bottom, but deeper water in the winter would be the most ideal, and I would say that shallower water is critical, particularly down south. You know, you have to be able to fish on the patches in the wintertime. Like, in the Keys, for instance, you have to be able to fish on the patches in the wintertime. You just have to, especially bottom fishing.

Now, the other thing that I will say, which I know is not going to be popular, and it's the unfortunate truth, is we all can think, and in our minds know, that red snapper is rebuilt, but the fact still remains that the science that we have right now says that it isn't, and so, according to the law, we have to do this, and that's just what it is, and it's why we're here.

I get the frustrations of everybody here, and I feel it too. It's frustrating as a four-letter word, but, according to Magnuson, this is what has to be done, and so, until Magnuson changes, or an ACL changes or something like that, I mean, this is what we're charged with doing.

The one other little soapbox piece that I will say, and then I will get quiet for a little bit, is what's further frustrating is I know, as long as I've been on the AP, we've put forth motions, every single meeting, about recreational accountability, and it's gone nowhere, and now our hair is on fire with this stuff, and I get it, but we don't have a choice. I mean, this is why we're here.

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I would think that a closure to match grouper, for breeding, for spawning, and you could close snapper from January to May, and, especially, that said, give it a one to two-month season on each side of that closure, say September to November and May and June, or June and July, and that would allow us to catch some of this bycatch and get rid of that number as well.

MR. HULL: Let me make sure I understood what you said. You said close snapper, but what you really mean is close bottom fishing, because you can't just close snapper. You've got to close the entire snapper grouper to the private rec, and it's the same as the shallow-water grouper closure, is what you said, but you can't just close snapper. It's closed anyway.

MR. CONSTANT: Right, and so what I'm offering is a suggestion to keep snapper closed when the groupers are spawning as well. In other words -- I know it's closed year-round, but then you give it an opening season on each side of that, which would allow people to catch them, to catch the snapper. We have this unattainable bycatch number that we cannot change by anything unless we catch them, or unless we keep them, unless we harvest them, and so let's harvest them with a two-month season on each side of the closure. Personally, I would say eliminate the size limit, so you can catch one and you keep one, but then you get rid of that bycatch number. We've already got record numbers. We've already rebuilt the fishery, but we're not allowed to go because of this bycatch number that we have no ability to touch, and so let's touch it.

MR. HULL: Here's what is up there and what the council is going to see. Closure to match shallow-water grouper, and so closure of what? You said close red snapper.

MR. CONSTANT: No, I'm not talking about -- They're talking about a depth, and I'm talking about all depths. Close the red snapper when grouper is closed, during these months of spawning.

MR. HULL: Yes, and snapper is already closed during those months, and so, I mean, it's already closed, and so, anyway, close red snapper to match shallow-water grouper and open to harvest with two-month seasons on either end of the shallow-water grouper closure, and that would be wonderful, but, I mean, it's already closed, and you only have like a three-day season to harvest them to begin with now, because of the science, and so it's a great suggestion, if you had the ACL to go with it, but I think what they're looking for -- So, if that said close bottom fishing for four months out of the year, during the same time as the shallow-water grouper closure, and so you just close bottom fishing totally -- That's not what you're saying?

MR. CONSTANT: No, I'm not saying that.

MR. HULL: Okay, because that's the way it sounds to me.

MR. CONSTANT: No, and the reason I said that here is it's the closest question I feel I'm going to have to say that.

MR. HULL: So you're good with that, leaving that the way that is for you? Okay. Chris.

MR. MILITELLO: Tony brought that up, and, I don't know, maybe it's -- Why don't we forget all the size limits, and I don't want to blow the scientists' thing out of the water, but, if you catch it, you keep it, if it's eight inches or if it's eighteen pounds, and why do we got to -- Don't throw them out, and then your bycatch goes -- Well, there's going to be the asshole that is just culling them, but --

MR. HULL: Well, I think total retention is an idea that could possibly work, but you still have to consider -- I am just speaking because I know kind of what they're thinking. It's all about all of the species that we interact with when drop a bait to the bottom, okay, and so total retention, and so, if we're discarding -- If we're targeting black sea bass, and we go to the bottom, and we're having to additional kick back black sea bass that are undersized, right, and so maybe it is to your point, and so, if we could harvest our target species, which is black sea bass, quicker, because we don't have to kick back because of the size limit, then we wouldn't be kicking back snappers trying to catch a bigger black sea bass, and I think that's kind of what you're getting at, but it's a -- It's so complicated, and it gets so unbelievable to figure out, and then you've got the problem of we would catch our black sea bass quota quicker, and now we're shutting down the black sea bass fishery, which is going to affect other people, which are fine with discarding them, because it keeps them fishing year-round, right, and so it's just unreal.

MR. MILITELLO: That's grouping all --

MR. HULL: Because they're all under the same snapper grouper species, and we have to -- I see Mike has got his hand raised to fix us up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Well, I have just heard commentary around that type of suggestion, of the total retention, and one of the comments that often gets raised, and, if there's a response for it, great, and then we can include that, but one of the responses to the total retention thing is, especially when it comes to a recreational fishery, and let's say you have total retention of two red snapper, and you go out and you catch two red snapper within an hour, and are you going to be

done fishing for the day? Are you going to like pack it up and go in, especially as a recreational fisher, if you're on a charter or for-hire or something like that?

That's the question that often comes up, and I have heard fish for something else, and, I mean, how often does that -- Like is that the case? Is that what happens, and then, also, one of the regulatory difficulties in trying to put this -- To convert this from that idea into a management with a tangible number, all that stuff, one of the difficulties is to try to come up with current practices and how that affects, numerically, a catch rate. That may be something that is more of a long-term thing that can improve the fishery, but it may not be something that is the response to the current overfishing status that we're talking about right now.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Mike. I saw Andrew, and then I saw James.

MR. MAHONEY: I don't exactly know how this going to fit in, but one thing that I tend to do, when I'm beeliner fishing, or fishing black sea bass on the hook-and-line, is, if I have something on that I know is not what I'm targeting, I will bust him off, because I don't want to deal with it. I don't want to bring him up. I just want my stuff back, so I can bait the hook and get it back down there, and I fish a very light-gauge hook, because of that, and so, if it's over four or five pounds, you know, it's not coming up to the boat. I don't know how that exactly can fit into what you all are talking about, but it's effective, and it's the way that I do it, because, eventually, those red snapper I want to harvest, and so I want them to be taken care of, and I treat them just as well as I treat the fish that I'm harvesting.

Now, you have a compliance issue with that, because people aren't going to want to do it, or they're not educated about it, and that's where the educational process for permitting comes in, which is what we talked a little bit about yesterday. I think that, when everybody is kind of on the same page about how they want this to all end up, and know that it's going to benefit them in the future, to take care of the fish that they're releasing, or not even bringing up the fish that they're releasing, that they're going to be proactive in it, I hope. Anyway, that's all.

MR. HULL: Well, that's -- Your recommendation, and your explanation of what you're doing, fits into gear changes that can be made, and I think we talked about focusing on that. If we didn't, we should add it in there, but lighter hooks, and we do that in other fisheries, too.

MR. MAHONEY: Yes, and this is a gauge size hook, and a higher gauge, a lighter hook.

MR. HULL: Yes. Who was next on this side? James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: To kind of address what Mike was kind of asking, how do we monitor what the recreational fisherman does, and, I mean, we go through this at every meeting, and that is we make them more accountable. That way, we understand their fishing habits better, and kind of maybe what their goals and objectives are.

Then, from that, kind of going back to the total-retention-type situation with the red snapper, I am hearing some kind of mixed things, and, if I could kind of maybe summarize what I'm hearing, that is that the shallow-water grouper, when they're closed, there may not be as many baits going to the bottom, and so, if the red snapper was closed alongside of those, you won't have discards in those months. If red snapper happen to be open all of the months that the shallow-water grouper

are open, and you had -- If you were allowed to harvest one or two or whatever science deems available, then those would be the months that you could do that, and then would be closed alongside of the grouper, when the baits aren't hitting the bottom anyway, and that's what I was hearing, and please correct me if I'm wrong.

MR. HULL: I think that's what you were hearing. I'm not sure on that one, but go ahead, Robert.

MR. LORENZ: Though I'm not really totally into doing this, I will give an idea out there, because, if it would go to public comment, it would be interesting to see how it comes, but, for -- We're getting -- I will be getting us now into regional fisheries management, which is another thing we've discussed with all these things, how it's different at different times of the year in different states and their waters, but to be willing to try, or at least put it on the table, to see how people think about it, for the area of southeastern North Carolina, and that may include northeastern South Carolina, and the possibility of replacing the -- Or adding into the grouper closure, spawning season closure, and just put in a full-blown bottom fishing closure during what is that period, a bottom fishing closure, but I'm going to parse that with from 120 feet and out.

The moral hazard, and I don't think a lot of people are going to fish that much beyond there at that time of the year, and we're probably not going to run into the snappers, because the water is kind of chilly until you get to 140 and start getting on -- That's where it quickly slopes off in our area, but so I will put that out, a bottom closure during the shallow-water grouper season, and I am picking 120, and you could try 100, and 100 is where you're going to get a little bit of passion, because of the sea bass fishermen, the black sea bass fishermen, but let's see where that goes.

MR. HULL: That is from North Carolina.

MR. LORENZ: I will clarify that it's for the recreational fishermen.

MR. HULL: At this point, with recreational. Jack.

MR. COX: You know, one of the cleanest fisheries we have is the black sea bass pot fishery, and we don't have the barotrauma of the fish, because we're fishing, you know, in -- But, during that time, the fishermen have to be outside of about ninety to a hundred feet, but I don't know, and this whole thing drives me crazy, because these are conversations we should be having about gag grouper. We've rebuilt a fishery here, and I understand what David Moss is saying, about we have these laws and stuff, but, guess what? That's why we have lawyers, to change the law when it's not right.

I wholeheartedly agree with the Magnuson Act, and I think it's the best thing in the world, and I don't think we should mess with it, or change it, because it protects what our interests are, but, you know, if we rebuild a fishery, and we've got scientists saying, well, you haven't, and you can't access it, and not we're looking at a whole bottom closure, and maybe it's time to hire a lawyer and have them look at it, because I know most people at this table feel like we have rebuilt the red snapper fishery. I mean, it just aggravates me that we spend all this time talking about it. I am sorry, Jimmy, but I've just got to put it out there, because, Jimmy, I hear about how thick the fish are, and you can't even catch another species where you are, because of red snapper.

MR. HULL: Don't get me started. I've been holding back the whole time, but he just put "hire a lawyer", and I like that. The council ought to get a real kick out of that, but I don't know if the legal team will, or maybe they will laugh at it. They probably will. Are you ready to move to Item d? Have you got enough there? Okay.

How would any potential closures discussed in response to Questions 2b or 2c impact your user group or region? I think we already know how that impacts us, and we just stated all of that, didn't we? Then e is what percent, approximately, of the red snapper you release each year are encountered during the times and areas discussed thus far? Again, I mean, it's kind of like, for Florida, and looking at it, it doesn't matter what sector you're in. From where we are, in northeast Florida, I mean, it's equal. Every month they are there, and it's not like the red snapper all of a sudden show up and they're gone.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just what this question is trying to get at is there was some discussion of, you know, critical times, critical areas, and so, in the times that are viewed as not as critical for some of these other species, and just ballparking how much of the red snapper that you're catching are coming during those times, those areas, that type of thing, and that's what this question is getting at.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. PILAND: As I stated earlier, our critical time is April to November. That's when the charter fleet, fishing from Hatteras, is operating the most, and there's a few boats that go throughout the year, and 100 percent of our interaction is year-round. If you go out there in January, on what we call the bad bottom, and drop bait, in sixty feet of water, there's a darned good chance that you're going to eventually interact with a red snapper, but the critical time that I stated, being April through November, would be when we were interacting with red snapper, and that's when we're fishing, and I guess a sidebar, or a different paragraph, if you're asking for an area or time when we're not interacting with them, I mean, when we can close an area, if I'm not fishing there, I'm not going to interact with them. I don't see the advantage of closing an area that we're not using and how that's going to benefit.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: One of the -- I guess one of the issues with red snapper, especially with the recreational estimation that comes into play here, is that, even if there is not a large number of people, and like, if there was a time period that is not heavily fished, one of the things that you run into with MRIP, and kind of the estimation process with it, is that, if there is an intercept during that time period, where it's a bit rarer, but there is still some effort going on, then there can be issues with the estimation that comes from the releases at that time.

You know, your critical time, what you were talking about, Andy, of April to November, if there were a closure in place, for at least some part, for December through March, you're saying that you don't typically fish during those months, in the areas where you would encounter red snapper, and so it wouldn't have, necessarily, as much of an impact related to that, but it would potentially impact that B2 estimate, because there is still fishing that's going on during those months, and there is still, very likely, going to be an intercept of somebody that released a red snapper, and that's going to go through the process of being expanded into the estimate of releases. I get that

that's a difficult point, for me in trying to convey that, but it's something that can affect the data that are associated with the issue that's trying to be addressed here of these released fish.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. PILAND: I somewhat understand the MRIP calculation, and not 100 percent, but in general, but, still, with the overabundance of red snapper in the South Atlantic, which is a term that the science department has used in AP meetings, to me, one or two intercepts between December and March, extrapolated through MRIP, will it matter, in the scheme of things?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: With the magnitude, with how large the number of releases are for red snapper, it could. I can't say, and I have not -- I have not crunched the numbers, and that's not part of my role, but, because there is a very large number of releases, and there's a percentage of that very large number that is taken as these are the fish that die after they are released, that could be a substantial number of fish, substantial relative to what we have, because there's like -- We're in the tens of thousands right now, and so I don't want to ballpark what that number would be, but it may not be very small, given the high number of releases that are occurring for this fishery.

MR. HULL: Are you good with that so far, Andy, as far as -- Okay. Robert Freeman.

MR. FREEMAN: I think I heard, yesterday and today, that we don't know how many people are targeting these fish, and I think I hear that the council is counting these fish, and how do you do that if there is probably three or four-times as many recreational boats out there targeting these fish as there are commercial guys, who know the rules and try to abide by them? I used to have a manager that would put out some crazy rules, every once in a while, and then, when they were violated, nothing happened, and I had a hard time convincing him to not make a rule that don't make sense, and don't make one that don't intend to enforce.

On a recent weekend, the Coast Guard was offshore on the Big Rock, which is a popular fishing area for the trolling boats, as well as the bottom fishermen, and the Coast Guard was out there boarding the charter boats, and that is not where our problem lies. It is that go-fast boat that's out there ten or twenty times a year, and goes when he wants to, whether the season is open or the weather is okay or not, and we need to focus on what makes sense, and I don't hear that coming out of some of the stuff from the council, and I will get off my soapbox.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. I would like to just stop for a second, and we're trying to address these questions that were put forth to us on what the council is dealing with, and they want to hear from us, and so I would have to ask, if I may, Jessica, and what are we doing wrong here? Are we answering these questions sufficiently, or what can we do better than what we're doing? Is this helping you in any way?

I think that's kind of where we're at now, because we're all pretty frustrated with trying to answer these and not knowing, you know, where we're headed and what's going on and what the numbers are going to be, and I think you're probably frustrated too, but I want to make sure that we're not just wasting our time here being frustrated and trying to answer these questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Jimmy. I think that answering these questions is helpful. Also, if you have other ideas, like gear, and, if you have specific ideas, like, hey, what if the council wanted

to try a specific gear change for the fishery, and I think answering these questions certainly is helpful. I don't know, because I'm sure people are getting hungry at this point, if you want to stop this discussion and take a lunchbreak, and then that might give people a little bit more time to think, and then maybe finalize this right after you come back.

That way, people could talk about this more over lunch, any final thoughts on this, but I do think answering these questions is helpful, and, yes, if you have final thoughts when you come back, or you guys have specific gear that you want to recommend that the council look at, in order to try to reduce these releases, anything like that is helpful.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. That's a good idea, and how about let's take -- It's 12:30, and we need to take an hour for lunch, and so let's get back here at 1:30, and we'll have some final thoughts, and that will give us a chance to talk at lunch, and so maybe a final thought from the AP on what we're doing here with this to the council, and kind of just take a breath and pause, and so we'll see everybody back here at 1:30. Thanks.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

(There is a gap in the start of the audio recording.)

MR. HULL: -- in the private recreational bottom fishing year-round, or half the year, or whatever, and maybe it's year-round, or maybe it's not, and they can go to the SSC, and the SSC says, hey, you're going to reduce your encounters by this amount, and that's the kind of thing they're looking for.

MR. CONSTANT: If, in turn, it would open a season, I think you would get a lot better reception.

MR. HULL: Well, if it's requirement -- Forget the part of this is a recommendation, and, no, it would have to be a requirement. Then they can say, okay, this is -- It's just like the venting tool and the descending device is a requirement. You have to have it on the boat and ready for use, and so it's required, and so we've got some credit for that. We got credit for that, because it's a requirement.

If it was just a recommendation, we wouldn't get credit for it, I don't believe, any credit for it, and so this change in gear would have to be a requirement and something that could be quantified, and, going right back to the hook strength, and so how do you quantify that? There's been a lot of studies on hook strength by -- I know Chip, back in the day, when we were still talking about circle hooks and stuff, we started talking about hooks, and he may have a lot of information on hooks, and I don't know, but that's the kind of thing you're going to need, and then the strength of a fish, the size of fish, and what breaks it, because, anecdotally, the SSC -- They won't accept anything anecdotally, and it's going to have to be quantifiable, but we need -- These are the things that the council is really asking us, as fishermen, people on the water, that use this gear and interact with the species, what works.

Hook strength works, and I agree to that, because I know it does, and I use it in my shark fishery, because I don't want big sharks, and I want little sharks, and so the big sharks bend the hook out, but, you know, how do I quantify that? I mean, I'm telling you that the big sharks don't -- They

bend the hook. Well, I don't know that that's acceptable to the SSC as evidence of I'm not dead discarding big sharks, because they don't ever come to the boat.

There's been -- So gear -- It's about gear right now, we need to think of more -- We have a list that we've given them, and it's everything ranging from hooks to leader lengths to no bait to different -- All kinds of stuff we've kind of thought of, but I don't think any of it has taken hold, and we only said it was a recommendation, and we didn't say it should be required, and so I don't know. What do you guys think? I don't know what else I can say to drive this conversation. Come on.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, I mean, the hook strength would be a possible great solution if you did it on a seasonal basis, like before the recreational guys could catch grouper or something, and it might be something that would give us enough credit to avoid going to shutting down bottom, which I believe everybody wants to do at all costs.

Now the trick is -- Hell, we can hardly find some hook now as it is, and so changing the whole industry over to a hook that might or might not be available could be something that might or might not be able to be done, but hook strength is something I think that could possibly work, and, like I said, from the charter/headboat industry, we would be willing to try anything, except a hundred people jigging at one time, to keep fishing.

MR. HULL: That's great to hear. That's the kind of things that they want to hear, and I think hook is -- There's a bright light on hook strength, and that's a bright light that we really need to look at, but even, from their perspective -- You talked about grouper season, and, I mean, the gag -- We're going to be in a rebuild on gags, right, and so maybe you would get some credit with a lighter hook on the gag rebuild too, if you're busting off the biggest blackbellies, because the hook is letting the big ones go, and I don't know, and so this is strictly, you know, talk right now, but so we've got jigs, and we've got hook strength, two more possible gear changes.

We talked about single rigs, and there is that, and I don't know what you guys are using, most private recreational guys, when they're dropping down for triggerfish and bass, and are you using double rigs, triple rigs, single rigs? Obviously, if you use a single rig, you have that much less chance of catching multiple fish at the same drop, and that could be something, and so you would make the requirement that private rec uses a single-hook rig, no multi-hook rigs, and you might get something out of that. Has anybody got some comment? Robert.

MR. LORENZ: Just to add one, the other one, which, earlier, I referenced like the drum rig that's used in North Carolina, but that would be a large hook on a very short leader, six to eight inches, attached to a fairly substantial weight. Again, the idea being that it would be hooked in the mouth, no swallowing. It's a large hook on a short leader and then attached to a heavier weight, and the short leader being six to eight inches. I think, in Florida, you call them knocker rigs.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: Do you want to hear what I've got to think about it?

MR. HULL: Yes, and I want to hear -- We want to hear from everybody.

MR. COX: We'll talk after the meeting.

MR. HULL: So I'm trying to think back of some of the other things that we had suggested, and can you all help me? Was there some other stuff that you can remember that we suggested? Of course, leader strength goes along with hook strength, that type of thing, but, if the leader breaks, then the hook is gone with the animal, but, if it's non-stainless-steel, it's probably going to rust away, but I think that having the hook break is better than having the leader break, if you want to release something. What else can you think of with gear that could be required that would have an impact on this? Has anybody got any more thoughts? If you don't, then we're going to -- Go ahead, David.

MR. MOSS: I don't have anything else to add. The only thing that I would like to see put in there is -- I would like to see the jig thing, if that's a requirement. The only caveat would be is if we could make -- I always forget what the line is, but the same thing that we did with the circle hooks, that it could be north of there, because, south of there, we don't really encounter a whole lot of red snapper anyway, and so it wouldn't be as much of an issue, and, when you're like yellowtailing down in the Keys and stuff, a jig is not -- It's not how we would fish for them, and so if we could have that jig requirement, if we're going to look into that, north of -- Again, I always forget what that -- There you go. That one.

MR. HULL: That begs the question of why doesn't south Florida and the Keys have their own separate management area for their unique everything, as opposed to north Florida and on up, which is all pretty much the same? James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. Are we in a situation where circles hooks are mandatory at this point in this area that we're talking about bottom fishing, just for clarity's sake, and, along with that, would we be inadvertently promoting the recreational fishermen to let that fish swallow the bait, so that the hook didn't bend out? If we're going to look at all of the things, you know, I know that, if I'm using -- Like, if I'm fishing for a mutton snapper on a drift, and I'm using a light hook that would bend, I kind of want that fish to swallow it, because I know that that hook is going to bend out, and I'm just saying, are we promoting something that we're not looking to do? I'm just putting it out there.

MR. HULL: Thank you, James. Go ahead, Jack.

MR. COX: Let's say we went with a gear modification. How are you going to know who your audience is on how to educate and how to use it, if they don't have a permit? It's like the sea bass endorsement holders, and we get a post card. We get a post card, and it would tell us when to fish, and when the season is, and it's kind of a reminder, but you can't educate a group of people that you don't know who they are, and it just goes back to the private recreational permit, and I'm just telling you that things that you talk about are things that could benefit the whole fishery if you knew who the audience was.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Okay. It looks like, Mike, that's all we can add to gear, and, obviously, you may want to state that -- Well, no, there's nothing else to state. Okay. Are we ready to move on? Never mind. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess just asking, in follow-up, and I don't know that this amendment, on this timeline, is going to do multiple actions, and the council's intent seemed to be that they want

this to be a quicker amendment, and so, if you could prioritize, within the gear, which one is the one that, if you had to pick one, or pick a one and a two, what would be the one or two that you would prioritize the most, to potentially have the best effect?

MR. HULL: Okay, and so I will -- From my perspective, and I will pretend that I'm a private recreational angler, it would be that I would say the single-hook rig, because that would address some of the problems that James said, and we're not changing the hook strength, and we're not changing that, but we're just reducing the potential of multiple fish on a single drop, with multiple discards, instead of one discard at a time.

If you required a single-hook rig, and then you're going to have to do an analysis on how many private -- What are they using now, and, if they aren't using a single-hook rig, and they're using multi-hook rigs, then that's going to be a reduction. You know, if you can prove all of that, you might get something out of it, and so that would be my view. Who is next? Andrew.

MR. MAHONEY: I just wanted to say, real quick, about the single-hook rig -- I don't know if other people go through this or not, but, a lot of times, it's the second fish that is better, when you've got the double-hook rig down, and so I feel like, a lot of times, the first fish may bring in the second better fish, and is that something that other people experience, or is that just me? I don't know. Anyway.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, I would be in favor of a single-hook rig if it was tied to a seasonal single-hook rig. We're trying to reduce the catch, and so, if you go from two to one, obviously, that's a reduction. I didn't get too far in math, but that's definitely a reduction. If you did it for five months of the year, or six months out of the year, and, you know, you're still having a cut, but you make it so that, when grouper season comes in, and some of these other seasons come in, you go to double for four or five months, and so then you could sort of splice it, to make -- Like, once again, from the charter/headboat, I would be willing to almost sacrifice somebody, but whatever, but do anything than to lose bottom and to have fisheries shut down.

MR. HULL: Thanks a lot. Hey, private rec guys, you can answer this, and what are you using now? Are you using double rigs, or triple rigs? I mean, who is using -- Is it predominantly that's what you're doing?

MR. CONSTANT: Depending on the species. I mean, if we're trigger fishing, yes, I use a double-chicken rig. If I'm a grouper fishing, no, I use a longer leader with a hook, and he's going to get the bigger fish, and so it's a mixed bag, but I would be single hook is number one, and jig is number two, on that list.

MR. HULL: Thank you. With single hook, long leader, amberjack and grouper, stuff like that, and then so the only thing you're going to lose is when you're targeting smaller animals.

MR. CONSTANT: I catch more amberjack on a jig than almost --

MR. HULL: There you go, but, you know, you can still catch triggerfish and bass and stuff like that.

MR. CONSTANT: Trigger would hurt us the most, because we catch a lot of triggers on the double-chicken rig.

MR. HULL: Roger. Does somebody else want to chime-in? You're using a single hook for grouper, yes. Robert Freeman.

MR. FREEMAN: I am confused as to how you would monitor the gear requirement, and how do we know that all these boats are going to be fishing one-hook rigs? We don't have the law enforcement that is boarding these boats. In 40,000 hours of fishing out there, I've been boarded one time offshore, and the guy that came on the boat, and this is before there were the restrictions that we have now, he didn't know a king mackerel from a grouper.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, on the enforcement front, I understand that there are going to be difficulties related to it, but, at the same time, there are also circle hook requirements, or circle hook laws, that are in place right now, and that's why, really, for this fishery, the biggest and best enforcement is the outreach, the education, and, to some extent, the peer pressure of making sure -- Fishermen holding other fishermen accountable to have common practices be good practices. That's something that we will certainly encourage, moving forward, but that -- It's a concern, but there are current regulations on the books that aren't too far off from what would be being talked about there.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Along those lines, I'm not really too worried about the enforcement. I mean, for me, the entire thing is giving options to the managers to do anything except shut down bottom, and so, if they want to say go with one, and they'll enforce it, however they want to enforce it, that's up to them, and it doesn't make a difference to me, but just as long as we can keep the fisheries open and keep rolling.

MR. HULL: Gotcha. Jack.

MR. COX: I don't think there is an enforcement anymore. I've not been checked in two years out there fishing, and I think we're just working off the honor system.

MR. HULL: David.

MR. MOSS: For the most part, recreational anglers want to do the right thing. I mean, if they know what the right thing is. There is plenty of guys that I fish with, and they use circle hooks, even though, down in my neck of the woods, it's not required, because they are convinced that it's the right thing, and so on and so forth.

As far as, you know, which ones I would prefer up there, I mean, for us, again, we encounter them when we're typically mutton fishing, which is a single-hook -- Usually it's a single-hook-type deal anyway, but so I'm cool with that. I would also be okay with jigs, and my only question is, and I understand that we don't know this right now, but what kind of a buyback are we getting, and "buyback" is probably not the right word, but what are we getting? Which are we going to get the best bang for the buck, so to speak, from any of those, and it's rhetorical, because I understand that

you don't have that answer right now, but, whichever one we've going to get the best bang for the buck, that's the one that I would put as number one.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. That's a good point. There's a lot of information that is yet to come for all of us, and so, Mike, do you want to ask anything else of us on this? Go ahead, Andy.

MR. FISH: If it ends up being a single-hook rig, I just wanted to make sure that accountability on regulation on landings will be noticed. Do you see what my question is? Since there's a lag in regulations for landings, per year, you're now cutting down one hook, and, if that reduces the amount of catch that there is, I just want to make sure that, in the algorithm, that that's accounted for.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think I'm understanding what you're saying, and, as far as the estimation within MRIP, I would have to get back to you on that, but, within kind of the context of how this amendment is trying to be framed, in the sense of, you know, moving forward, there would be a reduction in encounters, and that would be projected forward, along with the new ABC, potentially, and that's something that I believe that we're able to take into account.

The information about the projections would need to be developed before this amendment is finished, and like I'm sure you all want to see it, and the council would want to see it, and so everybody would want to know what is happening, before it happens, or what is projected to happen, at least.

MR. HULL: Chris.

MR. KIMREY: First off, nobody wants to close bottom, but, with gear restrictions, is it possible, if the council and the managers and everybody are just determined that closing bottom, in some fashion, is going to happen, is it possible to couple these hotspots that they may potentially close, and hopefully they won't, with gear restrictions, maybe? If you have a hotspot that's determined, instead of a complete closure, could you make it jigs only, or could you make it single-hook only?

That is not what we want, and we don't want to close bottom, but I know that, in the past, there's lots of things that we didn't want to happen that happened, and so this would be a compromise. If the managers decide that's what it is, is there some way that you all can word a phrase of, if necessary to close hotspots, could it be not a complete closure, but jigs or single hooks instead, or something to that effect?

MR. HULL: I think we've got that up there. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I will agree with that. I mean, I was thinking the same thing. There is a very specific area where they just catch ridiculous amounts of reds in our area, and it's going to vary on region, but, whatever area gets determined, if, within that area, for a time period, or for the year or whatever, if you have to use a single rig, instead of a double, and then, on either side of whatever that area is, you can use a double, that would -- You know, that might meet what they're looking for, because there is definitely, in sixty-five to ninety-five feet, reds all day long, every place you go.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Cameron. Good comments. I think we have worn that out, at this point, because we know we're going to be talking about it again. Okay. Hold on. Robert, you had your hand up, and I missed it. Robert.

MR. LORENZ: Mr. Chair, what I was going to say is that we discuss maybe kind of a summary statement of sort of the psychology of what went on during this discussion of Amendment 35, and, basically, what we're finding is, for most of us, our heart wasn't in this, on providing these suggestions as asked, and so I have thought of the potential of entering in, for the council, which the council can provide on, sort of a summary on how we feel about this, and I'm willing to make a couple of sentences.

MR. HULL: Go right ahead.

MR. LORENZ: Where I think we were, and comment on whether you all agree with me or not, is, in Amendment 35, this AP was asked to provide suggestions to further reduce red snapper interactions while fishing for other species. The AP was asked to consider what could be punitive actions that could include bottom closures and altered seasons, or shut seasons, for other species, in order to avoid red snapper interactions.

The AP presented opinions and suggestions in the best of faith. However, the overriding feeling and opinion of this AP is that the red snapper is recovered. This is based on the collective on-the-water experience of the AP members. The AP overwhelmingly feels that they were asked to provide suggestions to solve a problem that no longer exists. The red snapper is highly abundant, and the biomass of the species is largely assumed, by this AP, as being recovered and sufficient in abundance to begin a pathway to more liberal regulation of the species. It's just a statement.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. Does everyone agree to having that statement up there, on behalf of all of us, the AP? Is there anybody opposed to it? Then keep it there, man. Okay, and so we would like the council to hear that from us. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just, if you want that verbatim, Bob, can you just give me a copy of that, and I can either take a picture, or type it out for me, and I will include it in the report.

MR. HULL: Okay. I don't see any other hands right now on the topics there, and I think we're going to -- Did you say Jessica?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and I was just making sure that she was --

MR. HULL: Yes, she's all right with everything. We've given you what you wanted, Jessica, right? Okay. All right. So we're ready to move on to the next topic, which is Amendment 49, greater amberjack, and so I'll hand it back to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so we're coming back to Amendment 49, and this is a document that you all saw a much, much earlier draft on, about a year ago, that we're coming back to, because it's getting more towards its final stages, and so we're going to be looking to the AP for some feedback on it.

As a reminder of the background for Amendment 49, this was developed in response to the SEDAR 59 stock assessment of South Atlantic greater amberjack, and that finished up in 2020. The assessment stated that greater amberjack are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. This was the first stock assessment that included the FES recreational estimates for greater amberjack, and so those are included and reflected in the ABC and ACL numbers that were resulting from this.

The SSC reviewed the assessment and recommended the OFL and ABC levels that are shown on the screen, and you also see the current ABC listed up there on the screen, and it's noted that future recreational catches are going to be monitored in the FES methodology from MRIP. Right now, and in the past, they've been monitored through the MRFSS, and they never made the transition over to the Household Telephone Survey.

With the current -- With the management issues that are trying to -- I am sorry. I inadvertently put in a slide, or left over a slide, from the last time you all saw this. Skipping down to the amendment timing, where we are right now, and the next meeting is June of 2022, and there have been -- Scoping has been conducted, and the council has approved this document to go out for public comment and to have public hearings. We're going to be conducting a public hearing at the June 2022 council meeting in Key West, and that's going to be in-person, and we're going to do that during the public comment session for the council meeting in general, and so we'll be advertising that and putting out a public comment document within the briefing book for that.

Right now, the amendment is on track for final consideration in September of 2022, and so, looking at our goals for today, they are to review the current actions and alternatives, provide any additional comments to the ones that you previously provided, and, if you need to revise any of your previous input, based on some of the changes that have been made between then and now, we can go ahead and get that recorded, and it is noted that this is the last opportunity for AP input before final action, since it's going final in September, and so, within this discussion, we would be looking for the AP to provide advice on what the preferred alternatives should be and any rationale that would support that preferred alternative that you all would put forward.

Getting into the action items themselves, the first action, Action 1, that's addressing the ABC, total ACL, and optimum yield. Right now, the preferred alternative would set the total ACL equal to the recommended ABC, and you see that there on the screen, and that's the preferred alternative that the council currently has. There is also, shown on there, the current total ACL, and the other alternatives that were considered are shown more conceptually than they are with the numeric numbers, just to point to those, but they are included within the discussion document, if you look in the appendix there.

Your previous input on this action was to recommend a consistent approximate 2.8-million-pound ACL, and this -- There was an alternative, based on this recommendation, that was drafted, and the council put it in, and they considered it, and, eventually -- They did remove it prior to the draft that you see before you. The other input that you provided was that the council consider the potential impacts of a large short-term ACL change that would be seen in the initial years of putting in this total ACL.

With each of these actions, I am going to kind of pause and jump back to the discussion document, so that I can record any additional comments, but, if this is the feedback that you all would like to

continue along with this action, then you can indicate that and let me know that. If you want any changes, then please let me know, and we'll get those recorded.

MR. HULL: You saw what the council decided so far on that ABC equals ACL, and then the suggestion that we had for the consistent 2.8 million pounds over the timeline was taken out, and they considered it, and it looks like they took it out, and so it goes back to -- Mike, could you go back to that chart that shows the ABC over time?

You're going to get an initial big increase, and then it's going to decrease over time, and so is there any type of -- Is that what we're looking for there, and the other -- We had mentioned consider the impacts of larger short-term ACL changes, and, I mean, there's a lot of ways to look at that, and they're telling us that we can have these fish, and so let's have them, and that's one approach, and another approach is it looks like we've tried to say something like let's just be more consistent with something straight across-the-board, and does anybody want to have any more input on this, or are you happy the way it is? Jack.

MR. COX: Amberjack reminds me a little bit of snowy grouper, years ago, when the assessment came out and said the snowy was really in very good shape, and we did the same deal, and, you know, I just think we should be conservative. I'm just saying that we're going to find ourselves in a situation with amberjacks where we are with snowies, because, when we close the gags, we're going to put a lot of pressure, on the commercial side, onto jacks, and I just want it on the record that, five years from now, we're going to have a bad greater amberjack assessment, because I personally don't see the amberjacks in my area as healthy as what the assessment says.

MR. HULL: Let's give him a chance to get that up there and make sure you're good with it. You may want to put "North Carolina", in case somebody from other state has a different opinion. Is that good with you, Jack, what you see there? Thank you. Andy.

MR. PILAND: I'm also from North Carolina, and I see a lot of commercial pressure on the amberjacks in my area, and I agree with Jack that we need to keep a -- We need to be careful, because there's a lot of pressure on them.

MR. HULL: Okay. Anybody else? Andy.

MR. FISH: I also disagree with the stock assessment. I have buddies that fish from Stuart to my area in Canaveral, and a little bit up towards the Daytona area, and our amberjacks are in very poor condition, along with the shark predation on them, which is also making it very tough on us, but the amberjacks aren't anywhere near what they were four years ago in our neck of the woods, and I don't know if they all went up to North Carolina, but I know that, in North Carolina, I saw more in the last two years than I've seen in my six years of going up. That's it.

MR. HULL: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. As far as in the Keys, overall, I probably interact with -- Well, I communicate with two or three other jack fishermen, and the jacks this year may be a little bit stronger than they were last year. We're not seeing them on the reef in the numbers that we had in years past, but -- I don't know if we're quite there yet, but a resounding cry that I hear is size limit, and the viability of a smaller fish in the marketplace is quite a bit higher.

Also, I would like to point out that we're already into the 2022-2023 fishing season, and I don't believe that the total ACL is that 4,380,000 number, and so it's kind of a moot point initially, as a higher jump-off point for the 2022-2023 season, and I believe, last year, 2021 and 2022, we only caught just under 62 percent of the ACL, and so that, in itself, should tell you that the fishery is not as strong as what the assessment says. We didn't hit our mark, and let's not get ahead of ourselves here and try and catch more, or at least make the perception that there's more to catch.

MR. HULL: Okay. I don't see any other hands. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just checking back, is there an alternative other than the preferred that you all would like to recommend to the council?

MR. HULL: The preferred, we saw that ABC equals ACL.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So the preferred alternative is right here, and, scrolling down to Alternative 3, this would add a 10 percent buffer in between the ABC and the total ACL, and then this would add a 20 percent buffer in between the ABC and the ACL, and so what you're looking at, throughout these tables, these two columns are -- Actually, optimum yield should be changing, and so I'm going to close this. I am not worried about that as much.

This is what you should be looking and comparing in between these options, is this final column, this total ACL column, and so, in this first one, 4.38, ranging down to 2.669, million, and, in this one, it's 3.94, ranging down to 2.40, and then the last one is 3.50 ranging down to 2.13.

MR. HULL: So that's with a 10 percent buffer and then a 20 percent buffer?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. HULL: Which reduces the total ACL in that column, respectively, and then you can see how it gets reduced over time. Is there any -- Jack.

MR. COX: I would be a little more consistent, instead of having that big buffer and dropping it so much, like it is, over time, and having something more consistent across-the-board, and not start with such a high ACL, like we are. Look, over the years, how far it drops down, and --

MR. HULL: Which is what we did in the previous recommendation. That's what we made, was to have a consistent -- I think it was 2.8 million pounds consistently, and, for some reason, they didn't -- They threw it out, and Mike would have to answer why.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would be very hesitant to speak for the council, and so, if a council member wants to provide any advice, then that would be great, but my recollection of those discussions is that they were trying to kind of direct the IPT, as we were developing our analysis and trying to start limiting what alternatives would be done, and, in that meeting that was shortly -- It might have been the same meeting, or shortly after, the information on gag came forward, and so there would be -- There was potential concern about, if gag goes down, what else is the commercial fishery going to go for, and there may be more desire to have greater amberjack available as a

species that the commercial fishery could target when they don't have as much access to gag, and I see Kerry nodding in the background, and so I'm guessing that's a correct recollection.

MR. HULL: Does that answer -- James and then Jack.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: We had a very similar discussion at the last AP meeting, with yellowtail snapper, and I had some very strong opinions about what we should do with that fishery as well, and it's a very similar situation. What I am not seeing here -- If we were going to adopt a consistent catch, I'm not seeing the maximum sustainable yield, and has that been missing, or did I scroll past it, because the consistent harvest can't be above the MSY, and so, if we wanted to adopt a number, then it couldn't be higher than that maximum sustainable yield, which is that information available, first of all? We have the optimum yield and the ABC and the total ACL.

Then, just for the sake of both sectors in the room, do you have the sector allocation and who gets what currently and what that proposal looks like, moving forward, with these numbers? I mean, I think that, having two interests in a room, we would like to see how that looks. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The MSY, I can look that up, and it's in the long amendment document, and so I would have to look it up and pull it over, but, as far as what you were talking about with the requirements of setting the ACL, and so the ACL needs to be at the ABC or below, and so the ABC is listed here, and what happened with the recommendation that you all provided last time, that 2.8 million, what the IPT developed, to align with what you were talking about, as far as you need to stay at or below the ABC, is that option had this number, 2.818, in these first three years, in all the first three years, and then it matched the ABC in these last two, and so there was still a little drop-off at the end, but it wasn't that drastic swing as much, and it adhered to the requirement that total ACL must be equal to or less than ABC.

As far as the allocations, if that's something that is more of a determining factor for this, then what we can do is we can move to the next action, which is the allocations, and, within this document, there are seven actions that are listed there. The first is total ACL, and the second is sector allocations, and then there's recreational minimum size limit, commercial minimum size limit, commercial trip limit, April spawning closure, and recreational annual catch target, and so those are the things that we'll be getting to today, but, if you want us to do allocation and then come back to the total, then that's something that we can do, if that helps your decision.

MR. HULL: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I wish that Jessica was here, so she could back me up, and so, someone on staff, tell me if I'm wrong, but I do believe that we had a discussion about constant a catch scenario, and I know we had it on something, but I'm pretty sure that we had it on amberjack, and one of our concerns was the fact that, if you sort of took the mean of those years, you end up above -- At some point, you end up higher than you can be, and --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That was for yellowtail that we had that conversation, and what my recommendation to the council was, essentially, was get that constant harvest rate, along with the science that was available, to get it at that lowest number, because we're not hitting ACLs, currently, and we collectively see a little bit of a problem in the fishery, and, me and my peers, we

decided that a more conservative approach would be best, instead of waiting until there was a problem on paper with the science.

I kind of got a bunch of guys onboard with that, and those are the guys that I represent when I'm here in this room, and so that's -- You know, that's where we were on that species, and, you know, having a commercial fishery built around a number that is -- That keeps a lot of these guys viable year-round was really important to us, and so that's where my conversation points are kind of coming from when we're talking about amberjack, is to put these concerns out there for these fishermen as well.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just to finish, what I wanted to say was, if you all, as a body, want to have a discussion that you would be okay with having a constant catch scenario at the lower amount, that would be a discussion that would be useful for us to have as council members, because I feel like we strayed away from that, because we didn't want to be the most restrictive, and so, if that's a discussion you all want to have, I'm just saying that I think that would help some of us who were struggling with that aspect of it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Kerry. I think that, from what I am hearing from a couple of us here, and I need to hear from everybody else that's concerned, or has ideas and thoughts, on amberjack, and then we can go forward with some more discussion. Paul Nelson, go ahead.

MR. NELSON: I am good with the mid-range ACL on trying to keep things level that were conservative, but, the more important thing, I would rather keep what I catch, instead of throwing it back to the sharks and double killing everything. I don't mind the ACL at the end of the year, and I agree with these guys that it's not -- We won't fill it, the way it is right now, especially if we're throwing back our fish to the sharks.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that comment, and so I think that our council member, Kerry, was saying, hey, if there's something that we want to suggest about possibly -- You know, we already suggested it once, and it was taken out, for various reasons, but is there something we would like to suggest of some conservative number to help buffer this, so you could -- He showed some examples they had up there, which was a 10 percent reduction and a 20 percent reduction, which showed -- You saw the numbers and what it did to it, and so that was brought up by Mike, or is there something else, maybe just one constant catch number, that you guys could come up with, where you feel like that they could address everybody's concerns of having access to the fishery and live with it, and I think that's what they're asking for now. I have Jack, Paul, and James.

MR. COX: Well, I don't know why they took it down, because we already had this discussion of that 2.8, because I remember it now, but I -- Personally, in the commercial sector, I would love to see us just have a consistent trip limit, which would be a thousand pounds per trip, rather than 1,200 pounds to start the season and then we drop it down to a thousand.

What that does is it gives you a little bit of a buffer to protect the fishery, and I don't want to see us get in a situation where we are with gags and other fisheries and not have this amberjack fishery, and so I'm not trying to take anything, but I just want to see us take a more conservative approach, so we don't lose the fishery five years down the road from now, and so I would suggest that we do a thousand-pound trip limit for the commercial sector at the beginning of the season and a thousand pounds, like we have it, towards the second-half of the season. We have a split season right now,

and we have two different trip limits. The money that we're getting on these fish now, it's not going to hurt anybody.

MR. HULL: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: For the trip limit discussion, that will be another action that is getting addressed in this, and so I'll note it here, but we'll bring it back up later on.

MR. HULL: Paul.

MR. NELSON: I wasn't here for the last meeting, and so I was just going to ask how they came up with the 2.8 million pounds. Is that like an average over the whole time?

MR. HULL: Yes, and I think, if you look at the ABC equals ACL, and you look at the middle of it, you've got 2.8 there for 2024-2025, and it's kind of like the median range of the catch level, and so I think that's -- As I recall, that was the logical conclusion for that one. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I just wanted to add that it can't be that number, because that's above the minimum ABC. If you're going to adopt a constant catch, it's got to be at the lowest level, and, now, that being said, that is very, very restrictive initially, but, if you're not hitting your ACLs as it is, and we're going to move into this when we start talking about allocation, which becomes very important for the commercial sector in particular, because we have complied, and we have been held accountable, that we retain the portion of the ACL that we have been accustomed to and not get that taken from us, and I don't want to be sectional like that, but, when it comes right down to it, that's really what we need to do, in order to protect our commercial harvesters up and down the coast of this wonderful country. Thank you.

MR. HULL: So the difference between 2,818,000 and 2,669,000 is, what, 131,000 pounds difference? Correct? Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I am going to do something really quick here, just to remind you, and this what was formally Alternative 5, and this was in line with the requirements of ABC, because the annual value of the ACL was not exceeding the ABC, and it's just this would be the long-term value, but there was still kind of an initial bump in the more recent years, relative to what the long-term value would be, and so, if you wanted it the same all the way through, then James is correct that it would need to be this number or lower, but, if you wanted to do something like this, that's what was previously proposed.

The other piece of information, kind of drawing from that last council discussion, is that reminder of what's going to be coming in the future for gag, and I believe snowy grouper is another one, where those are going to be kind of the opposite of what you see here with amberjack. With amberjack, you have a big bump in the beginning, and then it declines and levels-out in the long-term.

With gag and snowy, those plans are going to require a big drop in the beginning, and then it's going to increase over time, as the stock rebuilds, and so that was one of the things that got brought up within the council meeting, was how do you offset that big drop from gag and snowy, and is greater amberjack a place where you would be willing to allow a bit more fishing, because you

know you're going to have this drop coming in these other places, and so that was the reasoning, at that point, for why they ultimately removed it, but, if you all want to recommend it, those are - - What I just said were the routes that you could go, is something like that, or that bottom number all the way through.

MR. HULL: Okay. Folks, what do you want to do? Jack.

MR. COX: I would like to see it back in there, based on our conversations that we're having about the fishery, but, at the same time, when we start talking about allocation, we can't change the allocation to 65/35 and leave it like that. In other words -- I think that's where we're going after this slide, and we're going into allocation.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess it sounds, from some of the comments, including that one, that what this number looks like -- How you all feel about this number is affected by what the allocation is that you all are going to recommend, moving forward, and so, if it's okay with the Chair, would it be better to move to that action and pick those percentages and then come back up to this one for the total number?

MR. HULL: Yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. In that case, I'm going to pause on this and just slide to the next slide for sector allocations, and so the current allocations are shown in this top table. Recreational is about 60 percent, just under 60, and commercial is just over 40 percent, and you see the poundages there. One thing to note is that the allocation percentages were derived when MRFSS recreational data were used, and the recreational ACL would be reflective of the MRFSS recreational data and not the FES data, and so that's one difference that you will note when comparing these numbers.

Right now, the council's preferred alternative is a 65 percent/35 percent split, recreational and commercial, and the different alternatives that were there -- So Number 1 is the current percentages and Number 2 -- That is if you took the FES recreational data and plugged it into the same formula that was used to come up with the current allocations. That's what you would end up getting, is about a 70/30 recreational/commercial percentage. 65/35 was kind of an intermediate value between those, and it also happens to be how the landings have shaken out over the last ten years. The ten-year average landings for the different sectors, compared to the total, have been about 65/35.

Alternatives 4 and 5 were added in the last meeting, and so, if you take a look in the document, there is a section there that summarizes the analyses that have been done on these alternatives so far. We don't have any analysis related to Alternatives 4 and 5, because those were just added into the document, and so we just haven't had the time to put that in, but those were put in with respect to, right now, both of the alternatives that are considered, other than the no action, would be allocating a higher percentage to the recreational, and there was some desire for there to be alternatives considered that would shift more allocation to the commercial fishery, given the potential growing importance of greater amberjack to the commercial fishery, with some of the reductions coming to other commercially-important species.

Those were added in there, and I can show you a landings summary, if that's something that you need to go in, and that's linked in the fishery overview, and that's also linked in the discussion document, and I'm not sure if you all have taken the chance to look at that, but we do have the most recent closures listed there, and there were rec closures, a couple of them, in the 2016-2017 and the 2017-2018 season, and there were commercial closures, as shown there on the screen.

One important thing to keep in mind, especially for the commercial fishery, is that the split season was not implemented until the 2020-2021 season, and so all those closures there were not in a split season scenario, and we only have I think one year of data, one year of finalized data, that includes the split season, and so all the analyses that are being done right now, just because we don't have the number of years with that, those don't fully account for the split season, as it's managed right now, and we just don't have the years, and so that's something to keep in mind though as you take a look at those different analyses within the document.

Scrolling through the discussion document that's in your briefing book, there is a discussion portion, and there is a summary of analyses. For each of these actions, there is a summary of analyses in the last appendix, and so we can look at that in a bit more detail, and I've kind of introduced the action at this point, and I will pause and see what all you want to see, and what would be helpful for you in providing your comments. The previous comments that have been made are shown there on the screen.

MR. HULL: One second, Jack. Can you go back to the slide that shows the preferreds on sector allocation?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The poundages shown here would be the sector ACLs if, under Action 1, the current preferred alternative, Alternative 2, which is ABC equals ACL, if that was selected and the preferred alternative for Action 2, which is this one, Alternative 3. If both of the current preferreds are selected, this is what your poundages would look like for the five projected fishing seasons.

MR. HULL: With ABC equaling ACL.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. HULL: So, for me, looking at the commercial season numbers, I would need to know, because I cannot remember where we're at now, of what we've caught in the last couple of years, where we just had the split season, and so what did we catch last year?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Just over 500,000 pounds.

MR. HULL: Totally, between both seasons?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: The first half was 318,628, and the second was 190,094.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so I can see where the council was at with looking at the increasing fish coming from the stock assessment and then looking at all the potential closures of gag, which you mentioned, and snowy, and like where are these guys going to go to fish, when they can't fish for gags anymore, and some relief, and so they turn to amberjack, because the stock assessment says,

hey, you've got some relief here, and so they're looking out for us, and now we're coming and saying, well, we need -- I'm glad you're looking out for us, but we think you need to be a little more conservative and take a conservative approach on what you give us. That's where we're at, right?

So now we're trying to come up with what that number should be, and then, looking at their preferreds, they're way above what we're currently catching, but the question is what are we going to -- What are the effort increases going to be for the next couple of years, after gag gets closed, because that's going to happen, and so what do we need to provide that access in the short-term, and so that's where -- For me, it's like we kind of need more information, but we don't have that, but we need to give some kind of an idea of what we're looking at to them, that we would like to be a little more conservative, and I think that's the idea, but we -- It depends on the allocation decision, as to what we think is the number, because there's a certain point -- If we caught -- If, last year, we caught five-hundred-and-something-thousand pounds, if there was an increase, in the next couple of years, and we catch -- I don't think we're ever going to double that.

I think, if we catch another 150,000 or 200,000 -- I don't know if it is or not, or if we don't, but it's a tough call, and so I'm just trying to summarize kind of where we're at and how do we come up with a good number, and so I see James' hand is up, and I think I saw Jack's hand.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Just where we're at there, at the 2026-2027 season, that would be, at the lowest ABC, I'm pretty sure, compared to the other charts that we've seen, and that would have the commercial harvest at -- I believe it was at a 65/35, and is that right, for recreational to commercial allocation, and that would leave the commercial sector with right at 900,000 pounds to harvest, which is almost twice as much as we harvested last year, commercially. Even if we did adopt the most conservative approach, and the same allocation as the preferred action, from a commercial standpoint, I think we would be in pretty good shape, as far as what we were retaining, and that's how I feel about that.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and that's a good summary, and so, even there, with the preferreds that are in place with the preferred allocations, you're going to have a first season commercial of -- If you chose the lowest, the 2026-2027, which is that something, Mike, that could be chosen, if you add those together as the total ACL, to be divided up between for commercial, as a recommendation to the council to choose?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: As far as taking this bottom row and like add rec and commercial for the total ACL, and is that what you're --

MR. HULL: Correct.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, that would be -- So what was being talked about -- That's this number. Adding those two together is this number, and so that would be recommending a constant ACL of 2,669,000, and, with this allocation, that would be a 65/35 recreational to commercial allocation of that poundage.

MR. HULL: Okay. Jack.

MR. COX: Well, here's the problem with that thesis, James. If in fact the majority of the people want to vote to decrease the size of the amberjacks on the commercial side, we're going to catch those fish twice as fast, because, for every four fish I am catching, I'm putting three back to keep a thirty-six-inch fish, and that's where I see this going in the next conversation, and so we're going to need more fish, and we're going to meet the ACL faster, but I am just saying that, over time, I've seen what has happened when we get an assessment that is not right, in my opinion, like this greater amberjack, from what I'm seeing on the water, and then we're going to get ourselves in a situation like we are with the snowies, and that's where I see us heading.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: To your point, which is excellent, that's kind of the beauty of this, because we're only harvesting just over 500,000, and, if the current participants stay in this fishery, and we don't attract more people that are moving from maybe the gag fishery or something like that, we do have almost 900,000 pounds to catch, from the current level that we're catching right now, and so it is almost twice as much, when you look at it, if the people who are participating now can meet the total potential of the ACL. We're not catching it now, but, if we introduce those smaller fish, we might meet it nice and quickly, and, for everybody involved, that's going to be a lot more dollars.

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I don't want to speak for the charter/for-hire, but, in South Carolina, from Charleston to Hilton Head, I know a whole lot of recreational fishermen, the guys that are in tournaments and that go deep, and I don't know one of them that harvests amberjack. My point to that, from where I'm sitting, is those numbers should be flipped. I don't know if the charter/for-hire needs to have a bunch of pictures taken and needs to have them taken home, but, as a recreational sector, I don't see us doing that kind of numbers.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Just to Jack and James there, couldn't we go with like the 2024-2025 and meet there in the middle? Wouldn't that be an option as well?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It could be up until 2025, and then, beyond that, it would have to go to a lower limit.

MR. HULL: Yes, you have to pick the lower number, and that's why the 2.8 got thrown out earlier, because it exceeded the lowest number at some point. As we're knocking this around, do we want to make a recommendation to the council on their preferreds? If we're going to, we need to come up with some type of decision on it.

For me, I'm good with the lower number, because it looks like we have plenty of buffer there. If you had to -- It almost doubles it, and, I mean, that seems like you would have to double the effort to close the fishery, and that seems like a stretch, and I don't think we're going to do that, and so we would be safe there, but yet it provides some conservation, in case -- Who knows? It shows that we're thinking about this, and the council needs to think about it, and, of course, that's why they threw it back to us, because they want to hear from us. James, do you want to make a motion, or does anybody want to make a motion to some of this?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Actually, since we jumped ahead of one thing, can we finish this out, before we make a decision here, and talk about size limit, so that we can really fully get the big picture of this fishery, please, kind of to what Jack was -- What his point was about meeting the ACL a little quicker, possibly?

MR. HULL: Staff, can we do that? Can we move past this now, and then we'll come back and make a decision after we see all the impacts that are going to be affected, and, of course, size limit is going to, and so can we go to that and get a little education there?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and what I will do is I'll just run down the rest of the actions, and then we can come back and hit the feedback for each one.

MR. HULL: Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We kind of discussed through Action 2, and Action 3 is a recreational minimum size limit consideration, and this was derived -- It originally came from the minimum size limit suggestion that started with commercial, and then there was a recommendation from the AP to make the two have equal minimum size limits, and so there was consideration of different minimum size limits for the recreational.

Right now, the council's preferred alternative for this is to keep the recreational size limit where it is, and they did want to check in with the AP and see what you all's feelings are on that. One thing that -- One piece of information that was included for the council, that I just wanted to make sure you all see, is the maturity schedule from the last stock assessment. What we see is, by twenty-nine inches fork length, females are at 99 percent maturity, and so, at the current size limit, they would be getting pretty close, somewhere between 89 and 99, but closer probably to 99 percent female maturity. Some of your previous input is listed there, and most of this wasn't as much in the direction of increasing as it was making the size limits equal, if you all wanted to see that, but that was Action 3.

Then Action 4 is considering decreasing the commercial minimum size limit, and so, right now, it's at thirty-six inches fork length. The council does not have a preferred alternative currently selected for this, and they wanted to come back to get a bit more AP input, as well as look at the public comments, before selecting a preferred for this action, but there are different sizes, ranging as far down as making the size limit equal to the recreational, at twenty-eight inches, and so there was input from you all, previously, about the preference for smaller fish by the commercial fishery, as far as plate preference and increasing the trip and catch efficiency, as well as the survival of any fish that need to be released, and so that was brought up before.

Action 5 is looking at the seasonal commercial trip limits. The current trip limits have a 1,200-pound limit in Season 1, which goes from March through August, and then a thousand-pound trip limit in Season 2, and that goes from September through February. The commercial ACL is allocated between those two seasons, with 60 percent going to Season 1 and 40 percent going to Season 2. There is carryover from Season 1 to Season 2, and so, if that full Season 1 quota is not met, then that carries over into Season 2.

The split season was -- As I said before, it was recently implemented, and so we don't have a huge amount of data, and the analysis that we're able to provide at this time does not really account for

the split season being in place, and that's just kind of a caveat to keep in mind when you look at any of those analysis summaries.

Looking at the second alternative for the trip limits, and so Alternative 2 would consider a change to the Season 1 trip limit, and this would potentially increase it to 1,500, 2,000, or 2,500 pounds. There are some projected closure dates that are in Appendix 3 that are shown, and one thing to note, with those, is that those would -- The ones that are shown in that summary are based on the council's previous preferred alternative for allocation. They previously preferred keeping the 60/40 split, as it currently is, and they change their preferred alternative at the last meeting, and so we don't have their most recent preferred alternative numbers for that, because the analysis was done using their previous preferred. We're working on updating that, and that will be available by the June meeting, but, again, it was March, and we haven't had the time to update all of those things.

The next Alternative 3 would change the Season 2 trip limit, and this would consider increasing it to 1,200, 1,500, 2,000, or 2,500, and so, in this Action 5, the way that it's structured is that you can change both, either, or none of those seasonal trip limits, and so, if you want one to stay the same, then you just wouldn't select the alternative that would change it, and so it could be done in that way, and that's kind of these are listed here, and so those are the three alternatives and the sub-alternatives listed with each.

The previous recommendation from the AP was that the Season 2 trip limit be increased to 1,200 pounds, and that was brought to the council, and the council added alternatives for some of these higher options.

Some of the discussion points related to this, since there is no current preferred alternative, the council is looking to the AP to help build some rationale behind a potential preferred, and so, first of all, what should the seasonal commercial trip limits be, and then what are some of the benefits and risks of these trip limits, and we're hoping to hit that in some of the discussion of this action.

Action 6 addresses the April spawning closure, and there was discussion, last April, about this item. Right now, the closure -- It states that there is no commercial purchase or sale in April. The possession limit for both sectors in April is one fish, which is the same as the year-round recreational bag limit, and one difference that is currently in effect is that the commercial fishery would be held to a different minimum size limit than what the recreational fishery is, because they have those different minimum size limits.

There are two other alternatives that the council is considering changing to, and one of those would be that there is no possession for either sector in April, and so that would take out the one fish per person that is currently allowed, and it would be a full closure during April for greater amberjack. Alternative 3 would remove the April spawning closure altogether, and so it would allow full purchase, sale, and possession for the commercial fishery, as it in other months during the year, and the recreational fishery would continue to operate in April, as it currently does, with the one-fish bag limit.

There were -- Again, some the analysis that are included here are in your document, and those are a bit caveated, because they're not based on the council's most recent preferred alternatives, but, given the updated preferred alternatives, from the recreational standpoint, since there is a higher

percentage in the current preferred going to the recreational sector, the dates that are listed there would be delayed from -- The dates would be delayed from what is listed in the document for the recreational sector, and any commercial closures that would have been estimated would occur earlier in the year than what is listed in the current analysis.

The previous input from the AP recommended including the recreational sector in the April closure, and so having a full closure, or allowing sale of commercially-landed fish during April, or a full closure of both sectors, and so the AP was looking for an increase in equity between the sectors, and also potentially increasing biological benefits from reduced harvest during the spawning.

There are some discussions questions listed there, noting the other changes that are considered, all the other actions that are going on, the moving parts, what should be the preferred option here, and what are the benefits and risks of your recommendation, and then, finally, recreational annual catch targets, and you all previously recommended removing the recreational annual catch targets, and these are intended to be indicators of when recreational landings are getting close to their ACL, taking into account the uncertainty of landings for that species, the PSE. These are not codified, and they are not currently used in any regulatory fashion for the Snapper Grouper FMP.

The part of them that is required is that, whenever we update the ACL, we have to include an action that updates the recreational ACT as well, and so this would just kind of take out some administrative burden, but it wouldn't really affect the regulations in any tangible way. Those are the actions that are being considered here, and we can go back to whichever one you want to start with and start kind of talking through your feedback.

MR. HULL: Well, I think the bit of information that I think James was asking, and I would be too, is that we don't have the analysis yet, or we haven't seen the analysis, of what a size change would do to how quickly you might catch the ACL, if you reduced the size limit, and I think everyone here would agree to just leave the private recreational size limit right where it is, I mean, because as soon as you raise it, now you have the problem of dead discards, which is something we're trying to avoid between all the sectors, and so why raise something that we have good results there? Leave that alone, but, if you reduced the size limit on the commercial side, just go all the way down to equaling the recreational size limit, where does it put us?

I mean, how quickly do we catch the ACL, if that's done? I think that's kind of where we're at. I think the idea, for me, as a commercial fisherman for amberjack, is the idea of reducing the size limit is to make my fishery more efficient, and it's better for my market, the smaller animals, and the discard mortality that I have with these larger animals, trying to get them to the boat before they're eaten by a shark, and so it's -- It has a negative impact, not only on me, but I think on the stock, when we're wasting animals, due to dead discards, and, potentially, is there a size limit where I can not harm the fishery and benefit me and benefit the marketplace with a size that's better?

I mean, that's kind of where I'm at, but I still need -- If it also meant that, okay, now the fishery is going to close, bam, like that, then, no, I don't need to do that either, and so more information is needed, but I think the point is that we need to become more efficient than what we're doing, and so I would like to hear from others on that. Jack.

MR. COX: I have participated in the commercial amberjack for a long time, and it's a very important part of my portfolio, and I catch, over the years, a lot of amberjacks, and I can tell you that, going back in time, when I started fishing for jacks in the early 1990s, that we saw a lot more of the thirty-six-inch fish than we see now, which tells me there's been a lot of pressure on them, because they're not getting as big as they used to, and we're seeing a lot more small fish.

Now, I'm fishing inshore, and so I'm talking fifty to seventy-five feet of water where I catch my jacks, but I would like to add an alternative in there that would give us a thirty-four-inch fish. I think that's a good number, looking at the chart that says that these fish are five years old, and they have reached maturity a little bit below that, and, at thirty-four inches, we're seeing a lot of fish that we wouldn't be discarding at thirty-four inches, and, based on the discards that I am seeing, we would be able to keep a lot more fish, but I wouldn't want to go much lower than that, because I would like to give these fish, that we all think are not as healthy as the stock assessment says, more time to spawn.

I would like to make a recommendation that we go to a thirty-four-inch alternative, as well as the other ones that are up there in the action, and a thirty-four-inch fish would be somewhere between a twenty-five and thirty-pound fish, which is a nice, healthy fish to harvest.

MR. HULL: Hold on. Mike has something to add here.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to point out that, in the discussion document in your briefing book -- In Appendix 3, that's where we included the summary of all the analysis that we have to-date, and some of those -- You know, I listed the caveats there associated with that, and the commercial minimum size limit is one where we're not going to get a whole lot more information than what we have, because we're not able to project what people are going to catch that they're, right now, legally not allowed to catch.

What we do have is we have the commercial observer data, and that's what is shown there on the screen, and so, when a fish is caught below the legal size limit, what percentage, what weight bin, or length bin rather, does it fall in, and you see that the vast majority are going to be smaller than twenty-eight inches, but this is kind of how they shake out, but, again, this is on a very limited dataset of thirty-eight fish, and so that's not a whole lot to go on, but we're just not able to really project forward how quickly people are going to catch fish at a lower size than they are currently allowed to catch those fish, and so we're not able to do season length projections.

I know that that would be helpful information, but it's just something that the data that we have available isn't able to lend itself to, but what we have available is shown here on the screen, where we have this distribution of this is what the lengths look like when someone who is being observed does catch an undersized amberjack.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that, Mike. I had two hands. Paul and then Vincent.

MR. NELSON: I do a lot of amberjack fishing, my whole life, since 1987 I started it, and the reason we're not catching any forty-inch fish right now is because they're getting ate by sharks, and there's no way to even get them in the boat to measure them, and my problem is throwing back the thirty-five-inch fish, the thirty-four-inch fish, and watching them get ate by sharks, which happens all the time in my area, and I'm fishing in 250 foot of water, and I don't fish anything

much shallower anymore, but it's a double waste of a species, I think, because the spawning fish that you're catching, the big ones that are laying the eggs, are getting ate by the sharks, and then you're throwing the thirty-five-inchers over the side, and they're getting ate by the sharks, and that's the reason why part of the quota is not being full, is because of the predation by the sharks.

I'm okay with the 1.8 million pounds or whatever you all want to come up with as a quota, and I don't mind that, and I would just like to keep what we catch and fill the quota up, whether it takes a year or eleven months or whatever it takes to do it, but I would rather not leave anything on the table if we come up with a quota that's reasonable, that everybody is happy with, and not leave anything on the table at the end of the year, and be able to fill it, but we do have a lot of shark problems, with them eating our fish.

I think that's a lot of problems with why they're not seeing them down at the cape, and they're not seeing the fish down there, and we are seeing a lot of fish up off of St. Augustine, and that's where I fish, in the deeper water, but, if the thirty-five-inches are getting ate, they're never going to make it to be forty inches, and, even with a twenty-eight-incher, throwing a twenty-eight-incher over the side, he's getting ate, and there's not got to be a thirty-six-incher. He's never going to be a thirty-six-incher, but they are getting ate, and there's been documentation, and I've made many public comments on that.

I would recommend a thirty-inch size limit and try to keep full retention, instead of wasting the resource, and I know in eighty foot it's different, and I agree with that. I mean, I wish I could fish in eighty foot, but I can't do it. I've got to run sixty miles to go catch my fish, when I can only get over thirty-six-inchers, and so that would be my recommendation, is a thirty-inch size limit. When we get to the trip limits, we'll go over that, but that would be my recommendation.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and you provided your rationale for it. I think it was Vincent, and then we'll come back to Jack and then Selby.

MR. BONURA: I just wanted to agree with Paul over there, and I think he makes a lot of valid points. I am just very adamant about having recreational and commercial equal on their measurements and when they're allowed to fish. Like, the April spawning closure, I think we should either have it closed on the recreational or open up the commercial, and I just thinking having everyone equal is a real good thing, and it makes it easier on the enforcement officers as well.

MR. HULL: I believe it was Jack and then Selby.

MR. COX: We certainly have a regional difference there, Paul. I mean, I hear what you're saying, and I just -- We don't have a shark problem like you guys have got, and you all need to fix that shark problem and then worry about this. That's what I would be banging away at. I mean, the sharks eat your fish up so bad, and I would keep banging on that door until I figure out a way to fix it, but, when you start running low on fish, what do you do? You start going after the smaller ones, and I just think thirty inches is too small, and I can't support it, and I'm kind of holding my own there at the thirty-four inches.

MR. HULL: Okay. Selby.

MR. LEWIS: What's going to happen is you all are going to take away my gag fishing, and five of my boats are -- If you go too small, thirty inches, I could fish within fourteen miles and catch my limit probably by lunchtime, every day I could go. You've got to be bigger than that, because, in North Carolina, in the Wilmington area, we have fish that big on our inshore reefs. Right now, to catch the bigger fish, we're going to have to go thirty-five miles, and so it's going to get filled quick, especially because you're going to lose a lot of -- The grouper fishermen are going to catch two-and-a-half boxes of fish, or we can't even catch that now, and they're going to switch over to amberjack fishing, because it will be so much easier to make up our money, and so it will be something that you've got to look at the size and how fast it will get filled, because you are going to gain a lot of fishermen.

MR. HULL: That's something that we all agree, and we would like to know what the best guesstimate is on that, but we can't get that information, because they can't project forward what we're going to catch if the size limit goes down, and all we can do is give our best guesstimate of what that could be. Paul.

MR. NELSON: I was part of the SEDAR assessment, this last one that they just did, and they determined that 80 percent of the biomass is under thirty-five inches.

MR. HULL: Can you say that percentage again, please?

MR. NELSON: 80 percent of the biomass is under thirty-five inches.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: We have a commercial boat as well, and my concern would be, if you drop it too low, then your quota is getting caught up too fast, and so I would be much more comfortable with dropping down to thirty-four to begin with, and seeing how it goes, and then you can always go lower if you want to, but, if you hit your catch limits in one month, and everybody is sitting at the dock twiddling their thumbs, then everybody has lost.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. FISH: In my experience with hook-and-line, and I haven't done it near as long as Paul, or caught near as many as Paul, and I'm out in 200 to 250 foot to catch our amberjacks, the biggest - - In the right conditions, the right water, the biggest amberjacks eat first. You catch the big dogs, and they dominate the school, and, to go along with the not seeing what we're agreeing with on the surveys, is we're not -- Yes, we're catching some of the legal-sized fish, but we are catching a lot of shorts, and, if we're catching a lot of shorts, yes, we're getting them through the sharks easier, but it's also the bigger fish aren't there to allow the little ones to eat, and so I'm just worried about the stock, and talking about all these people catching the smaller fish makes me think that there aren't the bigger fish. Also, I'm in favor of protecting them during the spawning closure for everybody.

MR. HULL: Okay. Anybody else want to chime-in? We have a couple of different recommendations there, and I don't know that we can come to -- Because of the regional differences that we have with this fishery amongst us, I don't know that we can come to an agreeable recommendation on the size for commercial. I think we can all agree that they should

leave the recreational where it is, but, on the commercial, let's just say there's a range from thirty to thirty-four inches that is there, and then some of the other suggestions -- But we're still just talking size, and we can go back to some of these other actions. Is everybody good with just leaving it like that and say we've recommended thirty-four and we've recommended thirty? James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I would just like to ask the council members that are here -- Would it be beneficial, for us as an AP, to make an official recommendation overall, or if these highlighted points are enough for the council to go on?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: James asked if it would be helpful for the AP to make a formal recommendation regarding this action, or is the commentary that's there, and the two different size limits -- Is that enough for you all to help make a decision?

MR. HULL: So the answer is that's good enough, or do we need to make a formal motion or recommendation?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It sounds like that's good enough. I am just giving you all a heads-up of on when I'm at the meeting and the way that this will -- Well, we'll also have an AP representative there to give this to the council, but I don't know -- It's going to be thirty-four or thirty, and the council would be choosing kind of between those options, as well as whatever else is there.

MR. HULL: Paul, James, and Robert.

MR. NELSON: **Can I make a motion to make it thirty-three inches?**

MR. HULL: You can do that.

MR. NELSON: Is everybody all right with that?

MR. HULL: You can make that motion, if you would like to make that motion, and see if we can get a second on it, and go that route. I mean, you've got the mic. Is that what you would like to do?

MR. NELSON: I think that's a middle-of-the-road compromise. I mean, we can always come back later on, in a couple of years, if it's an issue, and change it, but I don't see a problem with a thirty-three-inch size fish in my area. Like I said, I just don't like throwing them back and letting the sharks eat them.

MR. HULL: Okay. He's getting that up there, and then we'll read it and see if we get a second, and then we can -- We've had a lot of discussion already, and maybe we can go right to a vote on it and see what happens. **There's been a motion made to recommend a thirty-three-inch commercial minimum size limit to the council.** Is there a second on this? I will second it, if I can as the Chair, and I don't know if I can second a motion or not.

MR. BONURA: I will second that.

MR. HULL: Okay. Vincent seconds it. Okay, and so is there any more discussion on the motion that you see before you? Do you want to say anything? Go ahead, Andy.

MR. FISH: I am just scared of catching the school down, the adult fish, and that's the only concern that I see. I know the shark predation is a big deal, but it just scares me that, with so many smaller fish being caught, that we're catching it down, and that's one of my fears.

MR. HULL: Paul and Jack.

MR. NELSON: I agree that it's probably going to catch it down, but we're throwing these thirty-four-inch back, and they're getting ate, and they're going down anyway, and it doesn't matter, and I understand that concept of that, but I know that, where I'm at, we're throwing the fish back, and we're watching them get ate on the way down, and I just feel that it's a waste. They're never going to get big that way, and the big fish that we are catching, the roe fish, are getting ate on the way up, while we're fighting them, and so, like I said before, this is a double-edged sword that you're going to be walking on for a while, until the sharks get under control.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: I am going to have to take Andy's position on it, because -- No offense to your motion, but it's just a regional difference, that we're not seeing the sharks that you all have, and you all need to fix that shark problem if it's that bad, but, anyway, it's -- I don't want to see us -- I've been fishing for these things for a long time, and they're getting smaller and smaller, and I just don't want to see us beat it up.

MR. HULL: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I did just want to add that I do have an official stance that I wouldn't mind the entire AP adopting on the whole thing, and so, when they're at their council meeting, they can read a statement from the panel about the entire species and how we feel on it, and, trust me, and I know that you can't please everybody in the room, but, considering that we did jump around, from allocation to ACL to size limit, I kind of have a general idea of what the panel might recommend to the council, and I might be able to put it into a motion, but clearly we need to get past this one.

MR. HULL: Okay. End of discussion. **Anyone opposed to this motion, raise your hand; those that are in favor of the motion, raise your hand, seven; abstentions, three. That motion passes with that vote.** On to what James has recommended, and we've talked -- Prior to that, James, though, real quickly, if we can go back, and we discussed a size limit recommendation to the council, and the other action was -- Mike, what's the other action that we need to address? It was allocation. Is that something that we can go to right now, before -- I think what you want to do, James, was just an overriding --

MS. PASKIEWICZ: It would all fall under the discussion portion of that motion.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so, if your motion will cover the other actions, I'm all for hearing it, but I am seeing another hand. Go ahead, Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Wouldn't part of it be a seasonal closure in April, or is that a spawning? I would like to comment on just the spawning part, from charter/headboat.

MR. HULL: Well, then have at it.

MR. SEBASTIAN: For the charter/headboat, in our area, it's important that we're able to retain at least -- Once again, if we start saying, hey, American reds is shut down, and all your grouper are shut down, and all your amberjack is shut down, and you can't retain any of those, it makes it pretty unappealing to the average person to spend \$125 to \$185 to go out for an all-day fishing trip, and so this is important for us to keep open, so that at least they have one of the larger species that they can actually catch and retain during the month of April, with everything else that's larger pretty much being shut down totally.

MR. HULL: Good comment. Jack.

MR. COX: Allocation. Can I go to allocation, or am I jumping ahead of you?

MR. HULL: You go right ahead.

MR. COX: So this is also a question for the council as well, the members that are here. If we had -- When I was listening to it, and I might not have caught all of it, talking about allocation on amberjack, but it seemed to me that we were going to stay with a -- We weren't going to change the preferred allocation from where it stands today, which was 40 percent, I think 60/40, 40 percent commercial, but how can you take fish from a commercial -- From a highly-accountable commercial sector and allocate more fish to an unaccountable, open-access fishery that doesn't even have permits? I mean, how do you take -- I think, at the last second of that council meeting, somebody, one of the council members, said let's give our sector more fish and take it from the commercial fishery, and that's my question.

MR. HULL: I think it's a good question. I mean, I heard a private recreational comment, from Tony, saying he thought it should be the other way around, because the private recreational guys aren't -- I mean, amberjack isn't one of their main targets, and so, yes, obviously, they've got it wrong, right, and we think we've got it right and they've got it wrong, and it's the opposite of the way it should be, but so we're making those comments now, and they're hearing us. I guess, at this time, that statement was made, and, Cameron, what do you want to speak -- Go ahead.

MR. SEBASTIAN: To allocation, and so, I mean, is one of the actions just Alternative 1, and just leave it exactly how it is? I mean, I would be all for just leaving it how it is, and I don't see the point of giving recreational more and taking it away from the commercial.

MR. HULL: Right on. Thank you. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I have a question for Cameron. What part of South Carolina are you in?

MR. SEBASTIAN: We fish right on Little River Inlet, and so Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach, Calabash.

MR. CONSTANT: Do you all retain a good many amberjack?

MR. SEBASTIAN: They catch quite a few of them, yes. It's not a -- We don't ever say that we're going fishing for amberjack, but, you know, they'll catch them on the bottom rigs, and they will catch them on the drift lines, and so it's a good thing for the customers to have that hit and that fight and be able to catch a larger fish.

MR. CONSTANT: We have struggled, in the south part of the state, to keep a headboat, and I don't think there's any running out of Charleston anymore, or Edisto, and I think we gave it a shot in Hilton Head, and I don't think he was very successful either, and so, other than that, in the State of South Carolina, I don't see any reason why the commercial sector shouldn't take some of the recreational allocation, and I don't know if that's even feasible, but I definitely would not be in favor of taking away from it, from what I'm hearing.

MR. HULL: Well, maybe somebody will make a motion here in a minute, but, Andy.

MR. MAHONEY: What percent of the allocation has the recreational group been credited for in the last couple of years?

MR. HULL: What percentage of the ACL has been landed by the recreational sector?

MR. MAHONEY: Yes.

MR. HULL: Hang on one minute. He's coming up with that, and so, I mean, someone could make a motion here that we recommend Alternative 1, keeping it the way it is, and they had some additional alternatives, which do what Tony thinks could be done, which is to give a little bit more to the commercial than the private recs, and we could recommend any of these. The preferred, as you see, takes away from the commercial sector, at 59.3 and 40.6, and it takes it to 65 and 35, or does it not? The preferred goes up 5 percent, and the commercial loses 5 percent. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Last year, the last full fishing year, the 2020 to 2021 fishing year, that we have data for, was 52 percent recreational. The recreational caught 52 percent of their ACL, and that's what it was, and so the ACL is about 1.17 million, and they caught about 600,000. Within the context of those numbers, remember those are MRFSS numbers, and so it would change to FES, and there's kind of a -- The landings look a bit different, and I can pull up the overview, just to give a ballpark of what the recreational landings are looking like in the FES currency. Give me one second. You can go to another comment, and I will --

MR. HULL: Andy, go ahead.

MR. MAHONEY: What's FES?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The Fishing Effort Survey, and so, when MRIP changed over the way that they survey anglers, and they still have the onsite surveys, at the dock, but, instead of doing the telephone survey, where they're calling folks, they have a mail survey now, and, when they switched from the telephone to mail survey, that was switching from one way of getting the estimates to another way of getting the estimates, and, when that changeover happened, they recalibrated all the past data to be comparable to the current method, which is the mail survey, and that's moving forward, and so, if you look at the numbers for species like greater amberjack, that

hadn't quite switched over, and like we just got the assessment, and now we're switching over the way that we record the data relative to the ACL, and so the ACL -- If you go on the NMFS website, you will see an ACL in one number, that 1.16 number that I said, but, if you were to convert that to the new units, it would be higher.

Most of the recreational ACLs have moved higher, and so that's why I am pulling up this figure here, because that can give at least a bit of a ballpark, once it loads. It's at least a bit of a ballpark of what the recreational landings look like in the current measurement methodology.

MR. HULL: Andy, when they went from a phone survey, MRIP, to a mail-out survey, it changed all the numbers, and it's supposedly better, and it made all the recreational landings -- They applied it back in time, and they completely reinvented all the numbers, and, in most cases, it increased the recreational effort and catch immensely, for every species, because they changed methodology from a phone call to a postcard, and so that's where it's at, and the SSC blessed it as the best available science to use, and so that's what they're using, and they're converting all the numbers to FES numbers, Fishing Effort Survey, and that's why you're seeing the reallocation.

Because of that, every time they do a stock assessment, to look at a new ACL, because there is new numbers -- Because they used all the old methodology to come up with the allocation originally, and now you've got these new numbers, the new currency, to work with, so to speak, and they're looking at allocation again under that light. It strictly helps -- Well, I won't go there, but it makes it look like the private recreational sector is bigger and caught more animals than it did, which, at some point, makes you say, well, they -- Then there's the argument of, well, that means the stock was bigger than you all said it was at the time, blah, blah, blah, and it doesn't take a lot of things into effect, but that's what they're using, much like a lot of the other science we're using, and it's inadequate, but are you ready, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so this is in the fishery overview that's linked in your document and in the presentation in the briefing book, but I'm just pointing out here the recreational, shown in blue, and like the 2019 landings, which would be here, and 2018, and so, here, we're looking at about 1.3 or 1.4 million, ranging up, in the highest years, 2015 and 2016, in excess of two-million that were caught for the recreational, or that were landed, rather, for the recreational, and so this is what the new currency looks like.

MR. HULL: The old currency -- Going back to the numbers you gave us a minute ago, and the old currency, it was sixty-something percent, which was whatever you said the landings were for recreational, the last number that we had, as compared to the new currency number for 2018 is -- It looks like a million-four or something.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The comparable number for the 2019-2020 season -- In 2019-2020, the recreational harvest from MRFSS was 935,000 pounds, and 80 percent of the ACL, and, here, that's this number that is sitting -- An eyeball, just ballparking, it's about 1.3 million. For that year, that's kind of the comparable difference there. The ACL, in MRFSS units, was 1.167 million.

MR. HULL: It's 1.1 in MRFSS, but this is under the new.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and we don't have an old limit. We're setting the limit in the new currency for the future, and we don't have the new limit, looking back, because, in the past, it was set using the old methodology.

MR. HULL: All right. Thanks, Mike. Paul.

MR. NELSON: He said 2020 was 60 percent of the quota, the recreational limit was on that, and that they didn't fill it up, but 2020 was a COVID year, and I know that Florida was shut down for at least two months, until June, recreational fishing on the charters and everything like that, and even the commercial was even shut down a little bit, in March and April, or not April, but March for the amberjacks, and I know they shut me down at my fish house, but that could have affected the numbers for the recreational landings, having them two months, because those are peak months for amberjacks in our area, for the recreational fishing.

MR. HULL: Cameron and Jack.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I would be very leery of messing with the allocations, because of COVID, because of the immense population growth that is occurring on any major city near the beach, and you just have more and more recreational guys coming in, and so, you know, if we dropped it back for recreational, it could really be devastating, down the road, if they have to shut down major parts of the season.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: I would like to make a motion that the AP recommends Alternative -- Under Action 2, Alternative 1, the no action, retain the current recreational sector and commercial sector allocations, as they always have been, 59 and 40 percent, 40 percent for the commercial sector, under that no action alternative.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I will second that.

MR. HULL: I already have a second from Cameron, and so we have multiple seconds.

MR. COX: I would like just to state my rationale. I mean, as we hear, going around the table, how important it is for the commercial sector to have access to the amberjacks, and, I mean, it's - - As we talked about, when we lose some of these other fish that we know that we're going to take a hit on, which is more than the gags, that we're going to need these fish, and, in my area, I'm seeing more of the guys are already starting to access that fishery. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jimmy. As a discussion measure with this, I would like to kindly ask Jack if I may change this motion, and it may be a little bit bigger than what you had intended, but I don't really see any other time to do this, other than right now, because I kind of declared that I had a motion, and have been skipped over, but that's fine.

First of all, I would like it to look like -- I would like the South Atlantic Council to accept the following as the recommendations for this advisory panel, as the official recommendation of this

advisory panel, and, first of all, I would like to see the total ACL to be adopted to that minimum sustainable -- Or the minimum ABC, and so, moving to the discussion that we had about overall conservation, moving to that 2,699,000-pound ABC.

Secondly, I would like to see no change in sector allocation, no change in the recreational size limit, and adopt a thirty-four-inch size limit for the commercial sector. I would also like to keep the current closure month of April exactly the same, and so that's retention, but no sale. I believe that goes for commercial and recreational.

For me, considering all the discussion that we've had back and forth, I think that those four points, lumped into one statement, like a mission statement, from this panel should let the council know exactly how we feel. Now, like I said, I understand that I can't please everybody, but I feel like this is what we were hearing. Thank you, and, Jack, if you would be so kind as to consider that as an alternative.

MR. HULL: Thank you, James. I appreciate that. He's getting it finished up there, and so let's make sure it's correct as to what you stated and everybody sees that. I will read it. **The substitute motion is to recommend the following to the council: 1)total ACL equals the 2026-2027 fishing year with an ABC of 2,669,000 pounds; keep the current allocation in Action 2, Alternative 1, 59/40; keep the current recreational size limit at twenty-eight inches; change the commercial minimum size limit to thirty-four inches; keep the April spawning closure as it currently is in Action, Alternative 1, which is one per personally recreationally and commercially, but no sale.** Is that correct? It looks correct to me. What do you say, Jack? Is that okay with you to --

MR. COX: **As the motion maker on the motion that I made, I would be happy to remove that, and I would second James' motion.** I think it's a good summary. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. We've got --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: For Roberts Rules sake, you all need to vote to put the substitute motion as the main motion, and so to do the substitution first, and then you would vote on whether you approve the substitute motion, and so you would essentially -- If you want the substitute to go into effect, you've got to vote on it twice. That's what it means.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I thought that I worded it that if Jack would consider making these adjustments to his motion. That way, it would simplify the process, and we wouldn't have to do it twice. That's what I thought I asked for.

MR. HULL: So we're changing the description here, and so it's just going to be an addition to the first motion, I think. While he's doing that, go ahead, Paul.

MR. NELSON: What about the thirty-three inches that we already voted on?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Did the motion pass at thirty-three? That's the will of the panel, but then that changes that -- That would probably change Jack's stance on that being accepted, and we would have to do it twice.

MR. COX: **I'm sorry that you're going to have to do it twice, because I can't support that motion.**

MR. HULL: Okay, and so it sounds like the advice from --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So the process here is that there would be a vote to substitute this initial motion with the bottom motion, with the substitute motion, and I will highlight it, just so people know what they're voting on. If you want to see this to go into effect, then you would move that this be substituted for the motion above it, and that's what this current vote is for, and then, after that, there will be second vote. If this passes, there would be a second vote on whether this motion would be the recommendation of the AP.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so it's back on our hands to vote. I have read this, and I don't know that I need to read it again. **All of those that are opposed to this substitute motion, raise your hand. Seeing none -- Do I see anyone opposed to this substitute motion?**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jack, are you opposed to it?

MR. COX: Well, no, because I'm not opposed to it, because we're leaving it at thirty-four inches. The only thing I opposed was changing it to thirty-three inches.

MR. HULL: He didn't like the thirty-three that we had already voted on, and so this is another motion. It's not the same as the one that we did previously.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, asking James, since you made the substitute motion -- First of all, clarifying if this should be thirty-four or thirty-three, and then did we get a second for the substitute motion?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I made this motion as it's written, and I would like it to stay that way, but, seeing as there was already a motion that passed for a thirty-three-inch recommendation, I kind of don't know what is the best pathway forward here, but that motion, as it is written, is how I intended it. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so that means that this substitute motion would change the AP's recommendation on the minimum size limit, and that's what this means, and so this would be the recommendation, rather than the thirty-three, if this passes.

MR. HULL: If I could speak on behalf of the AP, as the Chair, to this, I think that, yes, at this point, the AP is trying to work with each other, and we see that there is regional differences and differences of opinion, but, you know, one inch now, and we've come to a reduction that a lot of us would like to have, and some people couldn't leave with the one that was so far down, and the others were saying, well, I can live with this, and so now we're coming together and saying, well, we can deal with this, and so, yes, I think -- Does anybody else see it differently than that? Probably Jack. Go ahead.

MR. COX: Well, no, and it's not on that. Kerry was just reminding me that I had said something about being so cautious as to change the trip limit for the first season to 1,000, rather than 1,200, and I didn't know if this was --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: If I may, Mr. Chairman, since we're going to open up the possibility of a faster catch rate, I would like to adopt a 1,000-pound trip limit for both seasons, just because I know that a slower harvest rate tends to yield the highest mark on the product, and I know we would be a little bit inefficient on the waterway. For every five 1,200-pound trips, you could have, you know -- You would have had six 1,000-pound trips, but, again, I would like that be a 1,000-pound trip limit on both sections, both seasons.

MR. HULL: So I see hands raised, now that that's brought up, and, before you change -- So you would adopt a 1,000-pound trip limit, and so now I think I saw Andy, Vincent, and Paul.

MR. FISH: I think a lot of the people here at the table do a lot of day trips that are a lot of these voices, but I think the majority of the north Florida and beeliner boats and those guys -- They're doing four and five-day trips, and I think the lion's share of the actual fish that are brought in on the east coast with grouper are going to be taking a bit hit. I think these guys are going to take a big hit if it goes to a thousand pounds, and I did see other alternatives for much higher quotas, or trip limits, and I just wanted to speak for those guys that aren't here that do four and five-day trips, and I think it's a lot of boats in the northeast region.

MR. HULL: So you would be opposed -- You think they would be opposed to a thousand-pound trip limit?

MR. FISH: Yes.

MR. HULL: Okay. I do too, but Vincent and then Paul.

MR. BONURA: I would definitely opposed the 1,000-pound trip limit as well, and I agree with Andy over there, and then the guys down in Key West -- We always head way west, and you're pretty far down there, and the 1,000-pound trip limit -- I don't think it's going to work. Back in October, the AP, all of us here, we agreed on, or had the option up, as 1,200 on each of the split there, and that was a good idea, I thought.

MR. HULL: I've got Paul, and then it was a tie between Jack and James.

MR. NELSON: I understand, because, if I only had to run to eighty foot of water, I would not mind a thousand-pound trip limit, but I've got to run to sixty miles, just one way, to even catch 1,200 pounds, and I just -- I would be opposed to a thousand-pound trip limit, along with all the other guys in my inlet.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: There's no enforcement, and so it doesn't really matter anyway, and I will just be honest with you, and that's what we are here, and we're pretty honest, and I'm just -- Most of our

fisheries, it's the regional difference between what you guys have got in Florida and us, and most of our day trippers are the ones catching the majority of the amberjack.

MR. HULL: James and then Cameron and then Richard.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. I just wanted to -- Since we're in the discussion portion of this, I did just want to give a little bit of rationale behind why I did want to make that part of my motion. You know, first of all, if we did lower the size range of that fish, which is what we're recommending, we may see a quicker filling of the ACL, and so it may slow that down a little bit, but I totally understand different circumstances and different travel lengths and all that, and, I mean, I would be willing to leave it at no change, for the sake of the people that come here to represent their specific group, and so, I mean, I think that I would change that, but I did want to add what my rationale behind that was, maybe just to continue on being a little bit more conservative, right from the jump, but, in order to accommodate the people that have taken their time to represent their peers, I would change that to leaving the trip limits as-is. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. I kind of forget where I was at. Cameron, are you good now? I think it was Richard and then maybe back to Vincent.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay, and just a possible monkey-wrench, or a solution, and I wonder what it would cost the recreational fishermen to give up that 200 pounds to the commercial fishermen, since we're not reaching that ACL anyway, and, if we're allowed to continue to catch one per person in the charter boat industry, I think that would be something that the charter boat industry would consider.

MR. HULL: Okay, Richard. Did you have your hand up, Vincent? Go ahead.

MR. BONURA: I would go with what you had said, James, if you would put it and keep it as-is, as 1,200 pounds in Season 1 and the 1,000 in Season 2. If we remember back, and I forget how long ago it was now, but maybe four or five years ago, and me and Jack went back and forth about this, and it took us probably about a half-hour to an hour of working on it, and we did -- He wanted 1,000 then, and we agreed at the 1,200, because of Florida, and Florida needs that early in the spring.

MR. HULL: Okay. Mike, did you want to provide something?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It would be cleaner, as far as making sure that the recommendations are clearer, if Point Number 4 -- If you all want to have reconsideration of that commercial minimum size limit, because you've already voted -- You already have a recommendation on it, and it would be cleaner if that was addressed separately, in the sense of it would -- You would need to withdraw the previous recommendation and then vote to put in this recommendation. That way, we don't have two motions going to the council saying two different things, because an approved motion is going to go to them, and so, if you all would like to address, or re-address, this issue, that would be the recommended route to go, the less confusing route, for coming up with the report.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so take care of that first, like right now, before we go any further with the other highlighted item and maybe going and changing the 1,000 back to 1,200, to get support for this to pass, and take care of the minimum size first?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Or just take it out of this one. Edit this one, taking it out, and with the note that you'll deal with this motion now, and then, if you want to come back to commercial minimum size, you will come back to it after.

MR. HULL: Go ahead.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I mean, then maybe it's cleaner to do this step-by-step and do it all as each individual motion on each action, and maybe that should have been the way that I approached it in the first place, and I do apologize for that. If we are going to keep this multistep motion, as the person who helped make it, I think that I would like it -- Number 6 to read "leave the trip limits as-is" and leave Number 4 right in there, and I think that it's going to get the support from the panel, and we won't have to revisit the size limit. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: There would still -- If that's the case, then there would still need to be a follow-up motion. If this is going to be the recommended, if the thirty-four-inch is going to be the recommended, there would still need to be a follow-up motion to withdraw the thirty-three that was already approved. That's the issue, is the thirty-three is already in there, and, until it's withdrawn, that is a recommendation to the council right now.

MR. HULL: Well, I think we can do that, and so, from my point of view, we need to go ahead and dispense with what -- He has now changed it to retain the current trip limit, which is going to probably make this motion get enough support to pass, because it's a compromise from the thirty-three to the thirty-four, to make this one pass, where people -- A lot of this is good stuff that needs to happen, and so I think it's a good motion the way it is, and I don't mind going back and changing another motion to withdraw what we had and say that this is what we want. Is everybody good with that?

Then we can move on with this, and so do we need to read it again, or everybody is there? We see what we have, and it's well-spoken. We have a second. I think Jack -- You made it as a substitute, and Jack seconded it. Okay. Let's read it. **Recommend the following to the council: Total ACL equals the 2026-2027 AB of 2,669,000 pounds; keep the current allocation action alternative as-is at 59.3 and 40.6 commercial, the first recreational; keep the current recreational size limit in Action 3, Alternative 1, at twenty-eight inches; change the commercial minimum size limit to thirty-four inches; keep the April spawning closure as it currently is; and retain the current trip limit for both commercial seasons as it is.** This has been talked about, and this kind of summarizes all the actions pretty much in one, and our recommendations, as an AP, to the council. **Is there anyone opposed to this? Raise your hand. I don't see any hands. Is there any abstentions? No abstentions. The motion passes.**

Now we have to go back, and someone is going to have to make a motion to withdraw our previous motion, and we're going to have to vote on that, to get rid of that, and make this the current, the one that we want. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Jimmy. Apparently the motion maker for the thirty-three-inch minimum size limit, which I believe may have been Paul, should rescind that motion, and then that needs to pass by a two-thirds majority, in order for that to go away, so there's clarity on which way the AP really wants to go.

MR. HULL: Paul, would you care to make that motion? Okay. There's his motion to rescind the previous motion. Then I'm going to -- He's going to finish writing it up there, and then we're going to have to vote on it to make everything hunky-dory, but I think that's what -- This is what -- We're all here together, as brother and sister fishermen, and we're trying to work together, and so we've come to compromise on some things that we have differences on and then come up with some type of recommendation that we can all agree with, and so I like that. Go ahead, Jack.

MR. COX: Should we put some kind of rationale in this, because we put so much work into it, so, when the council reads it, they'll know why we feel so strongly about all this that we've worked on, as far as everything? Just some kind of summary on, when they read it, why we went this way.

MR. HULL: I think let's do that, but let's think about it some more, and give us some time, and I think some of the rationale is for what I just said, that we're here trying to work together to keep everybody going, and so we all have different needs that we see that we need, and we're trying to come to a common conclusion that will help everybody, no matter which area you live in, and we're concerned about our stocks and keeping them sustainable for all us, for the longest period of time possible, and that's why we came together and came to a nice wording by James, and to bring it together, and you guys and Paul and everybody, and so I think you've done good to come up with some recommendations that we can all agree with, and it passed unanimously.

Compromise and working together between sectors and regions for the most equitable fishery as possible, but let's go ahead and dispense with Captain Nelson's rescind motion. He doesn't have to have a second, and we can just vote on it, right? Does Paul have to have a second on his --

MR. LORENZ: I will second it.

MR. HULL: Okay. It's seconded by Robert Lorenz, and so now we're going to have a vote on it. **Is there anybody opposed to that motion to rescind our previous recommendation? No one opposed. Any abstentions? Seeing no abstentions, that passes.**

Okay. Now the rationale, going back to our rationale, which I think is nice, and it's a compromise and working together between sectors and regions for the most equitable fishery possible, and in preserving sustainability for the amberjack stock. The rationale is compromise and working together between sectors and regions for the most equitable fishery possible and retaining sustainability in the amberjack fishery. How about that, Jack? Is that good enough for now? If you want to add to it later, we can, and you can provide additional comment. The rationale, we've already voted on the motion, and this is just there, and everybody agrees to that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: What I can do is I can listen to this meeting and the commentary around it, and take a look at the minutes, as I'm developing the meeting report, and make sure that I include some of the details that you all have brought up in your discussion, and just make a look at the draft report, when I send it out in follow-up of this meeting. That way, we don't have to iron-out all of the language here, and you can provide your edits and comments to that in follow-up, and does that sound good?

MR. COX: Mike, just make sure, when you put that in there, that there is a general consensus here that we don't feel the stock is quite as healthy as the stock assessment showed, and that's why we're doing what we're doing here, is we want to be cautious.

MR. HULL: Okay. That's good, and so we accomplished -- Are we done with amberjack now? Does that make us done? How about that. We're going to take a break, and so we'll take a five-minute break, Take a break and come right back.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. HULL: Let's get back at it. We don't have a lot of time left today, and it's 4:17, and we definitely want to end by 5:00, because I know everybody is tired. The next item is going to be Amendment 51, snowy grouper, and Allie from council staff, and a biologist, is going to give us the presentation and run us through this and try to get started before we have to close for the day, and then we can finish it up tomorrow. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so Amendment 51 isn't as far along as amberjack, and so we're not going to have that much to hash through, and so a quick background, and you guys reviewed this amendment in October, but it hadn't been scoped yet, and it was kind of just really preliminary, and so the most recent assessment was the SEDAR 36 update, and that assessment indicated that the stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Snowy does currently have a thirty-four-year rebuilding plan, which isn't going to be modified through this amendment.

We've heard updating catch levels to incorporate those FES recreational landings streams, and so we're going to be doing that with this amendment for snowy and updating allocations, and those new catch levels are going to result in a roughly 40 percent reduction in harvest, and then we did conduct scoping in February of 2022, and I will kind of review some of the scoping comments that we got applicable to some of the questions that the council asked you guys as I go through.

All right, and so a little bit of timeline on snowy, and you guys reviewed this, again, in October, and the council has seen it a couple of times now. They reviewed the scoping comments in March, getting input from you guys during this meeting, and then, in June, they will review the amendment, and they will approve it for public hearings, and then we're kind of scheduled for final approval in December of this year.

With that, I'm going to jump right into the actions, and so there are two -- These two actions that the council did choose preferreds during the March council meeting, and so, again, we're kind of early in the process with this amendment, but the council did select preferreds, to help facilitate analysis, and so that's why you're seeing preferreds for these.

Action 1 is revising the ABC, ACL, and OY, and so the alternatives that were brought to the council were Alternative 1, no action, which would retain the current ACL, which is based off of those MRIP-CHTS numbers, and Alternative 2 would set the ACL and OY equal to the ABC, which is based off of those updated FES numbers, and then Alternatives 3 and 4 would provide a 5 and 10 percent buffer in between the ACL and OY and ABC.

Then Action 2 would revise the sector allocations, and so, currently, the sector allocations are 83 percent to the commercial sector and 17 percent to the recreational sector, and that's based on

average landings from 1986 to 2005, but the current allocation used the MRIP-CHTS numbers, and so then Alternative 2 that you see results in an 87.55 percent and 12.45 percent to the commercial and recreational, respectively, and what that -- How we came to those numbers was using those same average landings from 1986 to 2005, but we used the updated MRIP-FES landings, and then Alternative 3 was using the allocations formula, and that used an average from 1986 to 2008 and from 2006 to 2008, and so the green rows are the council's preferred alternatives for both of these actions.

The council selected Alternative 2, setting the ACL equal to the ABC, and then Alternative 2 is just kind of updating the allocation percentages based on those updated FES landings, and so I will take a pause here and see if anybody has any questions.

MR. HULL: I have a clarifying question. In the allocations of the preferred, this would be one of the rare occasions, in what I've seen, where it actually decreased the -- With the new currency, it actually decreased the recreational allocation, because, in every other thing that I've seen, it's been just the opposite.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and I think it's just how the landings, the average landings, are from each sector, from 1986 to 2005, and I think this fishery, just by nature, is a more a commercially-heavy fishery, but Chip is also coming to provide further guidance.

DR. COLLIER: Looking at the recreational data for snowy grouper, there was a couple of different revisions that are in this new FES number for the recreational catch sector, and so one of the revisions is changing from a paper-based -- From a telephone-based survey to a paper-based survey, and they're getting much better coverage with that paper-based survey, and what that typically changed was the amount of recreational harvest on the shore-based catches, and, also, on some of the boat catches, it also changed, but it wasn't as significant as the shore-based, and so, as you move further offshore, those big changes that you're seeing for most species that we manage aren't occurring for species like snowy grouper.

What is changing is the part that was based on where the sites were, the site selections, and so some of those went down, and that's why you're seeing this change in snowy grouper that's very different from the other species.

MR. HULL: Yes, that helped, and you stated -- Obviously, this is a deepwater fish, and so a lot of those other shore -- When you said shore-based reporting for other species that can be caught potentially from shore, obviously not snowy, and so I get it. Thank you. Andy.

MR. PILAND: What's the ACL for recreational?

MS. IBERLE: I need to check on that, but the other thing that I will note about snowy is that the commercial ACL is in pounds gutted weight, whereas the recreational ACL is in numbers of fish, and I believe it's 5,315, if I remember correctly, and it's right around that number, currently, and that's the current recreational ACL.

MR. PILAND: 5,000 for 2,300 boats?

MR. HULL: 5,315 fish, and the limit is, what, one per boat?

MR. PILAND: Yes, and you've got 2,270 permitted boats, charter boats.

MS. IBERLE: That I'm unsure of, and I would have to have somebody check on that.

MR. HULL: No other hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so Action 3 in this amendment deals with reducing the snowy grouper commercial trip limit, and, currently, the commercial trip limit is 200 pounds gutted weight, and so what we're looking at here is the preliminary analysis that the IPT did, as far as the reduction in bag limit, and so the options that they were looking at were 150 and 100-pound trip limit, and so there is expected to be a 16 percent reduction in stepping down to 150 pounds and then a 38 percent reduction in stepping down to 100 pounds.

Then the lower table here is the predicted season with the preferred commercial allocation, and so what this is is looking at the updated commercial ACL from that preferred allocation option in Action 2 and then the predicted season length here, and so snowy currently has a split season. Season 1 runs from January 1 to June 30, and it receives 70 percent of the total commercial ACL, and then Season 2 is from July 1 to December 31, and it receives 30 percent of the commercial allocation.

One thing that I did want to note is, during scoping, we received some comments noting that any trip limit below 200 pounds wouldn't be worth the trip to depths where snowy are caught, and, previously, the AP has expressed to the council that they would not like to see a lower trip limit, and so you guys have taken that to the council.

The council discussed this in March, and they actually selected a preferred of Alternative 1, no change, and then they would like you to consider the following questions, and so discuss their preferred alternative, and does the AP still prefer this alternative, and so, again, in October, you guys discussed not reducing the commercial trip limit, and then they wanted you to discuss the pros and cons of a higher trip limit, and then discuss if there is any seasonality to the snowy grouper catch where you fish, and so what time of the year is most important, in your area, for targeting snowy, and, with that, I will turn it over.

MR. HULL: Thanks, and so I think it's pretty straightforward here. Do the commercial snowy grouper fishermen on this AP -- The preferreds that the council has already made, do we still recommend those as be the preferreds? I will quickly go around the room. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I prefer keeping it at 200, for my style of fishing. Any less would be too far to go to make it worth it.

MR. HULL: Okay. Paul, I know you catch snowies. Are you good sticking with the 200? Vincent, I know you catch them.

MR. BONURA: Yes, and I would keep it at the 200. Also, I would be open to a discussion about increasing the trip limit.

MR. HULL: Okay. Jack.

MR. COX: I would prefer to keep it at 200, but I knew, when the last snowy assessment came out, that it wasn't right, and that it was wrong, and it's just like the amberjack assessment. I mean, when it came out, and I think the last assessment was done in, what, 2013, when we looked at it, and I was like, wow, no way, and we're going to be in trouble, and look where we are.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so it sounds like, Allie, that we continue to recommend the preferreds so far, and I believe that was to recommend the allocation preferred and the 200-pound trip limit, and then there was something about seasonality, and was that the next --

MS. IBERLE: Let me switch back to the presentation, and so is there seasonality to snowy grouper catch where you fish, and then what times of the year are most important in your area for targeting snowy, commercially?

MR. HULL: Okay. Paul, in your snowy commercial fishery, is there a season that you're prosecuting that, and what do you prefer? When do you prefer to fish for snowies?

MR. NELSON: Well, we fish them year-round, as long as the weather will let us, and, I mean, we don't have no preferred on that. We like it the way it is.

MR. HULL: Okay. Andy.

MR. FISH: I'm the same. For me, it used to be an April thing, when I actually had some decent snowy spots that I could catch them, because, in April, everything is closed, when our kingfish slows down, and lobster is closed, and amberjack is closed, and I could go out there and do some snowy fishing, but it has definitely slowed down in our area, which is a very limited area for snowy fishing, but that's my comment.

MR. HULL: Okay, and I don't see any other comments, Allie. Jack.

MR. COX: When we closed -- We know scamp are in trouble, and red grouper are in trouble, and gags are in trouble, and it's become -- It's hard to -- Years ago, but, after this year I would say this is the most important time of year to have these fish, is when people are starting to -- The weather is warming up, and people are traveling to the coast, and everybody needs them, because it's the only grouper really we have right now, but now, after these other groupers start to close, we're going to need all we can get, and so it's going to be a year-round necessity.

MR. HULL: I would agree, and I can tell you that, from a market perspective, this fish -- Let's just say it's really important, during the shallow-water grouper closure, to have some type of white-meat grouper available as a local grouper to sell to people and say, hey, we've got some grouper from the east coast, local, and so it's important. It's an important fishery, and so I guess I would say that, especially during the shallow-water grouper closure, it's very important to have access to the snowies, but year-round, also, if we can stretch out the ACL year-round. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: You're looking for a 40 percent reduction in the catch rate of this fish, and we're not doing anything in the commercial sector, and there's not 12 percent available, or 17 percent available, in the recreational sector, and there's no way to get there if we don't start

somewhere, and I don't know where that is either, because I agree with guys that that's a long way to go.

There's not a lot of recreational guys catching them. Myself, I do, and my son-in-law does, and there's a few of us that do go out and catch them, but 40 percent is a long way to go when you're just looking at the recreational catch, and it's only, what, 5,000 fish? I mean, if you took them all off the plate, we're still not there.

MR. HULL: Well, yes, and I think, on the -- Yes, that's the total reduction that they're asking for, and it's unattainable without probably -- Again, how do you -- I don't know, but, you know, I think, on the commercial side, again, having a 200-pound trip limit is important to make it worthwhile to travel the extra miles to try to catch some snowy, if you're fishing inshore somewhere and say, well, let's go try to top-off the catch with 200 pounds of snowies, which can be done, if you know where they're at, pretty quickly.

MR. CONSTANT: We catch -- When we go out for swords, or we're wandering out there for pelagics, and we find ourselves out there, we know where they're at, and so we go catch a couple on the way home, and this doesn't affect our livelihood, but we're out there. That said, there is -- I don't know of many charters that go out that far, but the recommended reduction is from 17 percent to 12 percent on the recreational sector. When we're looking at 40 percent, that's doable, but there's 5, and so then your other recommendation was 38 in the commercial sector, and that's going to be hard to swallow.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: When we get to the recreational season action, which is another thing that the council kind of wanted some input on, it definitely looks like there's going to be a pretty small season, and then, as far as the commercial trip limit, and I know we recorded a comment of considering increasing the commercial trip limit, but I think maybe weighing the pros and cons of the season closing early, because the sector is meeting that sector ACL, and so, you know, considering the pros and cons of either reducing that trip limit, and making it maybe not worth the trip, or having a quota closure, and so kind of tossing that back and forth.

MR. HULL: Yes, and, from the commercial perspective, we discussed this, obviously, a lot, and could you go back to the preferred alternatives and the closure dates that you had up there for the split season? The preferred --

MS. IBERLE: These are the dates for -- This line is the Season 1 length, with the 150-pound trip limit for the 87.55 commercial allocation, with the updated catch levels, and so you have from April, from mid-April, to the end of May, and then, with the smaller trip limit, you've got this predicted season length right here.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so this helpful. With the 200-pound trip limit, your predicted season length would last -- A closure date of April 22, and so it gets you through, pretty much through, the shallow-water grouper closure, and then it's over, on the first season, and then I know that, in my area, most commercial guys are going to -- That's what they wanted, and they said, if I'm going to do it, let's just -- With this small amount of fish to deal with, let's just catch them, and then I just won't even think about it anymore, and I will just go do something else, because it's not

really -- They are not bycatching them. I mean, they're finding them on a snowy wreck, and it's full of snowies, and so that was their rationale for why keeping it at 200, I think, pretty much, but, Andy.

MR. FISH: Right now, snowy grouper is at 31 percent, out of 46,000 pounds, and so basically 12,000 pounds, and we're at April 20 right now, on a 200-pound trip limit, and I'm just giving -- This year, for instance, we're at 31 percent, or roughly 12,000 pounds, but it's a been a rough year for wind, I think, compared to normal.

MR. HULL: So, this year, it's obviously going to -- The closure is going to last -- We're not going to have that early of a closure, and so those are all the caveats that you've got to throw in there, and this is just some guidance, but I think I speak on behalf of that's what our rationale is, to keep at 200, and let's catch them and then move on to something else, and so I think we're good with that on the commercial side and the rationale for doing it the way we are.

MS. IBERLE: Then, really quickly, before we move off, is there anything else for the seasonality? I want to make sure that I got everything there.

MR. HULL: Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I just wanted to add that, for us down in the Keys and everywhere down that way, the hook-and-line bandit boats that golden tile fish really have to this open when the tilefish are open, blueline and golden, and then it's good too for the golden tile longliners. After it closes, a couple of boats go out and catch the groupers, after the golden tile longline is over.

MR. HULL: So, if we want to try to get that down, you just said that -- Can you kind of say that one more time, what you just said, so that we can get that down?

MR. BONURA: I said the golden tile hook-and-line boats need the groupers open during golden tile hook-and-line and blueline tile. Then the golden tile longliners catch them as bycatch here and there, but they also try and catch and target them coming into the end of their year, for a little bit after, and they go out and catch a couple of grouper trips at the end of golden tile longline season.

MR. HULL: Has she got that there for you? I think she did. Okay. There you go. Okay. Has anybody else got some comments or recommendations here? I don't see any more hands, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Give me just one second. All right. I mentioned earlier that we were going to talk about the recreational season, and so Action 4 is modifying the recreational season. What you're looking at is the preliminary analysis that the IPT did to look at the predicted recreational season length with the updated recreational ACL, and so this first table is landings, average landings, from 2015 to 2019, and these highlighted rows are the current open season for snowy in the South Atlantic, and so you have a two-wave season from May through August, and then these are the average landings for each of those waves.

Then Table 12, again, is that preferred allocation for the recreational, and then the recreational ACL in numbers of fish, and so, again, there's a pretty big reduction here in the recreational ACL, and then, when you're looking at these landings compared to how the fishery has been operating, you have less than one wave expected with these updated catch levels.

We don't have a preferred picked for this option yet, but the council did discuss a single-wave season, and then the options would be that first wave, and so Wave 3, which is May 1 through June 30, and then Wave 4, which is July 1 through August 31, and so the council asked the AP to consider what recreational season does the AP think would be most appropriate, and then do you have any suggestions for how to address regional differences in the fishery that can be applied through this amendment?

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: If it was between 2 and 3, 2 is the better option, and it's more in-tune with when the grouper opens back up anyway, and we also, as for the commercial, it would be nice to coincide with tilefish, because they're in the same area.

MR. HULL: Then, Tony, maybe you want to address the other question from the council, and that had to do with -- I'm trying to remember it.

MR. CONSTANT: Me too.

MR. MOSS: Any suggestions on how to address regional differences.

MR. HULL: Regional differences to access to snowy, and so, I mean, just right off the bat, there is weather differences between the south and the north.

MR. CONSTANT: This year, what he was mentioning, is it's been a horrible year to get out that far. I mean, the last two months, it's been howling. I can't answer that for Florida, and I really can't, and this is South Carolina where that would be the best time.

MR. HULL: I mean, that seems to me to be -- In south Florida, where you're really close to the deepwater, and potentially catching snowy, that would be -- I mean, they have pretty much year-round access to it, because the weather is generally pretty good.

MR. CONSTANT: That's what Paul was saying, and we have a year-round fishery for them too, where we can catch them, but it's just a matter of going out there.

MR. HULL: David, did you have something to add? Don't add it then. Good. Anybody else on this recreational recommendations? Chris.

MR. MILITELLO: We don't see a lot of them, and I see a lot more when we go to the Bahamas, but, I mean, we get the tiles here and there, but we don't get a ton of snowies, unless we're on the other side. They're twenty minutes, by the time a go-fast gets offshore in Palm Beach, it's -- They're out there easy, and so a lot of guys can get that 600 with a little Shimano rod-and-reel.

MR. HULL: So you think that's why there's not a lot of them for you?

MR. MILITELLO: We're dumping a bunch of artificial reef stuff with the fishing club, which we're seeing snowies jumping on these now, right away, but we're trying to build reefs out there, because there's not a lot of stuff out there.

MR. HULL: Jack.

MR. COX: So what happen when the guys are deepwater fishing and catching their tilefish and stuff, and they start catching snowies and the discarding situation, and how are we going to handle that?

MR. HULL: David.

MR. MOSS: Jack is exactly right, and we need to -- For snowies, I am concerned, I guess is probably the easiest word that I can think of, and we actually get them -- I mean, we can get them in state waters by us, and I believe they're technically open in state waters right now, if I'm not mistaken, at least in Florida, I think. Don't quote me on that, but, as Jack was saying -- We'll get them a little bit shallower than like the golden tiles and stuff like that, but, yes, when you're out deeper, and you get -- What do you do? I mean, you're not using a descending device for a thousand feet.

MR. HULL: I think, right now, they're telling you to waste the resource and discard it and watch it float off into the abyss.

MR. MOSS: It's a little bit of a rhetorical, and I know, at one time, we had -- I don't -- I should know it, but we had just like a deepwater closure, or season, or whatever we want to call it, and it might be something that we have to start thinking about again, because it's -- I'm sorry, but it's a super-accessible fishery, especially down by us, and not just with -- Certainly the go-fast boats, but even the go-medium boats, and we can get them most of the year, and, with the technology and all this stuff, I mean, it's there, and it's fairly easy to access.

MR. HULL: So is there some recommendation you want to make because of the -- I mean, you're looking at a one-wave, or less, opening, private recreationally, and so, when that time is up, do you have some recommendation of a deepwater closure? I see a question-mark there now, and is that something that you think that the council should consider for the private recreational sector, after it's closed, some type of a closure to prevent the discard mortality the rest of the time? I mean, that's up to you.

MR. MOSS: So here's my concern with this, is that, as we figure out more of rec reporting, and we move down that road, I think we're going to be really shocked at how many fish we see are being removed from this fishery from the recreational sector. You know, we were calling these rare-event species, because, for recreational guys, at one point, it was pretty rare to encounter them, and it's not that rare anymore.

There is a boat that I know of, like out of Hillsborough Inlet, or it might be out of Boca Inlet, and it doesn't matter, and I can almost guarantee that, at least once a week, he's bringing a snowy back, a charter boat, and he runs half-days to go do it, and that's just for snowies, and he goes out there for tiles and stuff like that, and he's well within his regulations and everything.

I don't know what the answer is, and I think that this is going to be something that -- I know we've been talking about not kicking the can down the road, and this is something we probably shouldn't

do either, but this is -- The deepwater stuff is going to be something that really has a reckoning with the recreational sector.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you, and so you're letting the council know that they need to be aware of that, what you're seeing, and I saw Andy first, and then back to Tony.

MR. PILAND: When we were presented the descending devices in the workshop, they had data proving that you could descend deepwater fish, and it was from the west coast, but it was still the same depth that we catch the snowies in. I use the descending devices extremely often when our deepwater fishing season is open, and I don't know if the fish live or not, but they do not pop back up, and they start fighting before the descending device opens, and so, as far as the comments that have been made of let them float away, they don't have to float away if you use your descending device, but, when you start -- You have gone from one type from the phone data calculation to your paper data calculation. When you look at the charter boat data, you're going to freak out, and I've said it numerous times, with more explicit language. When you look at the charter boat data, you're going to freak the F out, because we're catching way more fish than this.

I mean, we fish for them every day out of Hatteras, ten or fifteen boats. When we catch our limit, I can't say who is using descending devices and who is not, but this boat does, and it works. I have every reason to believe that it works, and the fish is -- Like I said, the fish is starting to fight, just like he did, or better than he did, when he was coming up, but the closure on grouper is going to happen before the closure on tilefish happens, which is already scheduled to close early this year, July the 26th, I believe, and is that right?

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Jack.

MR. COX: I mean, if we're trying to rebuild the snowy fishery, it's definitely something we need to address. You know, I don't know -- We keep talking about these deepwater seasons and things, and do they make more sense? I don't know, and Dewey was telling me that there's a lot of interaction with snowies north of Hatteras, where there's no accountability, and nobody is counting those fish and what's going on up there, and that's something that needs to be looked at as well.

That's not my area, but Dewey says don't forget about those fish, but, I mean, it's -- We're trying to rebuild, and so we've got to figure it out, because, if you're putting a lot of fish back, and you - - This is not my specialty, and, Robert, I don't want to call you out on it, but this is -- You're a deepwater man, and maybe there's something that you could interject here, and I don't know if you guys fish for snowies and have no interaction with the tilefish.

MR. FREEMAN: The experience I've had, the snowy was a dumb-man's fish. All you've got to do is get on top of them and drop a piece of meat down there, and you've got him. The limit, I think, I don't know, 2013 or 2012 or whatever, prior to me selling my boat, they were going to reduce the entire South Atlantic to 512 fish. I was catching more than that, and so don't tell me that the fish are gone, because I can take you out there for forty-mile-long stretch off of Morehead City, or southeast of Cape Lookout, and the fish are there.

On a recent trip, and I'm going to say within the last month, we made a trip south of the Big Rock, and we had maybe a dozen fish, but they were all under three pounds. Well, two weeks later, he went, and all the fish were eight pounds plus, and they were caught twenty miles from where the

first trip was, and so those fish are in a number of places, and a question earlier was what's deep water, and, well, for me, we never slow down until we're 360 feet deep, because that's where the grouper and tilefish begin to be very prevalent.

You find a rocky place, or whatever, and not necessarily were we fishing the real rough stuff, to where you get a mix of scamps, beeliners, yelloweyes and that sort of thing, and we stayed out of that, just because of tackle loss. When you drop six or seven rigs down there and come back with three, that gets kind of expensive, when you're using two-pound sinkers, but the prevalence of the fish being out there now -- Since I sold the boat five years ago, and I haven't been as often, to know this area the fish are there, and that area they're not, but I feel like they are in some quantities.

I know that, some of the spots we used to fish, you would go there and it was exclusively grouper. The last time I fished it, it was exclusively tilefish, and so there is something going on that these fish move from one habitat to another, and everybody says, well, the tilefish are in the mud, and I never experienced anything that told me that we were fishing mud, and it was hardbottom, and the snowies would be there, and quite often, in sixty to seven fathoms, you would catch beeliners and snowies and red porgy and tilefish all in the same place, and so that's kind of a little history of the experience that I've had out there, but, when they came up with that 512-fish limit, from the Virginia border to Key West, then I knew the end was in sight for me.

It didn't make any sense, and, today, who is going to run that far, and I'm talking about forty-plus nautical miles from the inlet, and who is going to run that far for one fish to the whole boat, and who on the boat gets to have the fish? It's a sad situation, but I do think there are more fish there than we're being given credit for, and, gosh, before Michelle Duval left, I gave her I think it was 126 numbers that I call hotspots, and, if you want know if there is fish there or whatever, you can go to these places, and now maybe Chip can tell us whether they fished any of that, or whether that list ever got to him, but I know that I passed the stuff on, because I was concerned that they're saying something that I don't believe, that the fish are there, and maybe the research boats weren't going to the places where the fish really are.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that, Robert. I think one of the things that I'm hearing is that the private recreational catch is not being reflected by the MRIP numbers and that it's just not happening, and that we're seeing, on the AP - The guys that are the recreational and charter boat representatives are saying, hey, you guys are not seeing the reality of what's being caught on the private recreational side, and I think that's a statement that we should make to the council, so that they can say, hey, we're seeing this, and you need to figure out what's going on with MRIP and why it's not showing this. Tony and then David.

MR. CONSTANT: Along with what Robert is saying, we see the same thing, and we find that we catch both the snowies and the tiles in the same area, and one day you will be where you thought you caught the snowies last, and you'll catch a tile, but I'm not sure if maybe the current is running harder that day, and it took longer to get the bait down, or maybe it swung out into another reef, and I don't know, but, that said, we don't find mud, and most everything we fish out there is hardbottom.

Going towards the charters, I don't really know of many in South Carolina. In North Carolina, you mentioned that, in North Carolina, you have a lot of guys running out there, and you also mentioned that it was forty miles, and we're looking at eighty, seventy or eighty, and you're not

going to run out there, and, also, down in south Florida, you're in the backyard, and you're doing it in a half-day trip, where it takes a half day to get there in South Carolina.

Maybe this thing could be addressed more in a lat/long situation as well. If we're -- I don't know exactly how, and I know I've seen amendments come through before with a lat/long differential, and, if we're, in South Carolina, having to go eighty miles, and we only have a handful of boats doing it, North Carolina may have a bigger issue with forty miles, and Florida has one at, I don't know, twenty? How far out is your snowy? You were talking about even state waters.

MR. MOSS: That's south Florida. I mean, you get them on a jet-ski.

MR. CONSTANT: So that will have to be -- You can catch red snapper in state waters too, but I don't know, and is it possible to do a lat/long issue here, south of 31 or 28, that we would have to curb some offshore, because I don't see that being an issue, with recreational fishermen in South Carolina anyway.

MR. HULL: Okay. I am not sure that I know what you're asking for, as long as the lat/long, but some kind of regional difference?

MR. CONSTANT: Regional differences.

MR. HULL: They have a hard time handling regional differences.

MR. CONSTANT: They do, and I remember Amendment 18 on red snapper.

MR. HULL: I think Allie has a couple of things. Charter data may be underestimating snowy catch, and I think that's what we're hearing, and, also, we're hearing that the MRIP, for private recreational catch, is not being represented in the MRIP data either, and so the council needs to be aware that we don't believe that the recreational interaction, and probably effort, is not being represented in the recreational FES-MRIP, or in the charter boat reporting, accurately, something like that.

MR. CONSTANT: But commercial is not going to -- It doesn't want to go under 200, and it doesn't want to drop it?

MR. HULL: No, because they want to --

MR. CONSTANT: I understand.

MR. HULL: The only reason they're going to be there is to catch them, to catch snowies, except in a couple of situations where Vincent talked about, in the hook-and-line fishery for golden tilefish, there's some interaction there, but then that season closes too, and so you would have to talk about trying to line that up, to where it stays -- He mentioned to keep it open during that time, and he mentioned that, but, no, I think that the commercial sector wants to have the 200-pound limit and catch them and move on and do something else. By that time, usually the commercial golden tilefish -- If they interact with them, the season is just about as short, and, I mean, it doesn't last long. The hook-and-line golden tile lasts what, how many months?

MR. BONURA: About eight months, probably.

MR. HULL: So you're getting eight months there, and so there's going to be some time where they may have to discard, if the snow closes this year, and I think he said it's almost the end of April, and we were at what percentage, Andy, commercial? This year, we're only at 30 percent in April.

MR. CONSTANT: Let's take the same view on the recreational side, and we're going to have the same scenario, and our season is this big, and we only get 1,500 fish now, or 1,600 fish, for the whole season, for every boat on the water? That's pretty dismal.

MR. HULL: It's dismal. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, but, Tony, I have the sense that maybe there's some confusion, and, if I'm wrong, I apologize, but it's not that the commercial isn't doing anything. The cut has been made to the ABC, and we're getting our allocation that is already reduced, and you're getting your allocation, and I don't mean us and them, but, in essence, commercial is getting theirs, and recreational is getting theirs, and what we're just trying to figure out is, within each sector, how do you want to use your piece of pie, and so it's not that we're not doing anything, but it's that our piece of pie has been reduced, and now, as an industry, what's the best way to use what little piece of pie we have left.

MR. CONSTANT: I do understand that, I agree with the 200-pound catch limit, but I'm also looking at what's going up on the board right now and saying that our charter is misrepresented, and, well, that means that the books aren't straight on the charter captains, and so, I mean --

MR. HULL: I disagree with your comment.

MR. CONSTANT: No, I know where you're at, and --

MR. PILAND: I would say that MRIP data is underestimating all of the recreational catch, the MRIP data --

MR. CONSTANT: Not the charter/for-hire?

MR. PILAND: Not the charter/headboat electronic reporting, and I don't think that's being misrepresented, and it hasn't been looked at, to my knowledge. Is that true or false? I don't think that that's been looked at.

MS. IBERLE: I am not sure about that one. I would have to check for you, but I don't want to say yes and have that be wrong.

MR. HULL: I can tell you this, that the clock is on time, and it says it's 5:04, and I know that staff has to carry on, and we're stuck here at the hotel, and we could probably stay here and let them go and see what happens then, but I think we need to, Allie, wind it up for everybody, and then we'll get back to this tomorrow, but is there one lingering hand here? David, go ahead.

MR. MOSS: The one thing I will say is, and this has to do with the electronic for-hire reporting, and so that's for federally-permitted boats, and so I've got up the NOAA catch estimates for last year, for 2021, by two-month wave, and, as a for-instance, in November and December, it shows seven fish, and there was more than seven caught from one boat that docks right by where I live. However, I don't believe, and I'm not trying to call him out, and I won't say his name, but I don't believe he's a federally-permitted boat, and so he doesn't have to report.

MR. PILAND: No.

MR. MOSS: Because he fishes in state waters.

MR. PILAND: The South Atlantic season was closed at that time, right?

MR. MOSS: I don't think so. It was state -- I mean, technically, he could have been within the rules, if he was in state waters, because it's open.

MR. PILAND: But when did you say that happened?

MR. MOSS: 2021.

MR. PILAND: In November?

MR. MOSS: It was -- This is the NOAA website, [fisheries.noaa.gov](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov), and it's preliminary landings for fishing year January 1 to December 31, 2021.

MR. PILAND: But the recreational season is May through the first of September.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so let's research that further to see what's going on.

MR. PILAND: It's not the first time that an out-of-season catch has been reported on MRIP, and it happened on bluefin tilefish and got extrapolated to the point that it should have shut the whole fishery down in January, and that's Florida's regulations for you. If you make it back to state waters, you're legal.

MR. HULL: Well, let's -- Allie, if it's okay, we have, on the board, where we're at, and we're talking about some problems that we see on the MRIP and the recreational reporting and things, and we have some concerns that they want to bring to the council's attention, but we don't have time to keep going right now, and let's bring this -- Let's come right back to this point tomorrow. Are we good with that? Mike, everything good? So it looks like, guys, we'll -- Good job today, and it was really tough stuff, and it's going to continue to be, but, tomorrow, we have a half a day, and we're starting at 9:00 a.m. again, and we'll try to get wrapped up by noon, and so we'll see you all in the morning. Thanks a lot.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on April 19, 2022.)

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APRIL 20, 2022

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, North Charleston, South Carolina, on April 20, 2022, and was called to order by Mr. Jimmy Hull.

MR. HULL: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the last day of the AP meeting. We've got to get through three important items, and we're going to see a couple of these again, or we're going to see all of this again, I believe, and it still has to go out to public hearings again on Amendment 51 and 52, and, from I heard, they're on the same timeline, and then gag is a meeting behind that, and so it's important that we try to, in the short time we have this morning -- We have to get out of here, because there's a Dolphin Wahoo AP meeting that's going to start right after us, and, also, I believe that, if you can and you want to hang around for that meeting, to put input in, you're more than welcome to do it, and so remember that. There's definitely -- If you have to be around here, or you want to be here, you can. With that, we're going to fire off and hand it to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so, to kind of refocus us for Amendment 51 for snowy grouper, I was going to use this discussion document, which is in your briefing book, to kind of review what we talked about yesterday, and so I'm going to start with the ACL action, and so I kind of wanted to just show you guys these tables a little bit bigger today, and not shoved on a PowerPoint, and so the 185 is the current total ACL, right, and so that's for both sectors, and then this Alternative 2, which is the preferred alternative that the council selected in March, is the ACL equal to the updated ABC, and so these values here are the council's preferred.

We talked a little bit about that kind of 40 percent reduction, and so you're seeing here that this is this updated total ACL and then the difference from the current ACL for each year, until, you know, the 2026 ACL will remain in place, until modified, and so that's where we're looking at that kind of 40 percent reduction.

The other thing that I wanted to point out -- We talked, again, about these allocations, and so the preferred allocation that the council selected in March was to use the allocation method that was previously used in Reg Amendment 20, but use the updated MRIP-FES recreational landings to recalculate that, and that resulted in that 87/12 and change allocation to the commercial and the recreational.

Snowy is a little odd, because the sectors are expressed in different units, and so there's a lot going on in this table, and so what you're going to see is kind of the first columns are the recreational portion, and so you have the percentage allocation and then the recreational ACL, which is in numbers of fish here. Then, when you're looking at the commercial columns, those are expressed in pounds gutted weight, and so you have the total commercial ACL, and, again, the commercial is a split season, and there's an allocation to Season 1, which is 70 percent, and Season 2, which is 30 percent, and so this is kind of how those numbers shake out. This middle section here is that Preferred Alternative. 2.

Then one more thing to note, and we were talking, yesterday, about the landings for each sector, and so how has the fishery kind of been operating thus far, and so, from 2015 to 2020, the commercial sector averaged 106.6 percent of the ACL, and so you can see that per year here in the percent ACL, and then the recreational averaged 68.8 percent of the ACL, and, again, you can see those percentages here, and so where we kind of left off was talking about the recreational season, and so this is Action 4, modifying the recreational season.

The preliminary analysis indicated that, with that updated recreational ACL, it was likely that the season would only be a single wave, and so, currently, it runs from May 1 to August 31, and so a single wave would put you at either May 1 through June 30, or the council would like you to discuss whether or not you would prefer to have that wave be later in the year, from July 1 to August 31. With that, I am going to scroll down to where I can take some notes for you guys, and this is that table that we looked at.

Again, we looked at landings from 2015 to 2019, and that's where this preliminary analysis predicted that, with that preferred allocation and the recreational ACL, we would have less than one wave, and so one more thing to point out is the IPT did conduct a kind of co-catch analysis, and, again, this is included in this document, which is in your briefing book, and they looked at trips that caught snowy, released snowy, and then harvested snowy and the species that they were catching them with, and we talked a lot, yesterday, about tilefish. Tilefish does appear on these lists, and, again, Table 14 is trips that caught snowy, and Table 15 is trips that discarded snowy, and then Table 16 is trips that harvested snowy. With that, I will turn it over to you guys.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Allie. Could you scroll back up a little bit? The number of trips, that's what we're dealing with of the data, number of trips, and then one more up, and so number of trips caught by species, and so that's from the MRIP, and so they intercepted one trip, and is that what that means?

MS. IBERLE: With this, you're looking at ten trips that discarded snowy, and so the number of trips that discarded snowy that also caught each one of these species, and so one trip caught yellowedge, one trip caught red snapper, black sea bass, and so forth.

MR. HULL: Okay, and, on the MRIP, when they get an intercept and they discarded -- So they're the discards then expanded and calculated and used against the total ACL, as a dead animal, and taken away?

MS. IBERLE: I believe, and I'm looking to people that are more knowledgeable than I, that the discards in the assessment are considered -- The species has 100 percent discard mortality, and so the discards -- Chip is coming to correct me.

DR. COLLIER: With snowy grouper, in the assessment, the way it works is all catch is reported as landings, and so the discarded is incorporated with the landings for both the recreational and the commercial sectors, and it assumed 100 percent discard mortality for all released fish.

MR. HULL: Okay, and then so, if they had -- If they intercepted a private recreational vessel, and he said that I discarded, then that gets expanded out, in the MRIP system, to be whatever numbers there could be, and then it's taken directly away from the private recreational quota, or ACL, in the stock assessment, and it affects what is given to them, because it's already been killed and

taken out of the stock. Okay. Thank you. More questions on what you've seen so far on snowy? Chris.

MR. KIMREY: With these few boats on the MRIP, I think I see where you were going, Jimmy. Like, if they had intercepts, when snowy is closed, on private recreational boats, and let's say the majority of those intercepts were when the season was closed, and each of those boats released one snowy, or floated it away, whatever you want to -- In essence, if they didn't have any intercepts when snowy is open with private recreational boats, that could be catastrophic to that little tiny percentage, just because every single fish is considered release mortality, and that's dead discards, and so those numbers just seem -- I mean, that's a blatant example of how easy MRIP can skew a fishery, I mean just a blatant example. That's a little unnerving that it's so few.

MR. HULL: I will add comment to that, and I think that we're all, here at the AP, expressing our uncomfortableness with the MRIP process for the private recreational as the tool that they're using. What do you do about it? What we're doing, complain, and hopefully something will change and it will be improved, because it's obviously inadequate, and there is error bars all around it, and they know it's inadequate, but what do they do about it?

I guess they're trying to do the best they can, but we're not happy about it, and I know the private rec isn't happy about it, but, rather than get off into that, and probably that's a -- I know we can complain about that for a long time, and it's going to take a lot of complaining to make that change, but I think they already know it, and I just wanted to understand it too, how it's being done, but any other -- Then we'll keep moving?

MS. IBERLE: Really quickly, before I move off this action, I did want to ask the AP if they have a preferred recommendation for those season waves, and so, if you have a particular time of year that is more important for your fishing.

MR. HULL: Tony, go ahead.

MR. CONSTANT: We would prefer the Alternative 2, and that would be the best out of the two choices.

MS. IBERLE: Then the other thing that I want to make sure that I nail down, and I skipped over it earlier, was we discussed, a little bit yesterday, about a deepwater closure, and I kind of had a question-mark on that yesterday, and so I wanted to come back to that and make sure that I am recording you guys' feedback to the council, and so that's this line here, and we kind of talked about a deepwater closure after the private recreational season, and I did add a note in there that the previous closure occurred, I think for less than a calendar year, in 2011, and it was a 240-foot depth closure.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I remember us talking about this, and then there was comment that it needed to coincide with the golden tilefish, any deepwater effort, I think it is where it was -- It was like, if you're going to shut it down -- You can't just shut it down for snowy, because then we're fishing for goldens, and then we're going to interact with snowies at that time, and so then 100 percent discard mortality, blah, blah, blah, and then you see where we're going, and so I don't know who wants to -- Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: You know, as a rule-of-thumb, I think everybody in the room is against any type of closure, but if -- I think that the snowy season, as well as the tilefish, need to coincide, for everybody's ability to help the whole resource. After that, like I said, I don't think anybody, myself included, is not in favor of any type of closure, but let's leave the two seasons open at the same time.

MR. HULL: Andy, you will be next, and so the idea -- I don't know the timeline on the private recreational golden tilefish season, and so how long has it been, and does it in any way coincide with the snowy at this time? I don't know, and that's something -- I guess we could say research that and come back to us. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: I just wanted to clarify, and so golden tilefish is open, recreationally, year-round. Blueline is open May through August each year. This year, it's going to close early, but May through August is the blueline tilefish recreational season.

MR. HULL: And golden tilefish is open year-round, and so how can you have a deepwater closure? You're just going to -- You can't, unless -- But we can see the problems there with the intercepts that could happen and things like that. Andy, you had your hand up?

MR. MAHONEY: Forgive me for thinking too long before I speak, but the 100 percent mortality in snowy grouper releases is, I feel, improper. We have -- There are studies that have been done and presented to us that indicate survival, good survival, with the use of descending devices, and we are all required to have them, and encouraged to use them, and, from a personal standpoint, I feel like there's an extremely high survival rate with the use of descending devices, and I protest the 100 percent mortality rate being used in our calculations.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy, and she's got that up here now under AP concerns, as the 100 percent release mortality may be inaccurate, and descending devices are effective for this species, and so it's something that we're letting the council know our concerns, and maybe it's something they can look into and be able to research a little further, because that's what it will take, and it may be something that you can drive forward to the council personally too, with the information that you have and the experience that you have seen, and then maybe there is some agency work on it, and maybe you could get it changed, and that would be wonderful.

MR. MAHONEY: I would be glad to, and a separate thing is, up there, it says discard concerns with tilefish, and that is not a common practice with tilefish. Discards aren't -- There is no reason to -- In my experience, you don't have a reason to throw back tilefish, and you don't throw back tilefish. I mean, you catch your limit and then you stop fishing.

MS. IBERLE: I think that was probably that I worded that incorrectly, and so I think what I was going for, and I want to make sure that this is worded correctly, was that, while tile fishing, snowy were discarded, and was that an issue? I just want to make sure.

MR. HULL: So snowy being a bycatch while you're tilefish fishing.

MR. MAHONEY: Okay. I'm okay with that, but, as far as discarding tilefish, we don't do that. There was one event brought up in an MRIP survey that it happened and was about to cause a problem with a closure, but that was an anomaly, and identified as an anomaly.

MR. HULL: I think that what you -- I think the point is the snowy discard concern while targeting golden tilefish.

MR. MAHONEY: In my area, you could also have it during blueline fishing, also.

MR. HULL: As well as blueline, golden tile and blueline.

MS. BROUWER: Could we clarify if -- My understanding was that the commercial golden tilefish fishery sometimes discards snowy, or is that -- I guess I was looking to Vincent, to see if we could get some clarification there.

AP MEMBER: If they're over 200 pounds, that's when they would be discarding, I would guess.

MR. HULL: I have some -- When we get into tilefish, there was some comment from some tile fishermen that I need to -- That is one of them, to make sure that the 200-pound limit bycatch. Anything else, Allie, to clarify on this? Does anybody else have anything else to add to this? We have already added a lot of things here, a lot of good stuff. I don't see any hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right. One last big scroll, and the final action for this amendment is going to review the recreational accountability measures, and so I'm going to use this table, and this is Action 5, and so the current recreational accountability measure has an in-season accountability measure, where, if the rec landings reach, or are projected to reach, the rec ACL, then the current season closures, and, in the post-season trigger, all three of these scenarios need to be in place for the trigger to occur, and so the rec landings need to exceed the rec ACL, and the total ACL needs to be exceeded, and the stock needs to be overfished.

Alternative 2 just has NMFS annually announcing the rec season start and end dates, and then Alternative 3 -- This kind of came out of red porgy, and so we're seeing it a lot with some of the snapper grouper species, and it removes the in-season accountability measure for the recreational sector. However, it modifies the post-season accountability measure, where the only thing that needs to occur for the post-season accountability measure to be triggered is the rec landings exceeding the recreational ACL. Then the AM would be the recreational season for the following year would be reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the rec ACL from being exceeded, and so, with that, I will turn it over.

MR. HULL: The council hasn't chosen a preferred on this?

MS. IBERLE: No, not yet, and so they will discuss this further in June.

MR. HULL: So if you can guys can quick read and see what you're looking at here. No action is currently what you have in place, is Alternative 1. David.

MR. MOSS: I don't mind Alternative 1, for the most part, though I'm not thrilled with that all three have to occur for the post-season triggers, and so the one that concerns me is the stock being overfished, and, since it's such a data-poor fishery, especially on the recreational side, how long do we have to wait to figure out that it's overfished? I mean, just -- In the landings numbers that you had presented, there was only one year where we had exceeded the ACL, which completely

skewed the average, and so the average that you had listed was I think 68 percent, or something like that.

If you take out that one year, where it was like 200 percent, then our average is only thirty -- I did the math, which I'm not great at, but I think it was like 38 or 39 percent, and so I don't know if there's any way -- I mean, I guess there's a way, and I could make a motion, but to do Alternative 1, but take out the stock is overfished from that list, and can I do that?

MR. HULL: I think you can.

MR. MOSS: Okay. **I don't know if I need to make like another alternative, because I need to eliminate it, and so Alternative 4? Okay. Then it's everything except for the stock is overfished, although, before I say that, I should probably read it again.**

MS. IBERLE: What I wrote up there is that the AP recommends adding an alternative that would retain the in-season accountability measure and remove the stock status from the post-season AM, and I've got to wordsmith this, but is that what you were thinking?

MR. HULL: Okay, guys. We've got a motion on there, and is there anyone that would like to second that?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I will second for discussion.

MR. HULL: You will second it for discussion? Okay. James seconds for discussion, and would you like to start the discussion, James?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, sir. Thank you, Jimmy. Going back to Alternative 2, where the National Marine Fisheries Service would declare the season open and closure dates, would that be under the same exact parameters, as far as MRIP reporting, or new factors, or what -- What is that based on? I don't know if that was covered exactly. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Yes, and that's -- I had that question also, and I was going to bring it up. Myra, please.

MS. BROUWER: So that one is modeled after the way things work for black sea bass right now, where the agency publishes a bulletin at the beginning of the year, and they project how long the season will be, based on the previous year's landings, and, for black sea bass, it's been a year-round, because they haven't been catching the recreational ACL, and so this would do the same thing. However, it's such a short season, right, and we just learned that it needs to be probably just one wave, and so Alternative 2 kind of is not the best tool, I guess, in my opinion, because the season is going to be so short anyway. We included it in there because the council did talk about potentially doing that for red porgy, and so, you know, as far as just having a full range of things for them to consider.

MR. HULL: Does that help you, James?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Let's have some conversation, if we need, and I do have a question, David. To fully understand this, for me, and I'm not a private recreational, but what's the rationale for your motion?

MR. MOSS: Especially in light of what Myra just said, and, in the case of some sort of anomaly, or, as we had seen in one of the previous slides, where it showed like, in one year, we caught 212 percent, and then all the other years were fifty-ish, and, if they're taking into account previous years' landings, and so, if you're at 212 percent, number one, that completes shuts down the fishery totally, I would assume, and then how do you open it back up? I guess, the following year, you would have zero, and so then how does that work, which is very complicated math to me, and so that's my first issue with that.

Number two, I don't like Alternative 3, because I think there should be in-season measures. If we're projected to reach our ACL, then why do we get to keep fishing for them? I get that, and then, also, going back to my previous comment too about the NMFS closure, and, if there's a year, for whatever reason, that they don't have any intercepts, that they don't happen to stop anybody or whatever, however that works, then we're going to keep it open in perpetuity, which I know won't be, and, I mean, it will still be a shortened season, but I do think that we're going to realize that we're getting a lot more of these animals than we thought, especially on the rec side, once we figure out permitting and reporting and all that stuff, and it's going to be dangerous for the stock, and so I do like that this is restrictive enough, but, you know, it keeps us fishing.

MR. HULL: Basically, what you're doing, if they approve this, is you're making it easier to have AMs, because you're taking away one of the requirements that were necessary. There was three, and so now you will take away the overfishing status, which is going to make it easier for having in-season accountability measures.

MR. MOSS: Well, so that's actually a post-season accountability measure, but, there again, I don't want to run into an issue, like Jack brought up with the amberjacks and stuff, where we're telling everybody that there's an issue and that it takes years to realize that there's an issue. I would rather be ahead of the curve on this.

MR. HULL: That helped. I think that helped everybody understand it, the motion, better, or at least it did for me. Any other discussion on this motion, before we vote on it? Does everybody understand it? **Okay, and so everyone who is opposed to this motion, raise your hand. I don't see any. Everybody that wants to vote for this motion, raise your hand. I see unanimous.** There you go.

MS. IBERLE: Then, really quickly, to review, what that alternative will look like is it will essentially be Alternative 1, but you won't have the stock is overfished, and so, to trigger that post-season AM, you would need the rec landings to exceed the rec ACL and the total ACL to be exceeded, and so I just wanted to show you that on here and kind of highlight what you're eliminating there. If that's all we've got, that's all I have. Are there any other final questions? Then I will look to Kerry, to make sure that I've got everything. All right.

MR. HULL: I just have one more, and so, if you go back to some of the other recommendations that the AP had made for this deepwater private recreational fishery, we do have listed in there, again, stamps and permits needed. Okay, and, as to David's, we're trying to make this more

accountable and more so that we can see what's really going on, and so we've made all those recommendations. Then I think we've got it. Excuse me. Andy, go ahead.

MR. FISH: Would the yellowedge grouper need to be included with these, because a lot of the guys are having interactions, or targeting them, when everything else is closed, because yellowedge doesn't even close, and I was just curious if it would be involved in this discussion.

MS. IBERLE: It certainly could be, if you guys are interacting with the species, and I know that yellowedge is part of its own kind of deepwater complex that shares an ACL, but I've got Myra here, too. If we're changing anything for yellowedge, we would need to look at that complex, which I believe is like yellowedge, silk snapper, queen snapper, and there's one other -- Misty. There you go, and so that's -- I think it would be a little -- It would be a separate complex, but you're more than welcome to discuss that at this point.

MR. HULL: Okay. Back to you. Okay. That's it on snowy. We got through it. Okay. Once we get set up here, I see that Roger is here, and we're going to jump into Amendment 52, golden tilefish and blueline tilefish, and so stand by.

MR. PUGLIESE: Good morning, everyone. I'm going to jump into Amendment 52, golden tilefish and blueline tilefish. Originally, it was golden, and, following up from the last council meeting, we integrated blueline, so it would track and be included in this amendment, and so what we have is, for golden tilefish, SEDAR 66 was completed in 2020, and this was an update, which included the MRIP calculations in that assessment.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee provided recommendations to the council on the ABC, OFL, and the catch levels, and also provided the recommendations that the stock is no longer experiencing overfishing, nor is it overfished. The council, subsequently, is going to be reevaluating the post-season accountability measures, specifically for the recreational sector, and then look at some of the commercial management measures, in response to some requests on the different components of the commercial sector, and, as stated in the document, and I don't know if anybody had a chance to look, the online information for golden tile, and blueline tilefish, and there are some links online for this system.

For blueline tilefish, for the last six years, landings of blueline have often exceeded the sector and total ACLs, and overages of the recreational ACLs have actually been particularly large at some times, and so the council has been directed to reevaluate, again, in this case, the post-season accountability measures also for the recreational sector and to look at modifications to the recreational management measures, and, again, the application of blueline, if you all had a chance to look at it, is online, and we can access that, as needed, as we move forward.

We're going to be looking at this now, to get some input, and there's early in the stages, and there's not a lot of analysis yet, and we're basically getting that ramped up, to take the next step, and so the council will be looking at it in June, with the intent of beginning to move forward for public hearings, once they determine preferred alternatives, et cetera.

That brings us directly to the actions that are included in the amendment. In response to the new assessment for golden tilefish, one of the first things is to address the need to put in a new ABC, totally annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield, and the council, at the last meeting, did look

at a suite of alternatives, which included where we are now, based on the historic CHTS information, but then the update that had the MRIP-FES for an alternative that provided an ACL equals OY, and then a couple of step-downs to just have the entire sequence of landings, the suite for the NEPA review, et cetera, to understand what we need to do.

Subsequently, the council selected a preferred alternative, which has ABC equal to OY, and it's an increase for the entire fishery to 418,000 pounds gutted weight, and that's about a 26 percent, I think, increase for the overall fishery, which, at least in one aspect, is good news for one of the fisheries.

Action 2 then looked at -- They were also directed to revisit the sector allocations, and, presently, the -- What was done was looking at the present numbers and applying the same methodology and calculating no change in necessarily the allocations, but it resulted in the Alternative 2, which is provided, of a 96.7 percent commercial and 3.3 percent for the recreational sector, just applying those and not changing anything, and, also, it did not change the overall in-sector allocations for the commercial fishery.

What we're looking at is, in 2022, the overall ABC going up, and ACL going up, to 418,000 pounds, which would divvy it up to 404,206 pounds to the commercial sector and 3,114 fish to the recreational sector, and the split-outs increase both the hook-and-line to 101,052 and 303,155, which is almost the entire allocation right now, and so that's some good news for all the different sectors involved in this fishery.

Moving forward, one of the things that has been discussed is -- And provided in scoping, from some of the different fishermen, and, in the past, I think this AP had some discussions also, or did have some discussions, very specifically, on the possibility of modifying the start year for hook-and-line and commercial, and there were a number of different alternatives discussed, and the council directed that we put together alternatives that essentially looked at the start date floating from like potentially January 15 to February 1, a couple of different ones for either the hook-and-line sector or the longline sector.

The idea that had been recommended is to try to do a couple of things, and one was to try to potentially avoid times of rougher weather, and also to separate some of the fishing effort, to maybe not have as much of the overlap, in terms of product on the market, and so this was an initial suite that was recommended by the council, and basically no later than February 1 was the recommendation, and so, as you're thinking about this, the bottom line is should the fishing years be modified, and so, as we get into the discussion, think about what potentially -- Then if there are other ones that should be recommended beyond this, what should they be, because, again, this is getting ready to go to public hearing and do analysis, and so those types of recommendations would be important at this stage.

That brings us to Action 4, and this is an issue that just came up at the last council meeting, and what was encompassed is the fact that the longline sector had been fishing up to a certain point, and, when it closed, some of the vessels potentially were looking at the ability to be able to then fish on the hook-and-line quota, and so what you do is you have a trip allowance for the endorsement holders after the longline endorsement allocation is closed, and so that would be 100, 150, or 200 pounds, is an idea of potentially something that would be considered.

Again, this would be, number one, after -- You would have to have a closure of the longline sector, and you would have to have an open -- It would still have to be open. Hook-and-line would still have to be open to even allow something like this, but this is a consideration for discussion, because this was an addition that just came up at the last council meeting, of the possibility of doing this, and that's going to be an important point to get the thoughts of is this something, because, again, this is going to be coming out of the hook-and-line allowance.

That moves us into the post-season recreational accountability measures for golden tilefish, and the issue on this is you've got Alternative 1, which is the present, and, at the present, what you have to do is you have to have the recreational ACL exceeded, and you have to have tilefish, golden tilefish, overfished, and the combined ACL being exceeded, and that has not necessarily occurred in the past, and there was a desire to have the opportunity to see if that could be more focused directly on the ACL, and that's where you see Alternative 2 that provides -- It eliminates the two and provides just basically something that would track that, when you have the recreational landings exceeding the ACL, that would be the trigger to allow the ability to adjust. Then a third alternative was to provide NMFS to basically annually set the fishing year. Again, should post-season, any of these types of measures, be modified?

That moves us to Action 6, and that moves us into the blueline tilefish discussions. As mentioned earlier, you've had exceeding ACLs for a number of years, and there is a desire to look at the different options to address this, and one, first, out of the thing would be to look at the recreational bag limit. As you remember, the bag limit was increased, a number of years ago, up to three, and so what was being considered was potentially a reduction to two fish, to one fish, and then, also, the issue of retention by captain and crew is something that was put on the table as another consideration, and so the council could actually select a couple of these, if they wanted to reduce the bag limit or if they wanted to look at the issue of captain and crew and a reduction, or one or the other, and so they could pick and choose on this, and so what thoughts the panel members may have on either of those different issues relative to bag limit reduction and the need for that, as well as the consideration of retention by captain and crew.

That moves us to Action 7, and that has to do with the other portion of the control for recreational, is the season. Right now, as Myra mentioned earlier, the present season is May 1 through August 31, and, this year, as noted, with the overage last year, there is going to be a reduced season, by I think about a month, this year, in response to that.

Now, what is on the table are a couple of different considerations of shifting the season forward and backward, whether it be May through July, June through August, May through June, or July through August, and I think the intent is the council is going to be looking at monthly and determine how different things fall, and so hopefully the analysis will be provided, so we can look at how those will play out.

Then one of the other discussions that did come up, and it's identified as just Alternative X, because there is some question on whether this actually could be done, given the limitations of the type of data we have, is if you did some type of a regional seasonal, because of the discussions about blueline catch to the north, versus blueline catch in Florida, and is the data, or the information, robust enough to be able to track something like that, and I think that's the reality, and some discussion of people's thoughts on that is probably going to be also good to provide the council with guidance on where this could go, or should go.

That brings us to the last one, which is going to, again, address the issue of post-season accountability, and it's exactly the same type of issue, where, right now, those measures in the post-season have to have all these different things triggered, and you have to have all three of the actions, the ACL exceeded, the total ACL exceeded, and you have to have an overfished status for the species.

While it did have an overfishing that occurred in one year, from the data, et cetera, I think it's back down to what the original catch levels were, and so it has dropped below that already, and so Alternative 2 does similar to what we did with golden tilefish, and it limits that trigger to just exceeding the ACL in the recreational sector, and then that would provide the ability to adjust the recreational landings in the subsequent year. The third alternative was just that you would potentially have an annual setting of the season at the beginning of the year, potentially. Okay, and so what I am going to do is go to the actions.

MR. HULL: Okay. He went through all of that, and so now we're going to go back to each item and address what options are there and get our comments.

MS. BROUWER: What we would like from the AP is -- We went through all the actions, and that seemed to be the best approach, so everybody can have a full picture of what the council is considering, and then we can go action-by-action and you guys provide recommendations, concerns, whatever you would like the council to consider when they discuss this in June, and, as Roger mentioned, they are going to be considering approving this amendment to hold public hearings, which will be held sometime between June and September, and, by then, we hope to have a narrowed-down range of actions and alternatives that then we will analyze, right.

Right now, we don't have much in the way of analyses for you guys, because the council is still trying to figure out which are going to be the actions and the alternatives that are going to go forward for those analyses, and so that's the input that we would like to get now, to help the council narrow down what is going to be considered for these two species in this amendment. Is there any desire to provide recommendations, or support, for the council's preferred, as far as the total annual catch limit for golden tilefish?

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Chris.

MR. MILITELLO: What is the spawning season for both?

MS. BROUWER: We have, up here in this document -- I don't know, off the top of my head, and the question was what's the spawning season for these two species, and so I'm going to open up our little Shiny tool here. In the meantime, while we're getting that information for you guys, these are the fishery information, and what do we call these, the fishery overview tools, and so, basically, if you have other questions, while we get the information on the spawning season, about the life history, or what the landings look like, we can pull that information up for either of these two species.

MR. HULL: I see a couple of hands up. My first question would be on your first question to us, and so the -- We got a new ACL, and so what is the buffer that is -- Is ABC equals ACL, and how

many buffers are in there between what we're being given from the stock assessment and what management wants to give us?

MS. BROUWER: The current preferred is Alternative 2, which sets the ABC equal to the total ACL, and so you can see what those catch levels would be from 2022 from onwards to 2026, based on those projections from the assessment, and then it stay at that 2026 level until the council modifies it.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thanks, and so any buffers are already in the stock assessment process, and we're getting what's given to us, with no more buffers.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and the council did not take it down beyond that, because we had the alternatives for 95 and 90 percent, and so this is the highest level.

MR. HULL: Because we have a great stock status, and so that's good. Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I was just going to add there that I believe the tilefish spawn all year. I mean, I've had encounters all year long that they've had eggs and roe in the fish, and then the question I have is when are we going to get the increase on the ACL? If it's on the board as this year, are we going to get extra fish coming this year, or is that going to be next year?

MR. HULL: Hang on one second, Vincent.

MR. PUGLIESE: In response to the question about spawning season, Walter Bublely at South Atlantic DNR provided a table, and you have a range from January through September, but the core of -- For tilefish now, and it's for both tilefish, would be April through June.

AP MEMBER: Tilefish on this would be just goldens?

AP MEMBER: There is blueline on there, too. Blueline is up here, and so it's April through --

MR. PUGLIESE: With blueline, it's April through September, for the core area for blueline.

MR. HULL: Does that answer your question, Chris? Okay. Then, Vincent, would you mind asking your questions again? Thank you.

MR. BONURA: Yes, and my question was the new ACL, the increase of quota, when would we get that? Would that be this year or next year, if it's on the board up there now, currently, at 2022, is what I'm looking at, but, as of right now, the golden tile longline quota had closed at 248,000 pounds, and, up on the board, we're looking at 300,000 pounds plus, it's looking like.

MR. PUGLIESE: In reality, I mean, this is essentially what we're getting from the assessment, and that technically is year-one, and so, while it says 2022, what it's going to be is upon implementation, which will be 2023, ultimately, and so these will be adjusted as we move forward with this, but that's year-one.

MS. BROUWER: But, realistically, Vincent, the timeline for this amendment is for the council to approve in December of this year, right, and so the regulations, the changes, the amendment puts

in place will not be effective until sometime probably mid-year 2023, which, by then, the longline quota probably will have been caught, and that one gets caught really fast and so, you know, the ACL would get adjusted probably in mid-year 2023.

MR. BONURA: All right, but, if it's mid-year 2023, we could have a reopener that year and catch the rest of fish coming into the end of the year.

MR. HULL: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Just for argument's sake, could the panel request that the council address this in June?

MS. BROUWER: Well, the council will be addressing this in June, but it's just the amendment process still needs to play through, right, and so we still have to do public hearings, and the council needs to review the amendment in September, and so the soonest we could have it finalized for approval by the Secretary of Commerce would be the end of the year.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Understood. Thank you.

MR. HULL: David.

MR. MOSS: One thing to be concerned about, from an ACL perspective, is the ACL was set using mean landings that ended essentially in 2008, a combination of mean landings from 2006 to 2008 plus mean landings from 1986 to 2008, and I am not asking for reallocation or anything like that, but we need to be cognizant of the fact that, around 2008, give or take, or maybe a little bit before, is when the recreational anglers really figured out what to do with a lot of these deepwater species, and so this is another one that we need to keep our eyes on and be careful, because, once we realize some better data and real numbers, there is probably a lot more recreational take than what we think, and so just a word of warning.

MR. HULL: Anyone else? Andy.

MR. PILAND: Just for some info for the group, and I'm on a research with Virginia Tech, and bluelines spawn year-round, and they are sexually mature at about ten inches.

MR. HULL: That is early. That's good. The only other thing I have, Roger, is, as they were discussing about where it shows this increase in quota, the golden tilefish people that are contacting me are saying, hey, we want that, even though you're saying the amendment process doesn't end until this, you're saying that the stock -- They're telling you that the stock -- The Scientific and Statistical Committee has given you these numbers now, and so can you give us those increases at a later date, rather than saying here's what you could catch, but you can't catch them, because the amendment process isn't through yet? Can you give us the fish that the SSC has given us, basically?

MR. PUGLIESE: I think everybody understands that, and it's the process that we go through, and we'll see what type of discussion the Regional Administrator may have.

MR. HULL: Well, you probably shouldn't be teasing us with it and then telling us we can't have it.

MR. PUGLIESE: Well, the good thing is it's good news, and it's a good trajectory across-the-board, which --

MR. HULL: For the future, yes.

MR. PUGLIESE: Well, look at some of the numbers in the later time, and the increases just continue to go up, hopefully, and hopefully recruitment stays good and you can see these realized even further into the future.

MR. HULL: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jimmy. Maybe, just for clarity's sake, on where it says the year, maybe just say, "upon implementation", and then year-two, year-three, year-four, because we kind of get stuck on dates, and then, if the data was showing the years, and, I mean, then we're already in 2026, and we did miss some harvest opportunity, and so, I mean, maybe, for clarity's sake, we could just put "upon implementation", and then each subsequent year. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Robert.

MR. FREEMAN: We have discussed, for I guess the last couple of days, the concern about the recreational vessels weren't permitted, and we don't know how many there are, and so how can we develop a confidence that these numbers that are being used to drive the legislation -- That's there is some validity to that? It just disturbs me as to somebody is sitting somewhere with a calculator and says, okay, this many eggs from this many fish and all that, but they don't really know how many fish there are, and they don't really know how many enemies those fish have, and so what makes this the information that's driving what we're allowed to catch?

MR. HULL: Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I am going to back up Captain Freeman and David Moss. In discussions, when we get to a recreational permit, or license, I think this would be one of the first species that we want to have let's say reported and monitored, and one of the reasons is, in my time so far on this AP -- Early on, seven years ago, I was stating that, hey, like in North Carolina, we kind of get conservation just because of how far these are, but, with the increase of the go-fast boats, I don't think that's going to be a block anymore, and so just what David says. Where it's easy to get these things in Florida, it's getting easier for the rest of us up north of Florida to get ahold of these, for the people that can afford to go, and there's more of them all the time.

MR. HULL: I think we're going to get into that further, and we could have further recommendations about everything we've already talked about in the past of stamps, permits, reporting for the private recreational sector, and this deepwater fishery, which is open year-round to them.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and I think some of those very discussions are going to be -- As the council gets into talking about the overall fishery and the interactions between the different species, the

targets and the different things, I think that's going to be definitely directions that they're going to have to address for the entire deepwater complex, because of some of these considerations and unique situations you may have to apply some of these newer different types of methods to track the fish, or monitor it better, or advance the way we're looking at some of the recreational catch information, but I think that really is the discussion on the first two portions, and that potentially could bring us into then Action 3.

If there aren't additional questions on those areas, and, of course, those can come up embedded within any of these other discussions, Action 3 addresses the issue of the first management action, which would be modifying the fishing year for the commercial golden tilefish and longline sectors, and so should the fishing years be modified for the commercial sectors, and, if so, what may be preferred alternatives, within this suite or other ones, that may be considered as we go to public hearings?

MR. HULL: Well, I will start out with a comment on that. As a fish dealer and restaurant owner, and someone that needs seafood during the -- A white-meat fish during the shallow-water grouper closure that we have, having golden tilefish open during that time is vital for the market, for us, and we've stated that many, many times, and so I have just stated it again. Now, for the golden tilefish longline fishermen, and hook-and-line guys, they need to speak up as to how they want to maybe manicure that closer for themselves. Go ahead.

MR. BONURA: The golden tile longline fishermen that I've talked to, most of them, if not all of them, would like to open up the golden tile longline commercial on January 15, to lessen stress levels over the holidays with their families and to keep the price increase and the price high, if it pushes it closer to Easter and Lent. The hook-and-line, I would keep them at January 1, just to give them a head start and to -- I mean, just keep it as-is, and I think that's about -- It's usually open until August, eight months or so.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. MAHONEY: I have a comment from a hook-and-line tilefish good buddy of mine, and I would like to read it, if I may. I sent him the screenshot of the bluescreen of the tilefish, and this might not be the part to comment, but it was involving the bycatch for the longline. After their quota is full, to allow them to catch golden tile, and he says that absolutely not, unless we, meaning him as a hook-and-line bandit fisherman, can start the hook-and-line fishing year on September 1, and all their bycatch would come out of the longline quota. He has a feeling that, if the longline guys catch these tilefish in their bycatch, that, once they make it to the dock, they could just say they caught them on their bandit gear, and it would go -- If it wasn't put on their quota, and I think I'm reading that correctly, but I wanted to say that and speak for him, or reading that for him.

MR. HULL: Okay. Well, that action is coming up also, and we're going to talk about it, and you can raise that up again at that time. We're going to be talking about that action soon, and that's good. Okay. Anything else right now on this action? We've made a couple of comments and recommendations from the longline endorsement holders that sit on the -- We have one, for sure, Vincent, on this AP. The rest of us that have a snapper grouper permit, we, obviously, can go after golden tilefish on the hook-and-line sector, and the recreational guys can fish year-round too for them, and so good opportunities there.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. That moves us on to Action 4 and to the item you've already touched on, and so your comments are already in the record, and this is to establish the incidental trip limit allowance for golden tilefish. The way it's structured is once the longline quota was caught, and so, really, the consideration is should an incidental allowance be considered, and, if so, is there a recommendation on a level?

MS. BROUWER: I am trying to remember what Andy said, and so I'm going to type it up, and then you help me tweak it, okay?

MR. HULL: Andy, do you want to read that and add to it now?

MR. MAHONEY: It says the incidental allowance of the hook-and-line sector begins fishing on September 1.

MS. BROUWER: What I understood, Andy, is that the commenter said that an incidental allowance -- That they would be okay with it if --

MR. MAHONEY: My buddy would not be okay. He says absolutely not on the incidental allowance for the longline sector, after the longline has already been closed.

MR. HULL: But he's not a longline endorsement holder?

MR. MAHONEY: Correct. He has been pushed out of that fishery, and he chooses to hook-and-line.

MR. HULL: Okay.

MR. PUGLIESE: That's a little more straightforward, because the comment about it coming from the longline allocation -- The longline allocation has already closed, and so this, I think, is more direct to what the comment is.

MR. MAHONEY: Correct.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay, and so are there other -- On the September, that was -- The September 1 was the qualifier, was that, if we did have an allowance, that it would push the hook-and-line to a September 1 start, or how did that -- Or is it just the most significant is the not support for an incidental allowance?

MR. MAHONEY: Correct. The most significant is the not support an incidental allowance.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay.

MR. MAHONEY: He also wanted input on a hook-and-line endorsement for tile, bandit tile, a bandit endorsement.

MR. PUGLIESE: Develop an endorsement?

MR. MAHONEY: Yes, sir.

MS. BROUWER: So one of the things that the council directed us to try to do is to bring together the longline endorsement holders for a meeting in the fall, and there is some desire for them to get together and maybe talk about creative ways, different ways, to manage that fishery, and so we're going to go forward and do that, and so we're looking to get a little bit more focused input from that group of folks in the fall of this year, but, whatever input we get, and I guess I should clarify, is probably not going to go into this amendment, and it would be for other things that could potentially be considered for that fishery.

MR. HULL: Okay, and I've got -- Just as you're getting -- People are chiming-in, and they're listening-in, and I've got some comment from a longline that is saying that, after the longline is closed, they do need a 200-pound bycatch allowance, because -- It was brought up at the last council meeting, because, while they're fishing for -- They have to switch over to fishing for snowy, yellowedge, and gags, and they're going to interact with golden tile, and so they would like to -- Instead of discarding those animals, they would like to have a 200-pound trip limit, and so I wanted to make sure that was on the record, and now I will go to Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Thank you, Jimmy. I want to agree with exactly -- That's what I was about to tell you, is pretty much what Jimmy had mentioned there. After the golden tile longline is over, if you go out hook-and-line fishing, or even bottom fishing groupers, deepwater groupers, you're going to run into bycatch of golden tile, and I hate to toss that species over the rail. It's a waste of the resource, and there shouldn't be any reason why these boats can't bring them back in and put them on the market for your local -- I mean, wholesale markets, retail markets, restaurants, everybody. It's a valuable species for the area, and many longliners that I have talked to -- They have all been interested in a couple-of-hundred-pound catch limit on the bycatch allowance.

MR. HULL: She's got that all up there, and so we've got that there, and I think that was a great idea, that you do need to get these different sectors together to talk about how to manage their fishery, and especially the golden tilefish longline. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, and a quick question. What is -- Forgive me for not knowing this, but what is, or is there, a trip limit for the longline sector, like during the season?

MR. BONURA: That's a 4,000-pound trip limit.

MR. MOSS: Okay, and what is -- Like, if you're just going hook-and-line, and one of the commercial guys are going hook-and-line, what is the average -- What, typically, is an average catch, reasonable?

MR. BONURA: Average catch on hook-and-line? I mean, all the bandit boats that I buy from are going out for multiday trips, and they're catching their limit of 500 pounds.

MR. MOSS: Okay.

MR. BONURA: I mean, there's guys off of Broward and Palm Beach County, Jupiter, that are only catching a couple hundred pounds on one-day trips, but anyone is out for multiple, or couple-day trips, are catching their limit, usually.

MR. MOSS: So my next question -- Sorry, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: You're good. Keep going, David.

MR. MOSS: My next question, and it's a question, is, if we do an incidental trip limit, are we recommending one of the alternatives? I mean, I'm okay with it, and I'm just asking if we're going to pick one of these alternatives. If your average catch is 500 pounds, right, and I might be misremembering, and there were a lot of numbers in there, and so, if your average catch is 500 pounds, I'm just curious which incidental trip limit we're going to pick.

MR. HULL: I see where you're heading with that. You're getting the information to try to make a logical recommendation, from none to -- So we're getting information from, as you would imagine, one sector is not wanting is to give up anything to another sector, and so that's in the discussion, but, if this AP wants to make a decision to allow, recommend allowing one, then we need to choose one, I think, or, if we were going to recommend not allowing it, we need to choose Alternative 1, or we can not do anything else other than comment and throw it back to the council and let them figure it out, and so that's where we're at. What do you want to do? Andy.

MR. PILAND: How many longliners are there?

MS. BROUWER: So there is twenty-three, I believe, endorsements that were issued for 2022.

MR. PILAND: And they've got South Atlantic commercial permits, as well as, additionally, a longline permit, and is that right?

MR. HULL: It's an endorsement on the existing snapper grouper SG 1, unlimited, and so they get a longline endorsement, and they qualified for that over a limited-entry system that was put in place however many years ago, and a lot of people got kicked out of it, because they didn't have enough landings or time, however they did it, and it's the same thing with the sea bass pot endorsement. You know, they limited it down to people that fit the criteria at the time, and they ended up with twenty-two.

MR. PILAND: So, when he takes the longline spool off his boat, he's a regular permit holder?

MR. HULL: Exactly, and now he's fishing for other species with bandit gear or hook-and-line. Andy.

MR. FISH: I believe the rule is, if you have the longline endorsement, you have to not fish for twelve calendar months, and you cannot possess a golden tilefish for twelve calendar months, as it stands right now, if you did the longline endorsement.

MS. BROUWER: If you have a longline endorsement, then you're not allowed to fish on the hook-and-line trip limit after you've caught the longline quota.

MR. FISH: Right.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so that's further information, and so where does that quota come from, is kind of where -- So I'm trying to -- So, if you have a longline endorsement, and, after longline is

closed, you are no longer allowed -- Right now, you're no longer allowed to -- You can't fish hook-and-line, unless you -- Not on that vessel, and, if you have another vessel that doesn't have a longline endorsement, and so I remember this now, and someone said I've got to buy another vessel to keep making a living, and so now I get it. Have you got that? Do you understand that, everybody?

They can't fish hook-and-line under the golden tilefish quota if they have a longline endorsement, currently, and so they would have to -- They can't fish hook-and-line for golden tilefish, but they can fish hook-and-line deep water for other species, and I think that's what they're talking about, is they want a bycatch while they're fishing for other species, and not with longline gear, but with hook-and-line.

MR. FISH: I believe that they can still longline and targeting the grouper, and they can still longline, and so they're going to interact with these fish on their longlines, and they're not just going to go start -- They're not just going to go bandit fishing for these groupers, but they're going to longline for these groupers and then still interact with the golden tilefish.

MR. PUGLIESE: They couldn't use longline for golden after the --

MR. FISH: Correct, but they're going to be fishing for grouper and interact with golden tilefish still on the longline.

MR. PUGLIESE: They're not going to be allowed to use the longline after they fill their quota.

MR. HULL: So we need clarification on that, because there is some -- I see a council member. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: It's not clarification, but it would personally help me if you all could have a little bit of a discussion, with your knowledge, about sort of these boats -- Are they all boats that switch over to bandit, and your knowledge of these boats that have the golden tilefish endorsement, and what they do the rest of the year, and that would just help my knowledge, because I don't know that many people who do that, and so, in that discussion, to the extent you can describe that fishery, that would help us.

MR. HULL: All right. Paul Nelson.

MR. NELSON: In my area, they longline yellowedge grouper all year-round, and they do interact with tilefish occasionally, and they don't take their gear off. They fish for tilefish and yellowedge grouper and they catch their limit of snowies, when they're open.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. MAHONEY: That is what the bigger boats do, and I know, in South Carolina, in Georgetown, there's guys that still target yellowedge, and they still interact with -- They get their snowies, and they interact with golden tile.

MR. HULL: Vincent, is that what your boats do, too?

MR. BONURA: No, and my boat actually, because of this issue of the discards, the last couple of years, my boat has been parked at the dock, and I haven't even gone fishing at all after golden tile is over. It hasn't gone anywhere, but, just recently, I purchased a Gulf of Mexico permit, and now we're going to be going over there, because we can fish all year over there.

MR. HULL: Paul.

MR. NELSON: Also, the boats that longline in my area go wreckfish fishing, or deepwater grouper fishing, after they open up on April 15, also, and so they do a little bit of everything.

MR. HULL: A lot of them used to shark fish, and so, when you're fishing with longline gear, those are your options. Then they have the -- Then, if you took the spool off, and you got an SG 1, and so you can't -- They have made it to where they can't hook-and-line golden tilefish, but they could still -- The only thing they really can do is hook-and-line other deepwater groupers, or they can longline other deepwater groupers, but then the crutch is, when they're doing that, they are interacting with golden tilefish, and that's the whole reason why they're asking for the bycatch allowance, right? Is that where we're at? What do you guys want to do? Do you want to think about it some more, and, if you come up with a suggestion -- Vincent, I mean, you're a heavy stakeholder in this, and what do you want to?

MR. BONURA: For us, my boat, it would be really great to have my crews, captains and crews and mates and everybody, would really like to be able to go hook-and-line fishing after golden tilefish is over, and maybe could think about a hook-and-line endorsement for all the hook-and-line guys, and, if you can put multiple endorsements on one boat, that could be an option that everyone could agree with.

MR. HULL: So you want to get rid of the rule that says a longline boat can no longer do hook-and-line on the golden tilefish after the longline season is over, and so that's what you're saying, and so, obviously, that's where the -- They both have an independent quota, and so where does the quota come from after a guy has already prosecuted the longline and then he jumps into the hook-and-line, and so where does it come from?

If you've already used up your longline quota, now you are applying more pressure on the hook-and-line guys that are there, and so that's what -- Those guys are texting me now too and saying, just like you, and saying make sure they don't do this, because now it's going to shorten my season, and so vice versa, and let me go longline, or I was taken out of it, and so, I mean, that's where we're at with that, and I forget what we did in black sea bass pots, because we have a separate hook-and-line quota there, and I don't remember. I think I can still hook-and-line them, if the pot fishery closes, and we don't have this in that, but we do have this in this. Anyway, let's go back, and I see more hands, and this is -- What we've got to do is discuss this out. Andy and then Vincent.

MR. MAHONEY: I would just like to see that, if this somehow goes through, that the bycatch for the longline guys would have to -- That catch would have to come off of their quota, next year, or that year. Me and my buddy had even talked about just stopping -- We were just outside and messing around, but they could stop at 90 percent of the longline quota, and then they could have 10 percent to play with the rest of the year, as their incidental bycatch, and these are just ideas, but I wanted to see that up there. Thank you.

MR. PUGLIESE: That's a little clearer, in terms of some direction, because it couldn't come back out of it, once it's closed, and so, if you're partitioning or something, that's an option.

MR. HULL: Yes, and you're seeing an increase in quota here to begin with, and so maybe it's like -- That's where you've got to get with those longline guys and figure out maybe a way to make it happen with maybe some of the increase.

MR. MAHONEY: I have no stake in this, and I'm speaking for other fishermen, on their behalf.

MR. HULL: I understand. A lot of us are doing that, or all of us are. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jimmy. I would kind of like to ask the council members that are here, and we had put a similar scenario for yellowtail snapper, to kind of stop at 90 percent and have some retention that were people hook-and-line mangrove snapper fishing, and we've kind of fallen out of the need for that, but I kind of wonder what the council thought of that recommendation, and had they given it a whole lot of attention in that timeframe? Thank you.

MR. HULL: I wish I could make a motion right now, because I would, but somebody -- Okay. Here we go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Do you want me to try to answer that question? Basically, we got the yellowtail stock assessment, and the data was somewhat old, and so we've sent the stock assessment back to FWRI to add in the most recent years, and then we'll come back and look at yellowtail, and so that's where that is, and so we haven't had discussions about, you know, what happens once a certain percentage of the quota is reached, and can you have a bycatch allowance of these other species, and we didn't even get that far, because of the waiting for the stock assessment to be updated.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jessica.

MR. HULL: Okay. Any other hands on this? Jack.

MR. COX: I am getting a few texts from some of the North Carolina guys that say, if we went down that road of letting those longline guys reenter the fishery for the hook-and-line sector, then it's rewarding the Florida guys with a lot more fish, when our guys were -- It just gives them more of the fish to catch, and they see it as an unfair advantage for North Carolina, and I told them that I would put it out there.

MR. HULL: Okay. Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I would like to put forth a motion, in order to answer some of these questions intelligently, and I would like for the council to provide for a meeting with the longliners, and the meeting specifically oriented to determine how to deal with bycatch after the longline season is closed, to eliminate wasted fish and look at this new quota that is coming out and maybe use some of that.

MR. HULL: Okay. **We have a motion to recommend that the council consider convening a meeting of the longline endorsement holders to explore ways to address the bycatch issue and let them figure out a way to make that happen.** Do we have a second? David seconds. Is there discussion? We have already been into this. I think that's a really great idea, and they need to figure out a way to make it happen, and it's their fishery. Let's have a vote. **Is there anybody opposed to that motion? Seeing none, it passes unanimously.**

I don't know, David, going back to your question, and I think that's probably the best we're going to get with this, is to throw it back at them and say that you guys need to figure this out, and we're not the best to figure it out for you. Thanks.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. That moves us on to Action 5, and this is getting back into the post-season accountability measures. As I mentioned before, this is to get away from having to have all those different triggers at one time, and you have that as the present situation. Alternative 2 provides that mechanism to drop it down to just the recreational ACL being able to exceeded, to be able to adjust that into the future, and so should any of these measures be modified at this stage?

MR. HULL: David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Similarly -- **Well, I guess, in this one, it's a little bit different setup, but I would make a motion for Alternative 2 as the recommended.** It's the same rationale, and I think that, if we start having all these different parameters, it's going to be more difficult, and I don't want to wait until we realize that the stock is overfished to figure things out.

MR. HULL: **Okay, and so we have a motion to recommend Alternative 2 as the preferred. Alternative 2 is recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, and the accountability measures would be the recreational landings would be monitored for persistence in increased landings, and, if deemed necessary, reduce the length of the recreational fishing season and the recreational ACL by the amount of the recreational ACL overage.** It provides a lot of simplicity, and it makes it easier to have accountability measures in place for the recreational sector, and so is there a second for this? Robert seconds. I just read it, and how about further discussion? I have a question from Myra.

MS. BROUWER: David, just to clarify, for snowy grouper, your motion was to recommend that the council maintain Alternative 1 without the being tied to the stock status. Now, for golden tilefish then, we're moving away from that and recommending that the council consider the post-season accountability measure being triggered specifically by recreational landings exceeding the recreational ACL, and so it's a little bit different, and so I just wanted to make sure that everybody is aware of that and that that is in fact your recommendation. Thanks.

MR. MOSS: Yes, understood, and it's just set up differently here, obviously, and like, I think on snowies, Alternative 3 was the NMFS one, and then Alternative -- I don't remember the -- Alternative 2 was that NMFS would decide the season, and I don't remember what Alternative 3 was, but, at any rate, yes, I'm aware, I guess is the long-winded way of me saying that. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I noticed the same thing as you did, Myra, and I would like to suggest taking it back to where Myra was headed with this and do the same thing that David mentioned on snowies and take it out of Alternative 1. I don't know if that's going to change the whole perspective, but I think overall view, looking at both recreational and commercial, is more important than just picking the recreational catch.

MS. BROUWER: Just to clarify, the only difference then would be that, for snowy grouper, the post-season accountability measure would continue to be tied to landings exceeding the total ACL, whereas, here, that post-season accountability measure would be triggered when landings exceeded just the recreational ACL, and so what you have to keep in mind is these are both deepwater species, and the recreational ACL, I think for both, is in numbers of fish, and the ACLs are not very big, and so, just as a reminder, for red porgy, which also now has a very reduced season and a low ACL, the council selected what is currently in here, Alternative 2, as their preferred, and so I'm just kind of bringing this to your attention, because one of the things that the council has tried to do, over these last few years, is bring some consistency to their system of accountability measures, because it's kind of hard when they vary a little bit for one species, and so they're trying to kind of rein all that in and clean it up and make it all consistent.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Myra. Robert and then Tony.

MR. LORENZ: After what Myra said, then I think, if we're evolving, if we're heading into a path of a recreational permit or license, therefore we will have many of our own ACLs, and I think maybe the way to rationalize these and have them all agree is to have the recreational season dependent on its own ACL as a trigger for action, alternative measures, and so that would be just my input, that I would go back -- That's the way I would rationalize it, it's let get away from the total ACL being met.

MR. HULL: Which means you would agree with the Alternative 2 in this instance.

MR. LORENZ: Yes.

MR. HULL: Then but she's referring back to snowy, where we just -- We still have all that other criteria, so to speak, in there too, and so Tony and then David.

MR. CONSTANT: Yes, and I'm aware of that, and I'm also aware that consistency in your regulations across-the-board is pretty important overall, but, also, in recognizing this is the majority of the commercial fishery, the commercial fishery is, I think, 80 percent, or 90 percent, of the fishery, and so I think an eye on that, combined with -- I mean, I'm in total agreement with permitting and with recording recreational fishing, but consistency, and this is basically a commercial fishery, and that's my point.

MR. HULL: David.

MR. MOSS: A question, and I don't see it in the document, but how often does commercial hit their ACL? Is it pretty much every year?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and that's my recollection. I mean, I could dig those landings up for you here, if you give me a minute, but I think --

MR. MOSS: I mean, just anecdotally is fine, and so, again, for my rationale, just to streamline this, one of the reasons that I didn't bother with all that nonsense with snowies is snowy, looking at the last five years of snowies, commercial has gone -- I mean, slightly, but over their ACL just about every year, and so, I mean, we would hit that anyway.

MS. BROUWER: I have put up the table here that is at the end of this document that shows landings from 2012 onwards, relative to the ACLs at the time, for commercial and recreational, as well as overages.

MR. PUGLIESE: If you look at this, I mean, it's basically right at the -- They are hitting their ACL right around the 100 to 95 percent every year.

MR. MOSS: Okay, and so it's kind of a non -- It doesn't matter, really.

MR. PUGLIESE: Well, now that's this ACL. That's the one thing to consider, is that these are all going up.

MR. MOSS: Well, I know what happens when we assume, but I'm going to assume that, when the ACL goes up -- Like Vincent said, once he hits the limit, he stops fishing, and so it's not because the end of the year came, but it's because they hit the ACL and stopped fishing, and so I'm going to assume that, if the ACL goes up, he's going to go out and fish more, which is fine, and he's certainly well within his rights.

MR. HULL: So I think what you're trying to say to us is we made a motion previously for snowy, which is different than the motion that we're getting ready to make for golden tile recreational accountability, and so you're saying that it looks like the council is more towards this one, Option 2, rather than the one where we kept the other triggers in there, and so it's just isolating it down, because we know, eventually, we're going to have some private recreational accountability, because of data collection and permitting and stamps and whatever comes with it, and so make it simpler, and make them accountable to their own landings. I am fine with -- We have already done the other one, and, yesterday, we went back and changed things, because we talked it out, and I don't know if we want to do all of that, but so, Tony or David, did you have something else to say?

MR. CONSTANT: I was just pointing out that you made the assumption that the recreational is going to have permitting and reporting, and I haven't seen that assumption yet, and I hope for that, but, I mean, it's just like these 2022 numbers are going to take place between 2023 and 2024, and we might be in that same time range for recreational reporting. In the meantime, we're going to have both sectors, which are already meeting their ACLs, and they're both going to be reaching their ACLs.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so we have a motion on the board that we recommend Alternative 2 as the preferred for this action. We've had discussion. Let's have a vote on it and keep moving. **Anyone opposed to recommend Alternative 2 as the preferred, raise your hand.** Alternative 2 reads that recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, and that's all the trigger there is for accountability measures. **Is there anyone opposed to that recommendation to the council?** Tony, are you opposed? Okay, and so I see one opposed. **All in favor, raise your hand. I see**

eleven, and so the motion passes. Abstentions. I see one abstention, and so the motion passes, and we're ready to move on.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay, and that moves us on into Action 6, which gets into some of the management measures, and this is to modify the blueline tilefish recreational bag limit, and, presently, you have a three-fish bag limit, and you have an allowance for captain and crew, based on previous amendments for retention.

MR. HULL: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy. Just to give the AP a little bit of background of why we're here, and so recreational landings for blueline tilefish have been exceeding the recreational ACL for like the past six years, and so discussion came to the council table that something needed to be done to prevent this from continuing to happen, and one of the things that came out of that discussion is clarification from the National Marine Fisheries Service that the agency can in fact close the season ahead of time when they predict that the landings are going to reach the recreational ACL, which is what is happening this year.

However, as part of the discussion, the council reasoned that, well, we need to potentially consider some measures to address recreational effort, and that's why these two actions have been included in this amendment, to try to address the recreational effort that is pushing those recreational landings up against the ACL for blueline tilefish, and so reducing the bag limit was something that was an obvious thing to consider, and they also wanted input from the AP on whether not allowing retention by captain and crew would be something that would help, and then, obviously, modifying the recreational season, in terms of length or, like Roger said, shifting it earlier on later in the year would be things that could help, and so that's what we're looking for from the advisory panel.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. PILAND: Is the whole South Atlantic putting too much pressure on the fish, or is it just one area?

MS. BROUWER: I am not sure. I think what we've been hearing, and what I recall hearing, is there's a lot of folks from the Hatteras region, where are, and north, and, you know, it seems that blueline tilefish have also maybe been shifting a little bit their distribution over the last, I guess -- I can't quite remember when it was, but the Mid-Atlantic Council didn't have a management plan for blueline tilefish, and then they had to put one in place, because there started to be a lot of effort targeting blueline tilefish up in the Mid-Atlantic, and there are differences.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. PILAND: I am not questioning your memory, but I remember that most of the pressure was from the point north in both recreational and commercial, and, I mean, I don't know if I'm remembering correctly or not, but that's what I remember, and there was talk of possibly a different creel limit for the boats north of the point.

MR. HULL: Yes, and you have others that agree with you. I got a message that nothing else, but just one area north of Cape Hatteras, which includes Hatteras, and accountability was pound-for-

pound payback, and so, as to the area, they're saying that it was just north of Hatteras, as far as the heavy pressure on the blueline, and they're saying that the accountability -- This must be the Mid-Atlantic's, what they have, and accountability was pound-for-pound payback, and so the Mid-Atlantic takes over on blueline tilefish right there at Cape Hatteras?

MR. PUGLIESE: No, and we manage through --

MR. HULL: So the South Atlantic is all the way up?

MR. PUGLIESE: To the North Carolina/Virginia border.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so it does go past there for the South Atlantic, and the blueline recreational ACL has been met, and it's been closed?

MR. PUGLIESE: I think, historically -- Again, if you look back at the -- We don't need to go into that, but it only actually closed one time, because you've got to remember those provisions were in to have to have all of those triggers to close.

MR. HULL: Andy.

MR. PILAND: Just for the benefit of the panel, north of the point, the fish are prolific in shallow water, thirty or forty or fifty fathoms, and those guys are catching the crap out of them, hand cranking with the charters, whereas, below the point, for whatever reason, to my knowledge, the fishing is all deep water.

MR. HULL: So that's -- What do we want to do? Do we want to give a recommendation on modifying the blueline tilefish recreational bag limit? That's where we're, at that's the question. The alternatives are no action, and the current bag limit of three per person per day, captain and crew and for-hire vessels valid quantities and species during that open recreational season, or there are other alternatives for consideration of reduce it to two fish per person per day, and, I mean, who here recreationally -- This is an important fishery for you, and we need to hear from you, Andy.

MR. PILAND: If we have to adjust the bag limit, I feel like that it would be very appropriate to eliminate the captain and crew, and what was said earlier about MRIP data playing into it, and I don't know how much over we are, but that could be enough to satisfy the MRIP data calculations, if you went from twenty-four fish to eighteen on --

MR. HULL: My question would be -- Excuse me for not knowing this, but is this necessary? Is this something that we have to have a reduction?

MS. BROUWER: There is no reduction in harvest that is necessary due to an adjustment in the catch levels, right, and so that's why I was clarifying that. This is something the council reasoned would be prudent to do if the landings, you know, continued to bump up against the ACL, and there seems to potentially be, you know, an effort issue. The assessment for blueline tilefish I think is going to be done in 2024, and so we still have, you know, a little bit of time to wait until the catch levels are adjusted based on the status of the stock.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so, from my point of view, hearing that about the stock assessment, I would wait until the results of the stock assessment, and that's what my recommendation would be, but, again, this isn't my fishery, but it makes commonsense to see what the stock assessment says before you start modifying the bag limit. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. I wouldn't mind hearing some discussion from the for-hire sector about the bag limit, since the sale of fish from a charter has been prohibited, and I kind of feel like customers that don't want the fish kind of give them to the captain and crew, and how important it might be for them to -- What they think about being necessary to keep those fish, and I wouldn't mind some discussion on that. Thank you.

MR. HULL: That's you, Andy.

MR. PILAND: The blueline tile fishing is very important to the northeastern North Carolina. If we don't have dolphin today, we can go tile fishing, or not today, but when the season is open, and we can go tile fishing and get a good quality fish for the charter. It's the same thing with the Oregon Inlet fleet if they don't have tunas. If they don't have tunas, and they don't have dolphin, there ain't much for them to do except go tile fishing. It is very important, because that has been the case the last couple of years, of not having tuna all season, not having dolphin all season, and it is important to us. With the early closure, the docks are going to be pretty bleak after that July closure.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Andy, if I may, I just was asking about the retention for captain and crew and their limit, and I wanted to know how important that was and not the going fishing for them.

MR. PILAND: I would -- One versus the other, I don't want to keep my limit.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That's all I wanted for discussion. Thank you.

MR. PILAND: In my personal opinion, the charter's is enough for six people. You know, if I was in charge of writing what the retention should be, I would write it as, you know, three per person, with a maximum of eighteen, similar to the dolphin limit, and I think that's very practical and would be a potential reduction in catch that might keep us from going over the limit.

MR. HULL: I saw David and Robert.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am inclined to agree with what Andy said, but my question would be, is there analysis, or can we get analysis, on what difference it would make if we eliminated the captain and crew keeping them? I would be interested to see that.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and that would be -- I think, I guess, in October, is when those analyses would come to you guys, if the council decides to retain that as an alternative for us to look at.

MR. HULL: Robert.

MR. LORENZ: I am certainly not fishing worthy to kind of contradict anything that Andy says, but I would just like to bring up, at this time, that just my personal gut feeling is that Alternative 4 -- That this may not be a time to start discussing that, due to current economics, and I'm looking

at fuel costs and costs of materials and this sort of a thing, and I'm just wondering if anybody is going to push back on that, that that has some real value. This might be, right at this point, an awful time for Alternative 4.

MR. HULL: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: In response to David's question, there is a catch distribution provided in the fishery overview, and so, if you want to look at that, that does give you some kind of indication of what people are catching on their trips.

MR. HULL: I am pretty sure that this is going out for public comment, again, and we're going to probably see this again, and it sounds like a lot of people asking for some more information, and I don't know that we can come up with a fully-thought-out recommendation until maybe we get more public comment from charter guys and more private guys, before the AP could maybe make a formal recommendation, and we're throwing up there what our opinions are, and thoughts, and I think that more needs to be known. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Jimmy, I agree, but, Andy, I do agree with you, as well as David, that, obviously, we want to see the numbers, but that would have been my recommendation too, as a former charter/for-hire, and I would say just eliminate the captain and crew, and I think it would help the fishery.

MR. HULL: Again, I would agree with that too, if it's determined to be necessary to help out, but we're going to hear from some -- We need to hear from more people, stakeholders, exactly on this one, I think, but it's up to you guys if you want to go further with a formal -- Go ahead, Andy.

MR. PILAND: I think the elimination of captain and crew would go over a lot better with the group in northeastern North Carolina that are actively fishing for them, versus any of the others, any of the other options, or alternatives.

MR. HULL: I think you stated that already on the second bullet point, and that was your preferred, if needed, and I think that's what we're trying to say too, is let's go further, and, if you have to do something, that would be the first option that we would think would be reasonable. Anything else? Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay, and so that moves us on to the recreational season, and there's a number of alternatives, based on variations from the existing season of May 1 through August 31, and it's some of the same discussion that I think you're having with regard to timing on this, and it is put on the table because of the desire to have some ability to control it, if needed, but that's the question, is should this, at this time, be considered for modification in any kind of a season?

MR. HULL: Okay. AP, you see the Action 7 to modify the blueline tilefish recreational season, and it's the same suite of alternatives that you normally see. Currently, the season is May 1 to August 31, and then there's lots of other options here, and so is there discussion or recommendations or questions? David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. I don't remember what we had for snowies, but I am inclined to make it as close to in-line with that as possible. Whatever it was that we decided, and I don't remember which one it was, but, whatever it was, I would make it as close to that as possible.

MR. HULL: So we're getting this up here, and it looks like, if you wanted to make the season coincide with the snowy grouper recreational season, it looks like Alternative 4, May 1 through June 30, is what I'm hearing, and so there's one recommendation. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I am inclined to lean towards Number 2, which is May through July. It has an extra month.

MR. HULL: We'll put that up there. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Should we make that -- **I would like to make that a motion, if possible.**

MR. HULL: You certainly can. The second bullet point? The one that you made?

MR. CONSTANT: **Yes.**

MR. HULL: Consider Alternative 2, May 1 through July 31, as the season. Do I have a second on that? David seconds it. Is there some discussion? **The motion reads: Recommend the council set Alternative 2, May 1 through July 31, as the preferred alternative for a blueline tilefish recreational season.** David.

MR. MOSS: A question for Andy, I guess, and you guys get them off of North Carolina, and when do you typically -- Is that around the time of year that you guys get them, or --

MR. PILAND: Could you repeat that again, please?

MR. MOSS: When do you guys typically fish for them, and do you get them in with snowies when you're out there?

MR. PILAND: We fish for them May through September, when the season is open.

MR. HULL: So maybe a rationale for why you made this motion for this time period.

MR. CONSTANT: What was the rationale for this, and that what you're asking?

MR. HULL: Yes, sir.

MR. CONSTANT: It was the start of the season in May, and the recreational would end two months in.

MR. HULL: Okay. We did get a second from David. Andy, any more discussion on that motion? Can you support that motion, or what does that do to you, as you're a direct participant?

MR. PILAND: It takes a month out of my season.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: This was just recreational, and it's not with you, is it?

MR. PILAND: Yes, it is, for charter.

MR. CONSTANT: I understand.

MR. HULL: So this wouldn't be good for him.

MR. PILAND: I fish Hatteras, Oregon Inlet, Morehead.

MR. CONSTANT: Can you bring the alternatives back up? We have -- The best-case scenario then would be leaving it as-is.

MR. HULL: Is that it? Andy, a question to you, and what's the best-case scenario for you?

MR. PILAND: May through August 31, Number 1.

MR. HULL: Number 1, May 1 through August 31, no action, Alternative 1.

MR. PILAND: Yes, and that is correct. That would be the best for us.

MR. CONSTANT: Is the blueline tile requiring action?

MR. HULL: It is not. Richard.

MR. GOMEZ: That would be the best-case scenario for the lower Keys, also, Alternative 1.

MR. HULL: Robert Freeman.

MR. FREEMAN: In my experience, the recreational season essentially is from late May, when kids start getting out of school, and, at Labor Day, the charter season kind of dries up, and that needs to be the timeframe they're allowed to keep these fish, and to coincide with the grouper season, so that they've got something to justify running that far out.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so there's a couple of ways to go for you all, hearing that further information, and we can vote this up or down, or we can change it or withdraw it or whatever you want to do, and that's up to you.

MR. CONSTANT: **I would like to withdraw it and change to Alternative 1.**

MR. HULL: Okay. We have a withdrawal of that motion and --

MR. CONSTANT: Then make it a new motion.

MR. HULL: To recommend that the council choose Alternative 1, status quo.

MR. CONSTANT: That's based on the new information that was provided.

MR. HULL: Understood, and so we'll see if someone will second that. Thomas. **The new motion reads: Recommend the council select Alternative 1 as the preferred, and we all saw that Alternative 1 is no change from the current season, and we have a second.** We've discussed it, and we know where we're at, and let's vote on this motion. **All those in favor of this motion, raise your hand. I see unanimous.** Okay. We can move on from this one now, Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Moving on to the last action, it addresses the recreational accountability measures, post-season recreational accountability measures, for blueline tilefish, and, essentially, this is the same format and structure as we did with golden, and so your original alternative had the need for the three triggers, and the Alternative 2 is the recreational landings need to be exceeded to then have the adjustment in the actual accountability measure, and, of course, 3 was the season would just be set. If it was similar to golden tilefish, Alternative 2 is what you all had selected.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so open your eyes and your minds and know that we've seen this for all these deepwater species for the private recreational sector, and we've kind of jumped around and chose different things a little bit, but what do you want to do here? Do you want to make a recommendation, or do you want to talk about it some more? It's back at you now to see what happens. David.

MR. MOSS: **I will recommend Alternative 2 again.**

MR. HULL: Okay, and so we'll put the recommendation, or is it a motion? She's got a motion there.

MR. MOSS: **A motion is fine.**

MR. HULL: Okay. We're getting the motion on the board.

MR. MOSS: It's the same rationale as snowies and whatever we did before.

MR. HULL: Just to keep this straight in everybody's mind, Myra, after you get that there, I will read it, but if you can go to the title of this action, and so this modify post-season recreational accountability measures for blueline tilefish, and so we've got a motion to recommend to the council Alternative 2, recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, which would then trigger the accountability measures that are there, which is in line with that we did on goldens. Any further -- Did we have a second on that? Yes, we did. It was Thomas, maybe, and so any further discussion on this? Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I would like to comment that I do agree with this on the blueline, because their ACL has been met six years in a row, and so the recreational side would be a good flag for this.

MR. HULL: Good rationale. Let's have a vote. **All those in favor of this motion, raise your hand. It's unanimous.** Okay, guys. Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: That's it for Amendment 52, and so this will go back to the council to deliberate and look at the potential for approving for public hearings and coming back to the AP in October

for additional input, and, by then, we'll have some additional analysis to pin down exactly what the council is actually going to move forward.

MR. HULL: Okay. So there's lots more steps to go. Vincent had something that he wanted to say, and I missed his hand. Go ahead, Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Thank you, Jimmy. Can we go back to the commercial golden tile, on the board there?

MR. PUGLIESE: Which action?

MR. BONURA: The changing of the January 15 or January 1.

MR. PUGLIESE: The season?

MR. BONURA: Yes.

MR. PUGLIESE: The commercial season.

MR. BONURA: Yes. Can I put a motion up?

MR. HULL: I am pretty sure you can, but just hang on.

MR. BONURA: Okay.

MR. HULL: Okay, and we hadn't already previously made a motion on this action, and just recommendations. Okay, and so this has to do with the start of the commercial season, and you have a motion. Go ahead.

MR. BONURA: **I want to put a motion for the commercial longline to open January 15. I've had multiple fishermen that are for that, and I think everyone wants it, pretty much. Also, could we add in there to look at a hook-and-line endorsement, and I have multiple hook-and-line guys that are interested in that, as well as lining up the golden tile endorsement holders to have a meeting to look at pathways of extending their fishery.**

MR. HULL: I am going to read it, Vincent. **Recommend that the commercial longline sector open on January 15 and consider a hook-and-line endorsement and convene a meeting on the longline endorsement holders to discuss ways to extend the season for that sector.** Is that how you want your motion to read?

MR. BONURA: Yes, that or discuss ways to manage their fishery, and you could put that, as opposed to "extend".

MR. HULL: I think we made that motion, or recommendation, on another action, for them to conduct a meeting to -- That was on the bycatch, and we did that, and so that's fine, and so we have a motion, and do we have a second, and then we can have some discussion? Okay. We have a second from Paul Nelson, and so now we'll have some discussion. My first question, in the discussion, would be what's the rationale for opening on January 15? Vincent.

MR. BONURA: The rationale is to make our Christmases and January 1, New Years, interest and the stress levels, if these guys have families, that they want to go out of town or anything like that, and, basically, you're stressed out to the max in trying to get this going, to be out there on January 1. Also, the fishery could extend closer to Easter, and that would hold the price higher and give a good market during the spring and Lent.

MR. HULL: So Myra is putting up there social benefits to families to delay the start, to give you time to prepare, basically because you're stressed out with the end of the year and the holidays and this and that. Okay.

MR. BONURA: Then the endorsement, and the hook-and-liners are thinking the fishery is overcapitalized, with extra fishermen every year, and there is more and fishermen participating in the hook-and-line fishing and using buoy gear, a new technique that has come around in the past couple of years.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so you want to make it to where a regular SG 1 would have to now have a -- If this went through, you would have to have an extra endorsement to prosecute the golden tilefish hook-and-line fishery.

MR. BONURA: Yes, that's correct, and this was actually talked about when they did the golden tile longline endorsement, and it was almost there, and then it went away, and I've been hearing issues about it ever since, and I believe that was before 2013, when they originally had it up on the board, and it was going to pass and go through, and then it just went away out of nowhere.

MR. HULL: Okay. I think you've given some good rationale. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. Just for a clarifying question, what would be the benefit of having the endorsement? I mean, I hear you that it would limit the number of people that just have an SG 1 from being able to participate in the fishery, but are you looking to have the same people that have the longline endorsement to be able to attain a hook-and-line and then switch between harvest methods? Also, I wouldn't mind if maybe you considered splitting up these motions, to where we didn't have to pick all or nothing when we voted on it, and I think that they're kind of two separate things, and that maybe you might get some more support if they were split up. Thank you.

MR. BONURA: **I would be willing to split the motions. That would be okay with me.**

MR. HULL: **Okay and so the motion now reads: Recommend that the commercial longline sector open on January 15.** That would be one motion? Okay.

MR. BONURA: I mean, I guess you could --

MR. HULL: Let's take care of that motion. We've got that motion up. If that's what you want to -- I think we need to dispense with that now, before we talk about the next motion, and so you're changing your motion.

MR. BONURA: You could put the convening of the meeting on the longliner opener, couldn't you?

MR. HULL: I suppose you could. We already made a motion for that, too.

MR. BONURA: Okay, or keep them all on their own, and that's fine.

MR. HULL: Do what?

MR. BONURA: We can keep them all on their own then, individual motions.

MR. HULL: So do each one individually?

MR. BONURA: Yes.

MR. HULL: Okay. So we've got -- You have changed your motion to the first part of the total motion, to recommend that the commercial longline sector open on January 15, and you've given rationale for it. Do we have a second for that?

MR. GOMEZ: I will second that.

MR. HULL: Richard Gomez seconds it. Okay. We've discussed it, and we got the rationale, and we're going to vote on it. **Who is in favor of this motion? Raise your hand. It looks unanimous.** Okay, and so let's go to the next motion that you wanted to make, which would be -
- Go ahead.

MR. BONURA: **Motion to consider a golden tile hook-and-line endorsement.**

MR. HULL: We've discussed this a lot, but, just real quickly, one more time, the rationale for that?

MR. BONURA: The rationale would be overcapitalization of the fishery, and it may close quicker and quicker every year in the near future, because of more and more fishermen getting involved in the fishery, and I've had multiple hook-and-line guys talk about it, and they're asking for it, and they have been asking for it.

MR. HULL: Okay, and you know how they usually end up doing that, is with some types of landings history, and, if you haven't participated in a certain amount of years, then you would be -- Your future access to that would be eliminated, for the all the people that have SG 1. Okay. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: With that, I would like to ask if you had any criteria in mind of year ranges, and, also, would that be -- Would your vision include that being -- Could you go between sectors, if you had the hook-and-line endorsement and the longline endorsement, or, if one was -- You can't have one with the other? I mean, just for clarity's sake, and we're in the room, and the question has come up, and so, I mean, before I vote on it, I would really like to know.

MR. HULL: Just let me chime-in too that we are under a real tight schedule today, and this isn't something that's really getting ready to come up, and this is kind of like new business stuff, and this isn't something that's getting ready to come up, and it wasn't on our -- This is just a -- We can really get into the weeds here and really not even know what they're going to do, and so we need to move along as quick as we can.

MR. BONURA: How about we just put it up to consider and let the council talk about it and bring it back to us later, at a later AP?

MR. HULL: I like that. I think the staff likes it, too. Instead of a motion, consider they bring it back to the AP at a later time, and so you've got the motion up there, and it's been seconded by Richard, and we've had discussion. Let's vote on it. **All those in favor of the motion, raise your hand, I see eleven; all those opposed, raise your hand, two; abstentions, one. The motion passes.** We're ready to move on. On the third one, I don't think it's really necessary, but that's up to you, and it's yours, and we already made that motion.

MR. BONURA: I would really like to have a motion for it, if I could, please.

MR. HULL: Okay. let's go. The same motion you have up there, she'll put. **Convene a meeting of the longline endorsement holds to discuss ways to manage their fishery.** Is there a second? Andrew seconds, and we've already had this discussion and motion, and so let's vote on it. **All those in favor, raise your hand, I've got fifteen up; all those opposed, zero; abstentions. It passes.** Back to you.

MR. PUGLIESE: I think we're done with Snapper Grouper 52. Thank you, all.

MR. HULL: All right. Right on. Thank you. We're getting ready to move on to the update on Amendment 53, gag grouper, and Allie is going to be setting up for this. I'm looking at the time, and we're at 11:15, and so we need to get through this gag, and then we have the elections, and then we have Other Business, which we already have one item up there, and so back to you, Allie. Thank you, guys, and, if you need to take a bathroom break, I say just do it and come right back, rather than a formal break, because we've got to keep moving, and we don't have long to go. Now would be a good time, probably, while she's setting up, to do that, if you have to.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so Amendment 53 is going to be kind of a brief overview, and this amendment is the earliest in the process of the ones we've gone over today, and so the council saw it for the first time in December, and they reviewed it again, some more fleshed-out alternatives and actions, in March, and then they're going to see it again in June, and hopefully they will see some preliminary analysis, and so we're not even in a -- We haven't fully analyzed this amendment yet, and the IPT is currently working on it.

You guys will see this one again, and we've still got two meetings before we approve for public hearings, and so that's where we're at with gag right now. This amendment has been scoped, and we did receive a decent amount of scoping comments, which I will discuss kind of at the end of this presentation, but I will dive right into the actions.

The first action is establishing a rebuilding plan, and so SEDAR 71 was the most recent assessment, and it indicated that the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing, and so the

council is required to establish a rebuilding plan. I forget exactly which meeting, but, during the summer, the council was given guidance that, in a scenario where F equals zero, the stock would be able to rebuild in seven years, and, under Magnuson, then the council is required to rebuild the stock in ten years.

The options, there's not too much wiggle room here for Action 1, and Option 1, no change, is not legally viable, and Option 2 is that T_{min} of seven years, and then Option 3, which was the preferred selected in March to help facilitate analysis, is that T_{max} of ten years, and so the terminal year for the rebuilding plan, or the end year, would be 2032.

Then Action 2 establishes the ABC, ACL, and OY, and so we're updating catch levels to incorporate the new MRIP-FES numbers and in accordance with the updated ABC from the SSC, and so the options were Option 1, which would retain the current ABC and ACL. Option 2 would set the ACL equal to the OY equal to the updated ABC, and then Options 3 and 4 would be a 5 and 10 percent buffer, respectively.

Then Action 3 is sector allocations, and so we've got a full suite of options here. Option 1 would retain the 49 percent/51 percent recreational/commercial allocation, respectively, and this was determined using the landings distribution from 1999 to 2003 from Amendment 16, and so these were based off of recreational CHTS landings. Option 2, just like snowy, kind of recalculates the allocation, but, instead of using the CHTS landings, it uses those updated MRIP-FES landings, and that results in a 63.63 and 36.37 recreational/commercial allocation.

Option 3 is using that allocation formula, and the dates from that, again, were 1996 to 2008 and from 2006 to 2008, and then, finally, Option 4 is -- The language for Option 4 doesn't really fit super well in a summary table, and I don't want to get too in the weeds on this, and this was something that was proposed by a council member in December, and so we've kind of been -- The IPT has been, you know, building this option and incorporating it into the amendment, and, for summary purposes, I like to think of it as the share-the-pain-share-the-gain option, and so each sector would take that initial hit to get the fishery from where they are now, landings-wise, to that reduced catch level, and then, as that catch level increases each year of the rebuilding plan, they get an equal portion increased, or added, to their catch level for each sector.

The council discussed this in March, and they kind of altered the dates for the basis years, and so, essentially, for this allocation option, you're looking at how the fishery has been operating for either a three-year average, and so that's Option 4a, or a five-year average, and that's Option 4b, and so the years that we're looking at here are from 2017 to 2019, for the three-year average, and then from 2015 to 2019, for the five-year average, and my apologies that those dates -- You can see, in red, that I kind of changed that here, and so, when this went out in the briefing book, it was 2016 from 2020, but I corrected that, and so the council discussed excluding 2020, just because of the nature of the fishery that year.

Then Action 4 deals with modifying the commercial management measures, and so this action is set up kind of a little wonky. Option 1 is kind of status quo, and so, right now, the commercial sector has a 1,000-pound trip limit with a step-down, at 75 percent, to 500 pounds gutted weight, and the season -- The spawning season closure runs from January 1 to May 1.

Then Option 2 would reduce the commercial trip limit, and then all of your sub-options are the reduction there, and then Option -- Sorry. That is numbered wrong, and that would be Option 3, and my apologies, and this extends that spawning season closure, and so one additional month in the spring, one additional month in the winter, and then two additional months, one in the spring and one in the winter.

Then Action 5 deals with the recreational sector, and so, again, Option 1 is -- Sorry about these letters, guys, and this has gotten a little crazy, but Option 1 is the status quo, and so, currently, there is a one-fish-per-person-per-day bag limit for the rec sector, and no vessel limit, and they have that same spawning season closure. The council has discussed a vessel limit for gag, and they have talked about a two, four, and six-fish vessel limit and then those same options as the commercial for extending the spawning season closure.

Then the final action is essentially the same table that you guys saw for snowy, and so looking at accountability measures. During the March meeting, there was a little bit of confusion, kind of from my end, on which sector we're looking at accountability measures for, and so I think we're going to be looking at both sectors in June, but these same kind of suite of options apply, and so, currently, we have an in-season trigger for both sectors, and then, again, you need to have the sector ACL exceed their -- Or the sector exceed their sector ACL, and the total ACL needs to be exceeded, and the stock needs to be overfished, and so these options kind of just uncouple that post-season accountability measure. I know I ran through that really quick, and the council doesn't have any specific questions that they would like the AP to address, but I will try to help address any questions that you guys have.

MR. HULL: I don't see any hands yet, and my question is what is the amount of reductions on the fishery that have to take place here? Is it an 80 percent reduction, or 50, or what is it? Do we know?

MS. IBERLE: Last time I was looking at the allocations, depending on the preferred -- Sorry, and I'm just trying to run through the math in my head, but it was around 70 percent, I believe, and it's a pretty big reduction from where the fishery has been operating.

MR. HULL: So this is real early in the process, and the council is just really getting numbers and digging in, and you're showing us this to get an idea of what is already there, and so a lot of this is subject to change as we keep moving forward, and so anyone have some comments or thoughts on what you're seeing so far? Allie.

MS. IBERLE: One more thing that I did forget to add is, when this amendment came to the council in December, there was discussion about a gear restriction for spear fishing, and so either removing or restricting spear fishing gear during the rebuilding plan for gag, and that was discussed during scoping, and we received quite a lot of comments in opposition to restricting spearfishing gear. The council discussed this in March, and they ultimately removed that action from the amendment, and so that's why it's not in the suite.

MR. HULL: Okay. I am looking for hands. As you said, you went through it there, and, if you don't mind, we can just look at this again, if you don't mind just scrolling. We see Action 1, the rebuilding plan. I do see a hand. Tony, go ahead.

MR. CONSTANT: If you would scroll up to I think it was Action 4, and 70 percent is a big reduction. I mean, things are going to be required everywhere. I would lean towards the Option 4a, with the adding of the month of May as a closed month, and starting on January 1 to May 31. If you will go towards the -- I know the guys are going to have a hard time with your gutted weights on your trip limits, and that's going to be strong one to swallow. Could you go towards the recreational side? I would lean towards Option -- I think it's 2d, with the four-vessel-fish limit, if you go to one per person per day, and, you know, the other would be a six-fish for your charter, but I know, with hitting the 70 percent mark, I think we'll probably have to go to the four.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Selby.

MR. LEWIS: So we are totally throwing away getting rid of spearfishing, and is that -- Since it's not added, and so we're really not trying to help the fishery, and we're just -- Because that's the biggest deal for helping our fishery, is to get the people to quit killing forty or fifty-pound fish, and so what you're saying is we're not really trying to help this fishery anytime soon, but we're just trying to restrict the fishermen to be able to catch these fish.

MR. HULL: I don't think she said that, but you're saying it, and that's fine. You can say that, and it's being heard and recorded, and you've said that, I think, but the council took it out, because it was there, and they've taken it out at this time, and so you can continue saying it, and you are, and so Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: From a charter/headboat in South Carolina, the -- We could probably do so many fish per vessel per day, and some of our vessels are twenty or thirty or fifty or a hundred passengers, as far as that goes, and so that would be something that would have to be really looked at hard, for vessels our size. Then, for the seasonal, we have to open on May 1, and we've already lost April on our big boats, because we can't operate during the whale no speed limit zone bullshit, and so we've already lost everything up until May for our Gulf Stream trips on our larger vessels, and so, if we don't start on May 1 and generate big money on the weekends, that's going to be financially crippling for us.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Cameron. I think Allie is getting that, and she's taking notes here to add to the report. Selby.

MR. LEWIS: I would go for the 200-pound trip limit, if we're not going to get away from spearfishing, because, for every fish, we need to keep the fishery open as long as we can, to have it for the restaurants and stuff, and so, if you're going to do spearfishing, it's going to get filled up real fast with the bigger quota you go, and so we've got to eliminate one thing one way or the other.

MR. HULL: So you would recommend Option 2a to the council as a commercial trip limit.

MR. LEWIS: Correct.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Selby. Jack.

MR. COX: You know, I hate to -- We've been watching this fishery go down for a long time, and SEDAR 71 was way off-base on it, and I hate to see these things, because what happens is we get

in a situation that we've got to take these huge reductions, and it kills us, and, if the SEDAR assessment had been right -- I mean, we've been watching this fishery decline for a long time, but, if the SEDAR assessment had been right, we wouldn't be in such a situation like this, but, you know, if we're taking a -- What is it, a 70 percent reduction in this fishery, and the trip limit was 1,000 pounds. Well, if you do a 70 percent reduction on the trip limit, that would put you at a 300-pound trip limit.

You know, I still dayboat fish, and I can make it at 200 pounds a day, but I would like to see something higher. You know, we've got to -- There is still fishermen in the business that stay out for four or five days, and they would need something a little higher than that, like 400 pounds, just in consideration of those guys, and we're going to go from a thousand -- Right now, they have a thousand-pound trip limit, and my recommendation would be to go to 400, and so I would choose Option 2c for that.

On another note, you know, if those fish are still spawning into May, as hard as it's going to be to do, I think we would need to extend that spawning season out for another month, to give those fish another month to do what they need to do. I mean, we know those fish are still spawning somewhat, but I know a lot of people probably wouldn't want to do that, but, man, this fishery is in bad shape, and I've been in this fishery since when I first started, in the 1980s, and, you know, it's heartbreaking to see where we are, and we're going to have to take it on the chin for a while, but I do have a question. If we're talking about a rebuild of ten years, what does that fishery even look like? Is that rebuild going to take us back to -- I mean, I know we'll never see the fishery we saw in the 1980s, but, if we work at this really hard and rebuild that fishery, tell me what that's supposed to look like.

MS. IBERLE: As far as the catch levels, going out to ten years, if I remember correctly, because I don't have the decision document in front of me, but the catch levels at the end of the rebuilding plan are back up to like 900,000, I believe, and the catch levels are increasing throughout the rebuilding plan, and so the way the ABC is set up is you are taking kind of a bit hit in the beginning and then adding poundage back on as you move through the rebuilding plan.

MR. HULL: I would just say, Jack, from what I remember, looking at it, within three years, in the rebuilding plan, it seems like you're back to the current what we've been catching, like three-hundred-and-something thousand pounds, and it comes back very quickly, but, at the end of it, you just heard, after ten years, 900,000 pounds, but it rebuilds quickly.

MR. COX: What does that do to -- The average gag grouper, inshore, was a twelve or fourteen-pound fish, and, when we rebuild the fishery, are we going to see that average size fish?

MS. IBERLE: That I'm not sure of, and I do know that the assessment indicated a lack of larger individuals, and so I think, right now, that's where the population is lacking, is those larger individuals, which are males. I am looking to make sure that I was right on that one, and so your younger individuals, and so we're kind of lacking the males in the population right now.

MR. COX: I will just say it again, but I don't know how you rebuild a fishery when you don't know the participants in the fishery, and so it goes back to that private recreational permit. I mean, you know, if it just keeps increasing and increasing, you're always behind the eight-ball, and you can't rebuild.

MR. HULL: The reef fish are making that well known, what needs to happen there, and I thought I saw Andy's hand.

MR. FISH: I am an indiscriminate spear fisherman, with zero bycatch, and I'm in favor of anything that would extend the season for all fisheries, and I think, when we look at the recreational at two, four, and six, I think that people need to realize that, at six, even if they do catch six, which might happen in May, but I don't think -- I think they would rather see it stay open, as well as the commercial, as long as we can, even though it's going to impact the guys that do four and five-day trips, and I think that's going to -- You have to take into account that those longer trips might have to do shorter trips, but I think, as a commercial fisherman, I would rather see it extended, so that I could keep catching them, to go along with other stuff that I can catch.

MR. HULL: Okay, Andy, and she's getting that up there, with all the other comments, and so I think we're doing good here, and time is moving on. This is early in the process here, and we're going to get this back, and there's going to be a lot of public comment on it, and so anything else? Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I just wanted to agree with Jack, and the 200-pound trip limit is probably not enough, especially with the cost of fuel these days, and everyone needs to keep an open mind on the expenses and what it costs to go fishing. If we're in lower trip limits, I mean, financially, how are you going to find crew and keeping the crew working, if you're not making any money off of it? I would rather, personally, catch the fish and be done with it and get paid and go home.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Vincent. We've heard that before too, and there it is. Selby.

MR. LEWIS: I would go with the 300 pounds on mine, since you said it goes up in three years, and that makes a big difference to me. If we weren't going up at that rate, I would want to keep it lower.

MR. HULL: That's fine. There's all of these options that are going to be talked about again, and, again, we'll be able to change our minds and talk about it, as we learn more and see where the council is headed and what they're actually going to have to finalize on. Andy.

MR. FISH: I just hope they do not use the same science and math as they do with the red snapper on this fishery, because we're going to be sitting in the same shoes as with red snapper, and so I hope we have lessons learned about what not to do with the red snapper, even though it seems to be a successful rebuilding plan, and it's not a successful future harvesting plan.

MR. HULL: Well, one good thing, Andy, is they're not closing it entirely, as they did red snapper, okay, and so I think they learned their lesson there, that you can't do that. Are we ready to move on? We're going to see this again, and you guys have provided really good comment. Back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: That's pretty much all for me, and so I will give you guys an update on gag in the fall. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Excellent. Jack.

MR. COX: You know, we've been rebuilding our red grouper fishery now for a few years, and I'm just wondering if anybody is keeping up with that, and are we on target for a rebuild? I'm just curious if anybody keeps up with red grouper, one of the staff members, and maybe what that would look like for our gag fishery.

MR. HULL: So you're asking for information on how the red grouper rebuild is going?

MR. COX: Yes.

MR. HULL: Let's see if we can get that coming to us, and give them some time to do it, and let's keep moving along the agenda here and get back to it. Thank you. Okay, and he's got the information now, Jack.

DR. COLLIER: Sorry, and I don't have the information right now, but what I am putting together is a document for the June council meeting that's going to look at all stocks that have been identified as overfished or overfishing, and so what it's going to do is it's going to look at recent trends in the fishery, current catch levels compared to the OFLs from the stock assessments. If we have an index of abundance, that will be provided. Then trends in the recreational and commercial fishery relative to their ACLs, some biology of the fish, as well as some social and economic factors that we're still working out, but that should be available for June, for I think the seven species that have been identified as overfished or overfishing.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chip. That's good to know.

MR. COX: Thank you, Chip. Boy, I will tell you, that was another fishery disaster, but hopefully we'll get some good news out of it.

MR. HULL: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I hate to jump all the way back to 35, but there was a motion that I was trying to make on Amendment 35, in regard to charter/headboat, and I wanted to revisit that before we wrap everything up. We sort of got into the weeds about it.

MR. HULL: Give us -- We will come back to Other Business and do that, but let's go ahead and get Number 9 out of the way here, and we're ready to go, and so it's time to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair, and so I'm going to -- I already see a hand up. David Moss, go ahead.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. First and foremost, Jimmy, I would like to thank you very much for your service and guiding us through COVID, over these last couple of years, and I know it couldn't have been easy, and you did an admirable job, and I really appreciate everything that you've done for us as a panel and for the council, and so thank you. **Then, second, I don't know I need to do them both at the same time, but I would like to make a motion to nominate Bob Lorenz as Chair and James Paskiewicz as Vice Chair.**

MR. HULL: Okay. Is there a second? I see lots of hands up for seconds. We can choose Vincent, and he's the closest, and so we have a motion to elect Bob Lorenz as Chair and James Paskiewicz as Vice Chair, and so let's go ahead and have a vote on that. **All those in favor, raise your hand.**

It's unanimous. There you go, and, for me, I have learned so much in this position, and it's been a pleasure.

MR. COX: I was going to put a motion up as well.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you. Jack, go ahead.

MR. COX: You know, with so many things going on with -- Both of those two guys will do a great job, and nothing against these guys, but, with so much going on in our fisheries, and just so many things before us, and rebuilds, and we've got a lot of fish in rough shape -- Jimmy, I mean, you've done a really good job, and you've got a lot of experience at this, and would you consider staying on as Chair for a little bit?

MR. HULL: No. What's that, Robert?

MR. FREEMAN: I said, did you deliberate long enough to make that?

MR. HULL: Just this meeting time.

MR. LORENZ: Folks, I intend to do the best job that I can for you, okay, and it's going to be hard to follow his steps, as far as the knowledge of the fishery, but I'm going to take kind of a management approach, where you all -- All of your information, I want to sponge it in, and then I want to be your strong liaison with the council, and anybody, particularly that needs help in getting some point across, be in writing or something, that's where I'm going to be, and, just as a disclosure, I only have two years left, and so there's four meetings, and you've got maybe somebody that's going to be just as strong as Jimmy coming right behind, and so I hope to do good for you. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Robert, and so we've gotten past that, and let's keep moving. We're into Other Business, and I already have -- I've got two Other Business requests so far, and we don't have time for a whole lot more, and I can promise you that, because we've got to get out of here for the next AP meeting, and we have, back to staff, a discussion about National Marine Fisheries Services observer program and commercial discard logbook, and that was already in the agenda, and so that first, and then we'll go back to Cameron, and that's probably all we're going to have time for, if that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Jimmy, and so there have been some comments that have been raised to the council regarding commercial interactions with observers and commercial discard logbook programs, and there has been some concern from the Science Center about some of the accuracy of the data and zero reporting that they've seen, and there's been concern from the commercial stakeholders about the frequency of being selected and how the data are being used.

The council is intending to get some information on the observer and discard logbook programs, to try to address some of these concerns and help improve these interactions, as well as potentially improve the data, wherever possible, and so the council is asking the AP if you all have any questions or concerns or things that you would like them to raise concerning this programs, and I can go ahead and list them on the screen, if you have something there, or, if you think of something a little bit later on, if you want to email it to me, then that's something that we can try to

incorporate, and I'm not sure if this will be a June or September meeting discussion for the council, but it's something that should be coming up in the future.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike, and I will just make a -- We don't have time to dig into this deep, and I think your suggestion that, if we have something really beneficial to say about it, we ought to contact you and let you know about improvements, because we just don't have time to really flesh it out here, but I would just say that the observer program, at the commercial level, is so important, and it really needs to be funded further, and that validates so much stuff that is self-reported for us, and observed data is good data, and I've been in stock assessments where they're looking for something, and they find some observer data, and, man, they love it, and this is the stuff, and so observed -- We need more observers in our commercial trips, and I welcome them. Every time I'm picked to carry an observer, I'm happy to have them, because I want them to see reality, and so I would just say that. Robert and Jack and Vincent.

MR. FREEMAN: How will the observer program work? I recently heard a conversation, and I think it was a New England boat or something, that they were an eight-hundred-dollar-a-day expense to carry that observer, and the boat was having to fund that.

MR. HULL: It doesn't cost me anything to carry an observer, other than I'm required to provide all the safety equipment and all the things that I would normally provide for me, such as even food, but it doesn't really cost anything, and I don't know what -- In New England, I have no clue, but, in the South Atlantic, I haven't had any additional expense for an observer, other than making sure that I can pass my Coast Guard safety vessel inspection, which costs plenty, and they won't get on there unless you have that. I think it was -- I don't have anything else to say about it, and I don't know if anybody else can answer your question, Robert. Jack.

MR. COX: I was just going to add to that. If you carry an observer fishing, you better start figuring out -- We all need to start figuring out a way to determine what some of our good fishing places are, because we've got BOEM coming in, and these windmills are -- These windmill farms are coming to us, and we're not going to be able to fight that back unless we have ways to prove how important these fishing places are, and so it's a really good time to think about, you know, updating your logbooks and just having something to take to battle when those conversations come up, because a lot of these places are going to be zoned off that we can't fish around.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack, and I think it was Vincent, and then that's probably going to wind it up, but we have Kerry first. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Myra just pointed out that I might want to mention why the observer thing is coming up now, and I personally have been chosen a couple of times since the beginning of this year, and I was confused, because the way I always understood it, as managers, is there's a sub-section of the fishery that gets chosen to carry an observer, and it's like 20 percent carries an observer within a so many months period, and it's the same with the bycatch logbook, and I think it's the same with the end of the year economic reporting logbook for the snapper grouper fishery, and so I was confused, personally, about, you know, one, how they go about choosing who carries an observer, and, two, what is done with the data that is collected during the observer program.

At our last council meeting, we heard from NMFS that there weren't that many days, and so they don't use it, and I think the number of twenty-eight days was thrown out, and another council

member, Chris Conklin, and I looked at each other, and I think we accounted for half of that with our boats, and so the issue is not necessarily -- The reason that I brought it up is not necessarily the concern with carrying observers.

On a personal level, I feel like it's a public resource, and that's part of the duty of extracting from a public resource, and, personally, I don't have an issue with it, but to have clear outlines of the program and to know what to expect, as a fisherman, and what you are expected to do, how often you're expected to carry an observer, and then, because it is a little bit of a pain to carry an observer, you want to make sure that data -- It's intrusive, you know, and, when that data is collected, I want to know that it's being used and it's doing what it needs to do for the resource, and it's not just being collected and shelved somewhere, and so that's sort of why this item is rearing its head now, and I just wanted to let everyone know the genesis of that.

I think, I hope, that we can ask NMFS for a report on these data collection programs that are happening in the snapper grouper fishery and then what is being used with the data and what we can all expect, how much we can all expect every year, to have to add on to our regular jobs, as far as reporting and carrying observers, and I hope that lends some clarification to why we're discussing this now, and, if anyone has any specific questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me, because, at the moment, I think I'm sort of carrying the torch on this issue for industry.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and so contact Kerry with your ideas or concerns or questions on this. I think that ends that discussion, and, in Other Business, who else has their hand up for Other Business? Was it Cameron? Andy.

MR. FISH: As far as the observer program, I would just like to say that there's a lot of liability when you take these people, and me and James were just talking that they should have to have their own insurance, and, at a minimum, they should be on a drug consortium, because we don't know who we're taking, and they have to have some kind of -- Not just some, hey, I want to go fishing, and I know they're involved in the program, but it's a lot of liability, and it's a lot of, you know -- In some cases, it can be just one person, one man and one female, and then it could be their word against yours, and there's a lot of bad ways that it could possibly go, and I'm just saying.

MR. HULL: Well, I hear you. As you're digging into, I mean, those things can be a concern, and I think that what Kerry said is they're getting ready to dig into it, and they want to know everything there is about it to come forward, and so now you're saying we need to definitely look into the things you mentioned, and you might want to email Kerry, or she's here now hearing what you're saying, and so she's hearing it, and that's good, and this is what they want, is feedback. Somebody else on this subject of observers? Okay. Then I think Cameron had a request, another action, to go back to -- I will just hand it over to you, Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: **Originally, Jack had proposed, in Amendment 35, that federal commercial and federal charter/headboat be considered for an exemption from the potential bottom closure, and so I would like a motion to include that, that federally-permitted charter/headboats be considered for exclusion if bottom closure is enacted within that amendment.**

My reasoning for that is, you know, our guys are trained, and they all have descending devices, and they all have venting tools, and they're very good at what they do, and so we really don't have

a lot of dead discards coming from that species, and, therefore, I don't think we should be penalized that heavily, if it comes down to a bottom closure or anything along that nature. The rest of it, gear, we're all for.

MR. HULL: Okay, and that's being put -- The only thing that I can see, that I remember that you said before, was maybe even spatially, and you might want to have "bottom or spatial closures", or, excuse me, seasonally. Spatial is bottom, and so it's seasonal closures. Then I will read it, real quick. **Recommend that federally-permitted charter and headboats be excluded from seasonal or spatial closures considered in Regulatory Amendment 35.**

We have a second by Andy, and we don't have time -- We already discussed all of this, guys, and so let's go for a vote. **All those in favor, raise your hand, fifteen in favor; those opposed, one; abstentions, none. The motion passes.** Then the timeline here is we have got about five more minutes, believe it or not. Hold on. staff has one more Other Business. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: A very brief Other Business item, but kind of, with relation to the snapper grouper discard issue, we talked about there is this short-term action that's being taken through Regulatory Amendment 35, and there's a longer-term action that's being done through a management strategy evaluation, and that process -- Chip is leading the charge on that, and he's here, and so he can tell you a bit more about it than I can.

DR. COLLIER: Thanks, Mike. With this management strategy evaluation, what we want to do is get -- Is fully integrate with recreational fishermen on this, and what we're looking at, potentially, is really trying to address the issues going on with the recreational fishery, not just red snapper, but other species, and so we would like to have maybe a subset of the Snapper Grouper AP to provide comments to a modeling group, and those comments would help to evaluate the evaluation criteria and what is most important to the recreational fishermen, the charter boat fishermen, and, if you guys can provide any guidance on that, and I'm not exactly clear how much work it's going to take.

What we can do is get the advice from you guys over a webinar, as opposed to having in-person meetings. That way, it could be a little bit more flexible, but it could be monthly meetings, just for a subset of people, and all we're looking for is maybe two people per state, one charter boat captain, or regions, however we want to split it up, but maybe one charter boat captain and one private recreational fisherman, is what we would be requesting, and so this is -- It's not talking about actions going right now, and it's likely to be three or four years down the line, and so it's going to be a long, involved process, two years of developing this model, before an amendment is developed from the results.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Chip, and so you'll be asking for volunteers in the future?

DR. COLLIER: Volunteers now would be great.

MR. HULL: All right, and so I see some hands up already. Look at that. I see a private rec hand, and I see a charter/for-hire hand, David Moss and Andy Piland. You've got those two so far, and I see Paul Nelson. He's charter/for-hire, and I see Cameron Sebastian. Okay. Thomas Meeks. Okay. You're about to get everybody. Thank you, Chip and Mike. It looks like we've got a little

more time, but not a lot, and Jack had his hand up first, and this will probably be it, guys. We've got one minute left.

MR. COX: Well, you know, we've seen some concerns between the private recreational unaccountable sector, and we've talked about this whole meeting, and we've seen some of the charter/for-hire guys saying, hey, you know, I don't really want to be associated sometimes, because we're a little bit more accountable than that sector, and we don't want them to pull us into a situation where we have closed bottom, but I just want to remind folks that the for-hire charter fishery is still open access, and, before -- You would have to go to a limited entry before there could be a sector separation, and I just want to remind -- You know, if we get to a point that they really want to start separating themselves out from the private recreational sector -- If I was a charter/for-hire, I would certainly be considering it, seeing what I see going on, but you'll have to go to limited entry first, and that's all I -- I just wanted to remind folks on that.

MR. HULL: Is that a comment on what Jack -- Okay, and we'll take that, David.

MR. MOSS: Just for the record, Jack, that's one of the main reasons why I opposed that previous motion, because one of my fears is that then everybody is just going to apply to be a charter/for-hire, the guys that can afford it, and we're not going to get the bang for the buck supposedly that we think we will, and you're just going to get this influx of people that -- I completely agree with you, that we need to remember that.

MR. COX: Hopefully the for-hire guys, when they see things like this happening, they will put more pressure on that sector as well, to say, hey, you need to get up to speed.

MR. HULL: Thank you, guys. If it's a real quick one, Vincent, go ahead.

MR. BONURA: We can make it quick and not do a motion or anything, but a recommendation that I would like to put up again, and I think I've done it the past few meetings, and we've been talking about it for a while, to look into an FMP for the barrelfish, because it's in a large decline, and there is currently no FMP for it at all, and no work done, no research, nothing.

MR. HULL: He is getting that up there now, and I remember you making that before, and so we'll keep on making it.

MR. BONURA: I would like to recommend to add them to our fisheries management plan here, the grouper AP and grouper panel, if we could.

MR. HULL: He's got that there. Okay, guys. I think that we've done a really good job. Thank you so much, and you guys are awesome, and so just keep on digging. We've just got to keep doing it until we get the good results we want, and so the meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 20, 2022.)

- - -

Certified By _____ Date _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
June 11, 2022

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04/18/2022 12:53 PM EDT

Duration

3 hours 56 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended

Yes

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First Name

MYRA

Yes

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Carolyn

Yes

Bell

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Yes

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Yes

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Griner

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Yes

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Martha

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Yes

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Alana

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Frank

Yes

Hemilright

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Yes

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Yes

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Allie

Yes

Kellison

Todd

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Yes

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Snapper Grouper

Attendee Report: Advisory Panel Meeting

Report Generated:

06/12/2022 07:48 PM EDT

Webinar ID

848-848-971

Actual Start Date/Time

04/19/2022 08:36 AM EDT

Duration

8 hours 33 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	Belcher	Carolyn
Yes	Bell	00 Mel
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Carmichael	John
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Finch	Margaret
Yes	Garber	Rudolph
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Griner	00 Tim
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Harrison	Alana
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Iberle	Allie
Yes	Kellison	Todd
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Marhefka	00Kerry
Yes	Meeks	Thomas
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Patten	Willow
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	RINCONES	RON
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Smart	Tracey

Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes

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Travis
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Wolfe
thomas
vara

Nicholas
David
Adam
00 Laurilee
Michael
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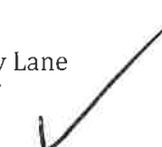


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Report Generated:

06/12/2022 07:42 PM EDT

Webinar ID

848-848-971

Actual Start Date/Time

04/20/2022 08:00 AM EDT

Duration

4 hours 3 minutes

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00 Laurilee

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